

A new life for olive oil waste

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When olive oil is produced commercially, olives are crushed and mixed with water in mills. The oil is then separated out and saved, while the leftover water and solid residue are discarded - and that can be problematic. Help may be on the way, however, as scientists have devised a process of converting olive mill wastewater into biofuel, fertiliser and clean water.



Olive mills don't just produce oil – they also generate a lot of wastewater (Credit: [smoxx/Depositphotos](#))

As things currently stand, there's no good way of disposing of the wastewater. Dumping it in waterways pollutes them while pumping it directly onto farmland damages the soil and reduces crop yields.

That's why a team led by Mejdí Jeguirim of France's Mulhouse Institute of Materials Science has taken a different approach. The scientists started by mixing the wastewater with cypress sawdust, which is another waste product that's common in the Mediterranean, where 97% of the world's olive oil is produced.

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