

BEST PRACTICES IM- PERFECT - ESPIGOLADORS

Submitted by: Dom Spain

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline with rocky cliffs and clear turquoise water. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the right side of the image. In the center, a white circle contains the text 'CIRCULAR ALBANIA TOURISM'.

CIRCULAR
ALBANIA
TOURISM



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INTRODUCTION



SECTION 1: BASIC INFORMATION

- Title of the Best Practice: es im-perfect - Espigoladors
- Website of the Practice: <https://espigoladors.cat/>; <https://esimperfect.com/en/>
- Social Media links: <https://www.instagram.com/esimperfect/?hl=es>
- Location: Stree Vallès, n° 57-59, El Prat de Llobregat (Barcelona, Spain).

SECTION 2: PRACTICE OVERVIEW

• Short Description of the Practice:

The "es im-perfect" is the job placement company of the Espigoladors Foundation (2014), a non-profit organisation committed to food recovery, ensuring the right to healthy nutrition, and creating employment opportunities. Espigoladors' social business model applies circular economy principles to the agri-food and tourism sectors. As a farm-to-fork practice, it transforms local fruits and vegetables, which would otherwise be discarded due to cosmetic imperfections or surpluses, into high-quality plant-based preserves like pâtés, jams, and sauces. es im-perfect's commitment to high social and environmental performance is independently verified by its B Corp certification, demonstrating its adherence to rigorous standards of accountability and transparency.

• Implementation Period: 2018 - ongoing

• Status:

☐ Planned ☐ Pilot phase ☐ Fully implemented ☒ Ongoing and evolving

• Thematic Areas Addressed:

☒ Farm to Fork / Sustainable Food Systems

☒ Waste Management

☐ Resource Efficiency

☐ Other: _____

• Describe how the practice aligns with the selected Thematic Areas:

The "es im-perfect" initiative/brand serves as a powerful example of how to implement circular economy principles within the Farm to Fork framework, transforming the traditional linear food system into a more sustainable, closed-loop model. The core of this practice is its ability to design out waste from the very beginning of the supply chain. By rescuing local fruits and vegetables that are discarded by the commercial market due to cosmetic imperfections, the project directly tackles the critical issue of food loss. This approach not only prevents perfectly edible food from ending up in a landfill but also shortens the supply chain by working directly with local farmers, which in turn reduces the environmental impact of transportation and logistics.

This initiative also promotes the concept of valuable ingredients from surplus. Instead of seeing imperfect produce as waste, "es im-perfect" gives these items new life by transforming them into high-quality preserves. This creates a new revenue stream and demonstrates to tourism SMEs and students that "waste" can be a valuable resource. For a hotel, restaurant, or catering service, this means that sourcing these products not only supports a local, sustainable model but also helps them reduce their own waste and improve their environmental footprint.

• Explain how this activity fits within the tourism sector:

es im-perfect fits within the tourism sector primarily through its strong connection to sustainable gastronomy and culinary tourism. As a producer of plant-based preserves made from rescued local produce, the brand offers authentic, environmentally conscious products that can be integrated into various tourism activities. For instance, their unique jams, pâtés, and sauces can be featured on hotel breakfast buffets or sold as locally sourced souvenirs. Furthermore, im-perfect's production centre, located in El Prat de Llobregat (near the Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park), can be visited and serves as a destination for agritourism or food tours, where visitors can gain first-hand knowledge about food waste reduction, social inclusion, and circular economy practices.





- **What learning value for VET training, curriculum development or capacity-building of professionals does the practice offer?**

The practice of es im-perfect offers significant learning value for VET students and teachers in culinary arts and hospitality. The model can be used as a practical case study for curriculum development, demonstrating how businesses can integrate sustainable sourcing into their operations.

Culinary Arts and Hospitality: a VET class could develop menu plans featuring locally sourced products, demonstrating how to create an innovative offering that integrates ethical products into menus, supporting a new generation of chefs and managers committed to sustainability.

This hands-on approach teaches students that reducing food waste not only helps the environment but it can also attract conscious tourists and improve a business's reputation by aligning its values with those of its customers.

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES AND ALIGNMENT WITH CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

- **What challenges or barriers were addressed?**

- ☒ Waste management and disposal
- ☐ Energy/resource use
- ☐ Infrastructure limitations
- ☐ Seasonality
- ☐ Skills and capacity gaps
- ☒ Low awareness of CE
- ☐ Behavioural resistance
- ☒ Financial or funding constraints
- ☐ Other : _____

- **How were these challenges overcome?**

Espigoladors Fundació overcame challenges through a smart blend of strategy, partnerships, and financial innovation.

Waste management: By rescuing cosmetically imperfect produce directly from local farmers, they created a new supply chain. This approach transformed a disposal problem into a primary source of raw materials, effectively "designing out" waste from the start and preventing it from ever reaching landfills.

Low awareness of the circular economy (CE): es im-perfect uses its brand and visits to its production centre as educational tools. This raises public awareness about food loss and inspires a more conscious approach to consumption.

Financial constraints: By building a self-sustaining business model, the sale of their high-quality preserves generates revenue, proving that a social mission can be profitable.

- **Which circular economy strategies does this practice address?**

- ☒ Waste reduction / reuse / recycling
- ☐ Renewable energy / energy efficiency
- ☐ Water conservation
- ☐ Circular product/service design
- ☒ Sustainable food systems / short food chains
- ☒ Eco-certifications or green standards
- ☐ Repair, refurbishment, or reuse of infrastructure/furnishings
- ☐ Digital tools for circularity or sustainability

- **Describe why this practice can be considered as a 'best practice' and how it contributes to one or more circular economy principles:**

The es im-perfect initiative can be considered a 'best practice' because it effectively integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability into a single, replicable model that addresses systemic challenges in the food system. This process directly addresses waste management and disposal and contributes to resource efficiency by preventing valuable food and the resources used to produce it (e.g., water, energy) from being wasted. It demonstrates how businesses can go beyond compliance to generate positive, measurable impact.





- **Describe why this practice can be considered as innovative. What new, creative or underused approach brings added value to circular tourism development?**

In the context of circular tourism development, es im-perfect - Espigoladors brings added value by introducing an underused but highly scalable model: integrating rescued, local produce into the tourism supply chain (e.g. hotels, restaurants, catering, and local food experiences). Their products can enrich the visitor experience with sustainable food offerings, helping tourism businesses meet growing demand for ethical and eco-friendly practices. Additionally, the brand's (es im-perfect) storytelling and visual identity challenge consumer perceptions around food aesthetics, turning "imperfect" into a selling point, which is both creative and impactful.

SECTION 4: COLLABORATION

- **Describe any collaboration that were involved in the development of this practice? this practice involve local authorities or other groups?**

The Espigoladors Foundation combats food waste and promotes social inclusion through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder model. The foundation's core practice of gleaning relies on a robust volunteer network of over 3,300 people who manually collect unsold produce from fields. This effort is made possible by close collaboration with producers and farmers who agree to let the foundation recover fruits and vegetables that would otherwise be discarded due to market surplus or aesthetic imperfections.

This work is supported by government grants and larger initiatives. The foundation has been a beneficiary of public funding, including from the Spanish government's Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, which is financed by the European Union's Next Generation EU programme. These grants help support their various projects, including the es im-perfect line of products.

SECTION 5: RESULTS AND REPLICABILITY

- **What measurable results or outcomes were achieved?**

The es im-perfect initiative has achieved significant measurable outcomes, according to a 2024 report, resulting in the preparation of 664,933 plant-based preserves, of which 303,289 were distributed to organisations supporting vulnerable groups (conserves que cuiden). Additionally, 158 tonnes of fruit and vegetables were recovered and transformed, contributing to the avoidance of 238 tonnes of CO₂ emissions (equivalent to 37 laps around the world by car) and the saving of approximately 1.08 million litres of water (equivalent to 41 Olympic swimming pools), highlighting both social and environmental impact.

- **Why is this practice relevant to the Albanian tourism context?**

The es im-perfect initiative is relevant to the Albanian tourism context not only because it could help reduce the food waste and lower their environmental impact of its booming tourism sector. More importantly, it gives visitors a deeper connection to the local culture. A meal can become, for tourism, a unique way to get to know Albania's terroir, landscapes, and agricultural traditions, making the experience an authentic and memorable part of their journey.

- **What is the practice's potential for further expansion? How can it be applied or adapted to other Albanian tourism destinations or businesses?**

This practice has strong potential for expansion across Albania due to its adaptable, community-centred, and sustainable approach. It can be scaled in various regions by using locally available surplus produce, allowing each area to highlight its unique agricultural resources. In tourism destinations, the practice can be integrated into agritourism and culinary experiences, offered as authentic souvenirs, or used by hotels and restaurants that prioritise local sourcing and sustainability.

- **What advice would you give others looking to implement a similar initiative?**

For businesses like hotels and restaurants, a first step would be to map and build partnerships with key local stakeholders—including farmers, food producers—to establish a reliable supply chain. Focus on sourcing surplus or imperfect produce to reduce food waste while contributing to environmental goals. This collaborative model creates both environmental and social value.



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SECTION 6: PICTURES

- Pictures of the practice:





Project Partners



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