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1 **Unraveling the environmental impacts of bioactive compounds and organic**
2 **amendment from grape marc**

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12 **Abstract**

13 In a society that produces large amounts of solid waste, the search for new methods of valorisation
14 has led to the development of techniques that make it possible to obtain new products from waste.

15 In the case of bio-waste, biological treatment such as anaerobic digestion or composting appear
16 to be suitable options for producing bio-energy or bio-fertilizers respectively. Vermicomposting
17 is a method of converting solid organic waste into resources through bio-oxidation and
18 stabilization of the organic waste by earthworms. The purpose of this study is to establish the
19 environmental impacts of a complete route for the valorisation of grape pomace in order to
20 identify environmental hotspots. In this valorisation route, different value-added products are
21 produced with potential application in the cosmetic, food and pharmaceutical sectors. Priority was
22 given to the use of primary data in the elaboration of the data inventories needed to perform the
23 life cycle assessment (LCA). The main findings from this study reported that the energy
24 requirement of the distillation process is an important hot spot of the process. Although the
25 valorisation route has some poor results in terms of the two environmental indicators (carbon
26 footprint and normalized impact index), when economic revenues were included in this analysis,
27 its environmental performance was better than that of other alternatives for bio-waste recovery.

28

29 **Keywords**

30 Vermicomposting; Grape marc; Life Cycle Assessment; Value-added products; Biorefinery;
31 Valorisation.

32

33 **1. Introduction**

34 Nowadays, food waste is an environmental and social problem with long-term consequences,
35 which are not correctly characterised by current frameworks (Kibler et al., 2018). Municipal Solid
36 Waste (MSW) management has become a matter of global concern due to its environmental
37 implications and the high costs associated with waste management (Marshall and Farahbakhsh,
38 2013). MSW generation has increased considerably in recent years due to rapid urban population
39 growth (Goorhuis, 2014). In fact, in 2016, the total waste generated in the EU-28 by all economic
40 activities and households amounted to more than 2,500 million tonnes (Eurostat, 2019). Data
41 published in this database indicates an increase in the quantity of waste recovered, used for
42 backfilling or incinerated with energy recovery from 960 million tonnes in 2004 to 1231 million
43 tonnes in 2016. However, the quantity of waste subject to disposal only decreased 6.3%, from
44 1154 million tonnes in 2004 to 1081 million tonnes un 2016 (Eurostat, 2019).

45 This problem requires research on new processes to achieve the complete valorisation of food
46 waste and public initiatives to change consumer consumption patterns and disposal behaviours
47 (Kibler et al., 2018). It is demonstrated that reducing landfilling in favour of increased recycling
48 of some types of materials such as glass, paper, plastic and metals leads to lower energy demand
49 and environmental impacts (Eriksson et al., 2005). In the case of biowaste, biologic treatment
50 such as composting or anaerobic digestion appear to be suitable options (European Comission,
51 2008).

52 Poor waste management involves not only altering the different environmental compartments, but
53 also contributing to problems of global impact. In relative terms, the management of the
54 agricultural sector's organic fraction contributes greatly to global environmental challenges such
55 as climate change, freshwater pollution and nutrient accumulation (Weidner et al., 2019). On the
56 contrary, the adequate treatment of the organic waste fraction can reduce the environmental
57 impact provided that the organic fraction of the waste stream is recovered in order to produce
58 substances such as biogas that can be used as fuel or biofertilizers to replace those of chemical
59 origin (Komakech et al., 2015).

60 The wine industry is one of the most important sectors in terms of raw material treatment and
61 economic production in the food processing industry. According to data provided by the
62 International Organization of Vine and Wine, world wine production in 2015 was approximately
63 280 million hectolitres of 78 million tonnes of grapes (Guerini Filho et al., 2018). In Galicia, the
64 Atlantic region of NW Spain, the wine sector has a long tradition with different varieties of high
65 oenological quality, as evidenced by mentions of excellence and awards (Vázquez-Rowe et al.,
66 2012).

67 Winemaking process comprises a complex sequence of activities (Escribano-Viana et al., 2018),
68 from grape growing, harvesting, fermentation and maturation in the winery to the handling of
69 waste generated at each stage of the process. The main solid organic residue from winemaking is
70 grape marc, also known as grape bagasse or grape pomace, which consists of the seeds, pulp and
71 stalks that remain after pressing the grapes. In general, the total volume of waste generated is
72 around 20-30% of total wine production, which represents a more than meaningful percentage
73 (Zabaniotou et al., 2018). However, this value is lower than that of other food industries, where
74 the produced waste can account for up to 60% of the initial products (Notarnicola et al., 2017).
75 The most common alternative for the valorisation of the grape marc in the winery is the production
76 of brandy spirits, although there is room for innovation when it comes to the processing of this
77 stream.

78 However, this fraction of the grape can be considered a valuable source of polyphenols since it
79 contains around 70% of the phenolic compounds of the grape, which could be extracted in a safe
80 and sustainable way (Poveda et al., 2018) since only a small part of the phytochemicals applied
81 during cultivation is transferred from the grape to the wine (Mazza, 1995). The interest in
82 extracting and exploiting the polyphenols present in this type of waste lies in their potential use
83 and application in a wide range of sectors, such as cosmetics, food and pharmaceuticals (Fontana
84 et al., 2013). The current management of wine residues is still in the early stages of development,
85 so it has focused on its application as an organic soil amendment (Domínguez et al., 2017). In
86 small geographic areas with a high burden of agricultural activities, the inappropriate disposal of

87 this material has led to the release of excessive amounts of polyphenols to soils. Phenolic
88 compounds are responsible for the phytotoxic activity of grape marc, so this problem need to be
89 monitored as it can cause inhibition problems for plant growth (Barbera et al., 2013). These
90 agronomic problems associated with the application of grapes to soil could be minimized by
91 stabilizing them through different organic decomposition processes as composting or
92 vermicomposting (Gómez-Brandón et al., 2011). In the present study, vermicomposting was
93 evaluated as a sustainable alternative for the stabilization of wine waste and for obtaining different
94 value-added products.

95 Vermicomposting is a natural process based on the interactions of earthworms (mainly of the
96 species *Eisenia foetida* or *Eisenia andrei*) with the endogenous microorganisms present in the
97 waste as a result of the decomposition of organic matter (Lleó et al., 2013). By varying the
98 operational conditions of the process, it is possible to modify the physical and biochemical
99 properties of the final product (Domínguez et al., 2010). Beyond the enzymatic transformations
100 attributed to earthworms, there is a significant improvement in oxygen concentration, which
101 favors aerobic composting of the waste under conditions of low greenhouse gas emissions
102 (Nigussie et al., 2016). The final product obtained is vermicompost or earthworm humus, which
103 has a stable, homogeneous, and fine particle size appearance. Vermicompost is also a nutrient-
104 rich, peat-like material characterised by high porosity, high water-holding capacity, and low C:N
105 ratio (Domínguez et al., 2014).

106 Residual organic matter tends to humidify, polymerize and polycondense. As a result, the levels
107 of humic acids and, to a lesser extent, fulvic acids increase (by 20-60% compared to those present
108 in the starting materials), affecting the chemical and structural characteristics of the organic matter
109 (Gómez-Brandón et al., 2019). This is why the final product has high water retention capacity and
110 nutrient content (Chen et al., 2018). Vermicomposting is considered a green and clean technology
111 (Karmegam et al., 2019) with moderately low investment and maintenance costs and low energy
112 consumption. According to a quantitative perspective of impact assessment, the Life Cycle
113 Assessment (LCA) methodology has been used to assess and compare the impact of different

114 waste disposal scenarios, including composting, landfilling and incineration. The LCA
115 methodology allows the quantification and comparison of environmental impacts between the
116 stages of a product or service throughout its life cycle, from raw materials acquisition to end-of-
117 life. Several researches have used LCA to analyse the environmental implications of organic
118 waste composting (Saer et al., 2013; ten Hove et al., 2019), incineration (Abuşoğlu et al., 2017;
119 Dong et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2018) or landfilling (Buratti et al., 2015; Henriksen et al., 2018).

120 However, only a few LCA studies have analysed the environmental implications of
121 vermicomposting food waste. Within these studies, 2 research works have been published that
122 can be considered as references of great interest for this study. Komakech et al. (2015) and
123 Komakech et al. (2016) compared the environmental performance of different management
124 alternatives based on anaerobic digestion, composting and vermicomposting for food waste and
125 animal manure, but only the categories of global warming potential and eutrophication potential
126 categories were considered in both studies. Tedesco et al. (2019) evaluated the life cycle impact
127 of the bioconversion of fruit and vegetable waste into earthworm meal from a “cradle-to-gate”
128 perspective. The main product obtained from vermicomposting are the worms themselves, while
129 in the present study, the worms are mere tools which are used to valorize agricultural waste into
130 some value-added products.

131 The objective of this research is to evaluate the environmental impacts associated with the
132 valorisation of grape marc through vermicomposting using an LCA approach, identifying the
133 stages and the processes that make the greatest contribution to the environmental burdens.
134 Therefore, the system under study converts wastes into usable materials following a circular
135 economy approach. The function of the system is to achieve short-term stabilization of grape
136 marc, obtaining four main outputs: a nutrients-rich biofertilizer, marketable brandy spirit, and a
137 mixed fraction composed mainly of seeds, from which an extract rich in polyphenols and oil rich
138 in fatty acids can be obtained.

139 **2. Materials and methods**

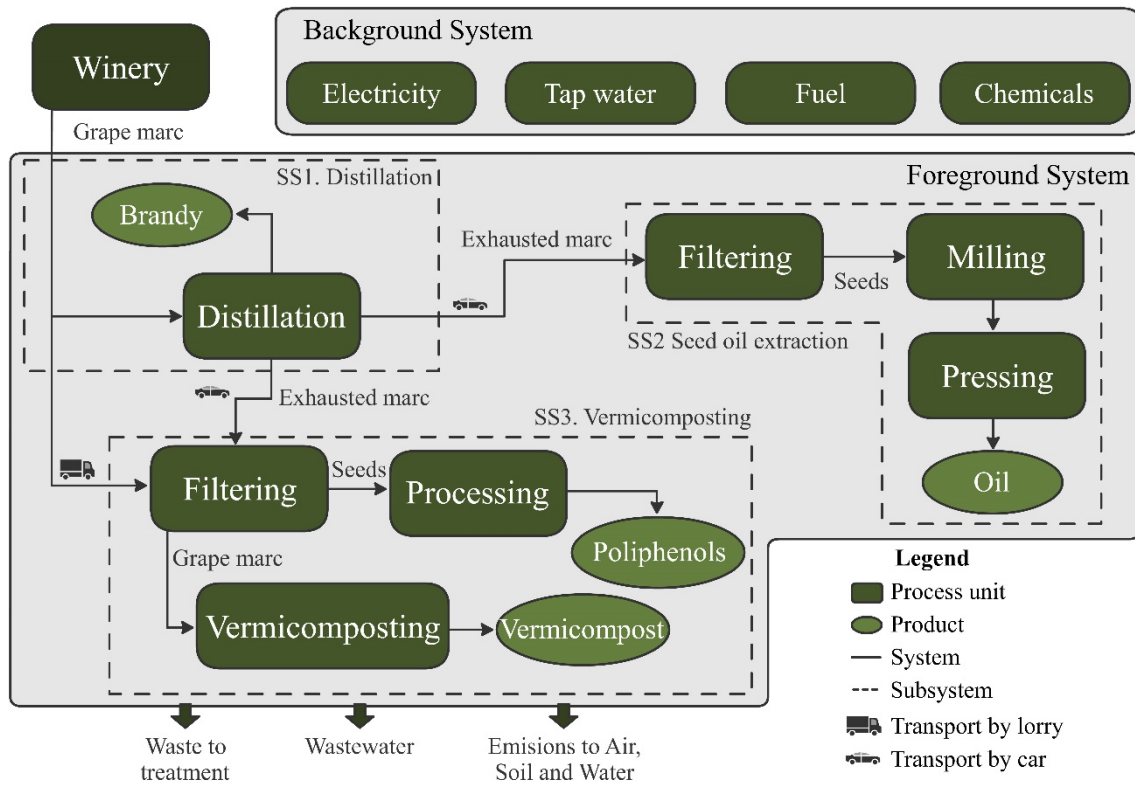
140 The LCA methodology is based on the recommendations established in the ISO standards (ISO
141 14040;14044) and aims to be a comparative study in the evaluation of the environmental profile
142 of the vermicomposting technology together with other alternatives for the final disposal of grape
143 marc.

144 *2.1. Definition of goal and scope*

145 The main goal of this study was to evaluate vermicomposting as an environmentally friendly way
146 of achieving the valorisation of grape marc waste using the LCA methodology. There are three
147 possible options in the selection of the Functional Unit (FU), that is, based on the quantification
148 of a single target product, the total flow of raw materials or the combination of different products
149 (Khoshnevisan et al., 2018). In order to represent the function of the system and to be consistent
150 with the multiple-output nature of the process, it seems correct to select a feedstock-based FU.
151 The FU considered was the treatment of 1 tonne of grape marc.

152 *2.2. Description of the overall system and system boundaries*

153 The study was performed through a “cradle-to-gate” perspective, from the extraction of raw
154 materials up to the point when the different products are ready to leave the facilities. The feedstock
155 for the process, as already mentioned, is residual grape marc supplied by different warehouses
156 located at a maximum distance of 130 km from the location of the vermicomposting facilities.
157 The production plan was evaluated considering all the processes from the production of raw
158 materials to the final products obtained from grape marc. Specifically, the system under study us
159 divided into three subsystems (SS), which are detailed below in Figure 1: SS1. Distillation, SS2.
160 Seed oil extraction and SS3. Vermicomposting. It is considered that the production of grape marc
161 as co-product associated with the winemaking process and capital goods are outside the system
162 boundaries.



163

164 **Figure 1.** Valorisation scheme of grape marc targeting oil, brandy, vermicompost and a
 165 polyphenol-rich extract.

166 **Subsystem SS1 - Distillation**

167 Distillation of grape marc distillation to obtain different spirits is an activity traditionally used in
 168 local wineries that seek to obtain value-added products from waste. Grape marc is the perfect
 169 feedstock to produce brandy spirits named as “orujo” by simple distillation. In this study, steam
 170 distillation has been considered because it is widely used in large facilities. The use of steam and
 171 cooling water to heat and cool the grape marc and the brandy, respectively, have been considered.
 172 In addition, the production of wastewater during the distillation process has been taking into
 173 account. In this case the distillation efficiency is relatively high, obtaining 25 L of Brandy per
 174 every 200 kg of processed marc. In this subsystem, a large part of the exhausted marc that is
 175 obtained as co-product is directed to a grape seed oil extraction process (Subsystem 2), while the
 176 rest of the exhausted marc is mixed with fresh marc and is transported by lorry to subsystem 3, in
 177 which further operations that allow obtaining an extract rich in polyphenols and an organic
 178 fertilizer called vermicompost are carried out. It is important to note that no consideration has

179 been given to transporting these fractions from winery to distillation unit since this type of
180 operation is usually carried out in the same place. However, transportation by lorry and car of the
181 outputs of the distillation unit to the rest of subsystems have been considered.

182 **Subsystem SS2 - Seed oil extraction**

183 The exhausted marc is subjected to a filtering treatment, in which seeds are separated from the
184 rest of the material. This exhausted marc without seeds is a waste and is sent to landfill for
185 disposal, although it could be considered as a co-product of oil extraction and used to obtain other
186 value-added products, as for energetic or feed purposes. Nevertheless, the main objective of this
187 subsystem is to obtain grape seeds oil, so seeds are the principal target. These seeds are feed into
188 a disk crusher, where a fine seed paste is obtained. The paste is pumped into a press, where the
189 grape seed oil is obtained by crushing the seeds. This oil has a good market value due to its high
190 content in vitamin E and linolenic acid. This process is especially interesting since the operations
191 carried out at this subsystem are physical and the consumption of chemicals is hardly necessary,
192 only cleaning agents.

193 **Subsystem SS3 - Vermicomposting**

194 The mixture of fresh and exhausted grape marc from SS1 is taken to a filter similar to the used in
195 subsystem 2, in which seeds are separated from the grape marc. The quantity of seeds that can be
196 separated has been assumed as 15% of the total grape marc weight. These seeds are led to a
197 pressurized solvent extraction that allows the obtention of an polyphenols-rich extract. The use
198 of sand as dispersant and methanol (65%) in water as solvent have been considered (Álvarez-
199 Casas et al., 2014). In the other route, grape marc separated from the seeds was stored at 4°C until
200 use. The grape marc was processed in pilot-scale vermireactors with a surface area of 3 m² held
201 in a greenhouse in the University of Vigo with no temperature control and the earthworm species
202 *Eisenia andrei* (commonly known as red worm) was used. Vermicomposting system described
203 by Domínguez et al. (2017) was considered.. At the beginning of the trial, the vermireactor
204 contained a layer of 12 cm of vermicompost as a bed for the earthworms. Then, successive layers
205 of grape marc were placed through time, for processing by the earthworms. In this way,

206 earthworms are always located in superficial layers of the reactor, while vermicompost is
207 deposited in the lower layers of the reactor. Thus, the reactor was filled in successive layers until
208 a batch is completed in about 12 weeks. At this time, the vermireactor allows the treatment of 600
209 kg grape marc to obtain over 240 kg vermicompost ready to be used as a high-quality organic
210 fertilizer. During the duration of the trial it is not necessary the use of additional chemicals or
211 materials. In order to prevent desiccation, the vermireactor was watered daily and leachate was
212 collected and sent to treatment, collecting about 10-12 L leachate per batch. The use of electric
213 sieve and grinder to reduce the particle size of the vermicomposting is also necessary. The electric
214 consumption was estimated considering the average use time and the power of the equipment.
215 Polyphenols extraction was carried out before vermicomposting since, as reported in Domínguez
216 et al. (2016), the amount of polyphenols is reduced by almost one half in a period of only 14 days
217 and by the time period of 42 days, the decrease is about 98% of the initial amount. In the end,
218 two main products are obtained from this subsystem, a nutrient-rich, microbiologically active
219 organic amendment known as vermicompost and a polyphenols-rich extract.

220 *2.3. Inventory analysis, data acquisition and allocation approach*

221 The quality of the data handled in the elaboration of the life cycle inventory is especially relevant
222 in order to ensure the reliability of the study. Therefore, the collection of inventory data requires
223 primary data (typical of real systems under study) or secondary data (those complementary to the
224 main process such as electricity, raw materials, water and fuel). In this study, most of the data
225 related to the system correspond to primary data, while those relating to the background system
226 (water, electricity, fuel and chemicals) were taken from the Ecoinvent® v3.5 database.

227 Regarding the distillation system, the data published in Dimou et al. (2016) has been used. In this
228 study, a techno-economic analysis of the complete valorisation of wine lees is carried out. From
229 this work, the data on cooling water consumption, low pressure steam and wastewater generation
230 have been adapted to the characteristics of this study. As for the seed oil extraction subsystem,
231 material and energy consumption has been obtained from Rinaldi et al. (2014), where the
232 evaluation of the life cycle of the production of extra virgin olive oil in Italy is carried out. The

233 total amount of oil obtained from the grape seeds has been estimated based on the study of Fiori
234 et al. (2014). In this paper, it was considered that grape seeds contain oil in the range of 8-16%
235 depending on the crop and the harvest year. In the present study, 10% kg-oil per kg-seeds is
236 considered.

237 With respect to vermicomposting, primary data were obtained from the pilot-scale vermireactors
238 held in a greenhouse in the University of Vigo. The managed data covered the identification of
239 operational aspects of the inventoried reactor, such as the consumption of resources (water,
240 energy, fuel...), waste management or the use of machinery. Direct emissions related to
241 vermicomposting were estimated based on the emission factors taken from different secondary
242 sources. Emissions of methane (CH₄), ammonia (NH₃) and dinitrogen monoxide (N₂O) due to
243 earthworm activity were adapted from Komakech et al. (2015) considering the characteristics of
244 the vermireactor. Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) emissions were adapted
245 from Lleó et al. (2013). Products and residues of the grapevine cultivation contain biogenic carbon
246 from captured carbon dioxide (CO₂) during crop growth. Although CO₂ emissions were
247 calculated, these emissions were not included as they were considered as biogenic CO₂.

248 The data necessary to model the extraction of polyphenols from the seeds obtained from the
249 vermicompost were obtained from primary sources. A Pressure Solvent Extraction (PSE) has
250 been considered (Álvarez-Casas et al., 2014) and material consumption of this stage was
251 established based on the extrapolation of laboratory data to a pilot scale trial considering the
252 primary experimental results as the basis for the analysis. Marine sand was considered as
253 dispersant and the amount of sand was estimated considering a ratio seeds/solvent of 2/1 (w/w).
254 Methanol 65% was considered as extracting solvent considering a solid/liquid ratio of 1/40 (w/v),
255 as detailed in Dimitrov et al. (2019). Total electricity consumption was estimated from Pradal et
256 al. (2016), taking into account that the methanol content in the solvent (% vol.) and the extraction
257 duration are similar to those selected for the extraction of polyphenols from seeds. Though there
258 may be other ways of polyphenol extraction from grape seeds, this system has been chosen due
259 to its applicability was demonstrated by the analysis of bagasse samples from wineries in Galicia.

260 (Álvarez-Casas et al., 2014). A summary of data managed for the complete valorisation of grape
 261 marc is displayed in Table 1.

262 **Table 1.** Inventory data of the valorisation scheme for grape marc

Inputs from Technosphere		Outputs to Environment	
Materials	kg	Emissions to air	kg
Grape marc	1000	NH ₃	0.26
Low pressure steam	1036.60	N ₂ O	7.43·10 ⁻³
Sand	52.94	CH ₄	2.73·10 ⁻²
Methanol	2	NM VOC	1.24·10 ⁻²
Vinyl polychloride	0.12	Outputs to Technosphere	
Polyethylene	0.14	Products	kg
Cleaning product	1.65·10 ⁻³	Vermicompost	240
	m³	Polyphenols-rich extract	2.43
Water	1.46	Seed oil	4.79
Cooling water	10.54	Brandy	58.82
Transport	t·km	Waste	kg
Lorry	50.59	Exhausted marc	289.71
Car	22.94		L
Energy	kWh	Wastewater	441.35
Electricity	123.66		

263

264 The system under assessment is a multi-outputs system where more than one product is obtained.
 265 No allocation criteria were considered since a feedstock-based FU was selected, however, if it
 266 were necessary to identify the impacts for each product, it is advisable to apply the economic
 267 allocation criterion, since the outputs are produced in very different amounts in order to avoid
 268 attributing an unbalanced impact. Table 2 reports the market price considered for the different
 269 added value products as well as the mass and economic allocation factors.

270 **Table 2.** Computation of allocation factors based on economic and mass allocation approach.

Product	Production (kg)	Market price (€/kg)	Mass allocation	Economic allocation
Vermicompost	240	1.2 ^a	78%	11%
Polyphenols-rich extract	2.43	147.67 ^b	1%	14%
Seed oil	4.79	300 ^c	2%	56%
Brandy	58.82	8.57 ^d	19%	19%

271 ^a Ecocelta (2019)
272 ^b Vieira et al. (2013)
273 ^c Le petit jardin (2019)
274 ^d MAPA (2018)

275 *2.4. Life cycle impact analysis: methodology*

276 The software SimaPro 9.0 (PRé Consultants, 2017) was used for the computational
277 implementation of the inventories. The methodology considered to express the environmental
278 impacts was ReCiPe 2016 v1.1. in a hierarchist perspective with the following impact categories
279 at midpoint level (Huijbregts et al., 2017): Global Warming (GW), Stratospheric Ozone Layer
280 Depletion (SOD), Ozone Formation (OF), Terrestrial Acidification (TA), Freshwater
281 Eutrophication (FE), Marine Eutrophication (ME), Human Toxicity (HT), Terrestrial Ecotoxicity
282 (TET), Freshwater Ecotoxicity (FET), Marine Ecotoxicity (MET) and Fossil Resource Scarcity
283 (FRS).

284 **3. Results and discussion**

285 *3.1. Environmental performance of the overall process*

286 The environmental assessment was carried out from a cradle-to-gate, excluding from the analysis
287 the production of the raw material (grape marc) since it was considered as a waste from wineries
288 and environmental impacts were totally allocated to the main product of these production systems
289 e.g. bottled wine as the main product. The environmental impacts according to the
290 characterisation phase are reported in Table 3. Most environmental burdens are allocated to oil,
291 as the price is very high and, therefore, the economic allocation factor is also high. However,
292 environmental impacts assigned to vermicompost production are much lower. For example, in the
293 case of GW category, the production of 1 kg vermicompost only involves the emission of
294 approximately 200 g CO₂ eq.

295 It is important to highlight other benefits derived from the use of vermicompost as organic
296 fertilizer in substitution of other more consolidated alternatives such as the use of peat or compost
297 as a soil amendment. The vermicompost produced during the process can be used in vineyards as
298 an organic fertilizer. In fact, due to the chemical characteristics of vermicompost (20.2 ± 1.3 g/kg

299 Nitrogen and 2.1 ± 0.1 g/kg Phosphorous, among other nutrients), the 240 kg produced per batch
 300 can provide the amount of nitrogen to the soil as 346.3 kg peat. If vermicompost use as organic
 301 fertilizer is taking into account, environmental benefits can be calculated by determining the
 302 avoided life cycle impacts of peat mining processes and subtracting them from each impact
 303 category. When the use of peat is avoided by utilizing vermicompost, all its environmental
 304 impacts are also prevented, and the life cycle inventory of peat can be considered a credit to the
 305 life cycle burdens of vermicompost production.

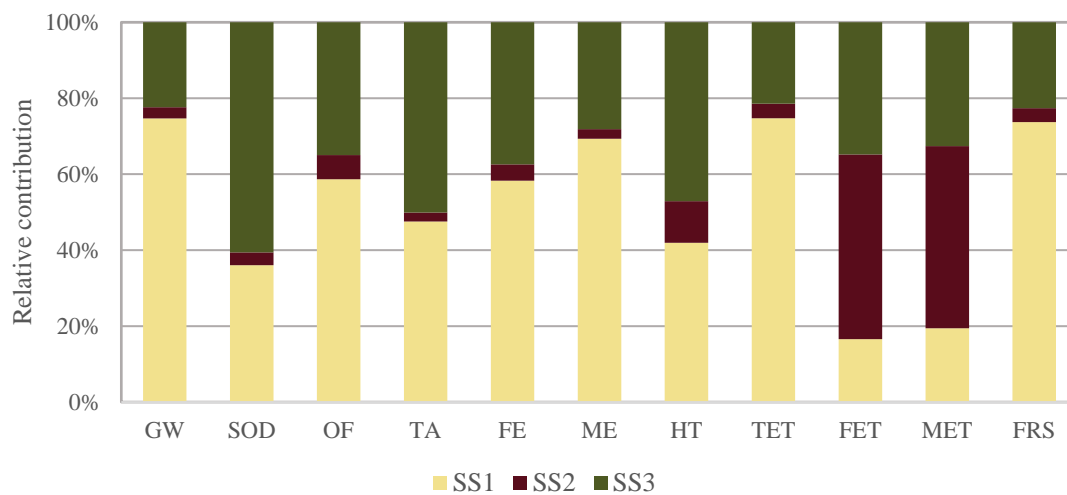
306 Beyond the comparative performance as soil amendment, it is relevant to identify other benefits
 307 associated to preservation of biodiversity and improved resilience of the crops against pests. This
 308 enriched-microbial environment provides macro and micro-nutrients to the soil and avoids the
 309 extensive use of pesticides, two major consequences that should not be ignored. Direct
 310 consequences of the use of vermicompost as a soil amendment are attributed to improved
 311 germination, growth, flowering and fruit production for a wide range of plant species, such as
 312 trees, horticultural crops and aromatic, medicinal and ornamental plants (Lazcano and
 313 Domínguez, 2011).

314 **Table 3.** Impact assessment results associated with the different products obtained in the process
 315 per functional unit (1 tonne of grape marc)

	Unit	Vermicompost	Polyphenols-rich extract	Seeds oil	Brandy	Total
GW	kg CO ₂ eq	48.9	61.0	244.2	85.7	439.7
SOD	kg CFC11 eq	$2.18 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$2.72 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$1.09 \cdot 10^{-4}$	$3.82 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$1.96 \cdot 10^{-4}$
OF	kg NO _x eq	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.7
TA	kg SO ₂ eq	0.2	0.2	1.0	0.3	1.8
FE	kg P eq	$7.81 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$9.73 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$3.90 \cdot 10^{-2}$	$1.37 \cdot 10^{-2}$	$7.02 \cdot 10^{-2}$
ME	kg N eq	$8.38 \cdot 10^{-4}$	$1.04 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$4.18 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$1.47 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$7.53 \cdot 10^{-3}$
HT	kg 1,4-DCB	0.9	1.1	4.6	1.6	8.2
TET	kg 1,4-DCB	136.8	170.4	682.5	239.4	1229.1
FET	kg 1,4-DCB	1.3	1.6	6.4	2.2	11.5
MET	kg 1,4-DCB	1.8	2.2	9.0	3.1	16.2
FRS	kg oil eq	14.8	18.5	74.0	26.0	133.3

316

317 According to the results obtained, most of the environmental burdens derived from the
 318 valorisation strategy are related to the distillation unit (SS1), as displayed in Figure 2. This
 319 subsystem, along with subsystem 3, are responsible for more than 80% of the environmental
 320 burdens in all impact categories, except for FET and MET. Subsystem 1 can be highlighted in
 321 categories GW (74.7%), TET (74.7%) and FRS (73.7%). In relation to subsystem 2, it is the main
 322 contributor in MET and FET categories, which are highly sensitive to both waste and wastewater
 323 treatment. On the contrary, in GW, TA and ME the environmental burdens related with this
 324 subsystem are minimal, with an average of 2.6%.

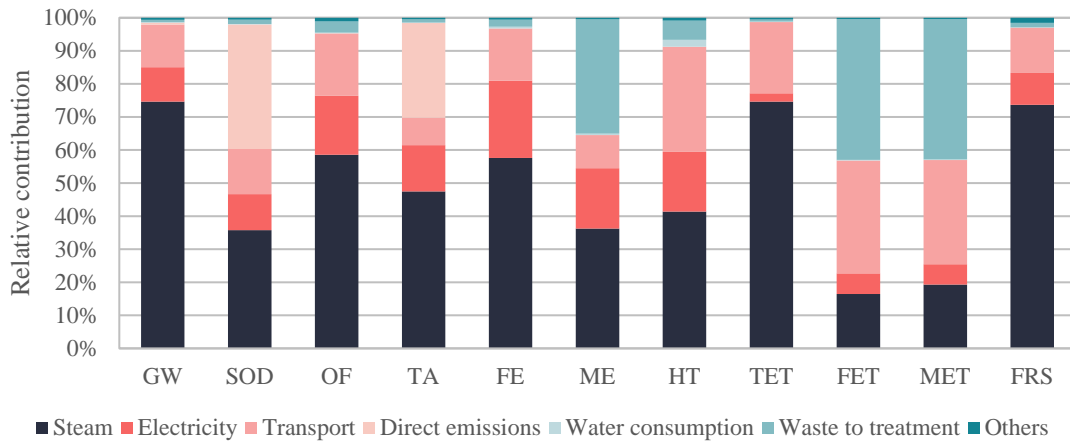


325

326 **Figure 2.** Contribution of the different subsystems (SS1-SS3) to the environmental impacts
 327 associated with the valorisation of grape marc

328 Thus, subsystem 3 presents environmental impact values lower than 40% in all impact categories,
 329 except in SOD, TA and HT categories (60.6%, 50.1% and 47.1% respectively). This is mainly
 330 due to nitrogen-based gas emissions during the vermicomposting stage, mostly ammonium and
 331 dinitrogen monoxide, which have high characterisation factors in these impact categories.
 332 Focusing on GW, the environmental burdens of this category are assigned to subsystem 1, mainly
 333 associated with the combustion of fossil fuels to obtain the steam required for the distillation of
 334 grape marc. Direct emissions into the atmosphere associated with the vermicomposting process
 335 were quantified in subsystem 3; however, most of these emissions were substances as ammonium
 336 that has no impact in this category, in addition, the production of N₂O and CH₄, with high

337 characterisation factors in this category, is minimal. Direct CO₂ emissions from vermicomposting
 338 should not be considered as fossil carbon, but as biogenic CO₂, so they were not included in the
 339 inventory analysis. Determining the environmental impacts per activity involved in the
 340 valorisation process is useful to locate the “hot spots” of the process. In this way, Figure 3 displays
 341 the distribution of environmental burdens per activity in the valorisation of grape marc.



342

343 **Figure 3.** Relative contributions per activity to the environmental profile of the valorisation of
 344 grape marc (1 tonne grape marc as functional unit).

345 As for the activities associated with these impacts, steam consumption is the most impacting
 346 activity in almost all impact categories (Figure 3). Consequently, steam consumption is the main
 347 hotspot within the entire valorisation process and should have, therefore, the highest priority for
 348 process improvement from an environmental point of view. Omitting FET and MET categories,
 349 steam consumption exhibits global contributions ranging from 35.7% in SOD to 74.6% in TET
 350 and GW. Regarding GW category, steam production stands out for GHG, SO₂ and NO_x emissions
 351 associated with the combustion of fossil fuels. With respect to TET category, steam consumption
 352 is the main contributor, due to the emission of heavy metals into the air derived from the burning
 353 of fossil fuels. It seems to be consistent that steam consumption was the most contributing process
 354 also in FRS, as it is an activity with high energy requirements. In relation to ME, FET and MET
 355 categories, the high contribution of waste treatment is remarkable (34.6%, 42.6% and 42.4%
 356 respectively), corresponding to the environmental impacts arising from the landfill treatment of

357 waste generated during the production of seed oil in SS2. It is important to note that the
358 information relating to the treatment of waste in landfills has been taken from the Ecoinvent®
359 database, where a significant amount of metals is emitted to water and air. High concentrations
360 of heavy metals, especially Cu and Zn, are behind the impacts observed in these two categories.
361 It is especially noteworthy that electricity consumption has a low impact on almost all impact
362 categories, which is not frequently found in LCA studies. The rationale behind this evidence is
363 attributed to a low consumption of electricity, reaching a maximum contribution of 23.4% in FE.
364 Most of this environmental impact comes from phosphate emissions from coal mining, which
365 account for 10% of the Spanish profile. The contribution of transport is similar in all categories,
366 with no substantial differences highlighted. Toxicity group was the most affected by
367 transportation activities. Specifically, the categories of HT (31.7%), FET (34.2%), MET (31.5%)
368 and TET (21.6%) as a consequence of emissions of heavy metals into the atmosphere such as
369 copper or zinc derived from the consumption and combustion of gas oil. As for the environmental
370 impacts related to water consumption, the contribution is practically insignificant, below 0.6% in
371 all the impact categories considered, except for HT, where it reaches the maximum contribution
372 of 2.4%. The rest of the inventoried inputs have almost no impact, so they have been unified in
373 the “others” category, which presents an average contribution lower than 1%.

374 *3.2. Comparative assessment with biowaste treatment practices*

375 It is important to note that in this section different biowaste treatment practices in the exhausted
376 marc from SS1. Distillation have been compared with the entire foreground system of the present
377 study. This combination of distillation and the different biowaste treatments has been decided
378 based on the fact that grape marc distillation to produce brandy spirits is a practice widely
379 distributed in wineries around the world. The treatment of 1 tonne of biowaste were maintained
380 as functional unit. The chosen treatments were landfilling, anaerobic digestion, incineration, and
381 composting, according to the datasets included in Ecoinvent®. Detailed information on the
382 different treatments after the baseline scenario is summarized in Table 4.

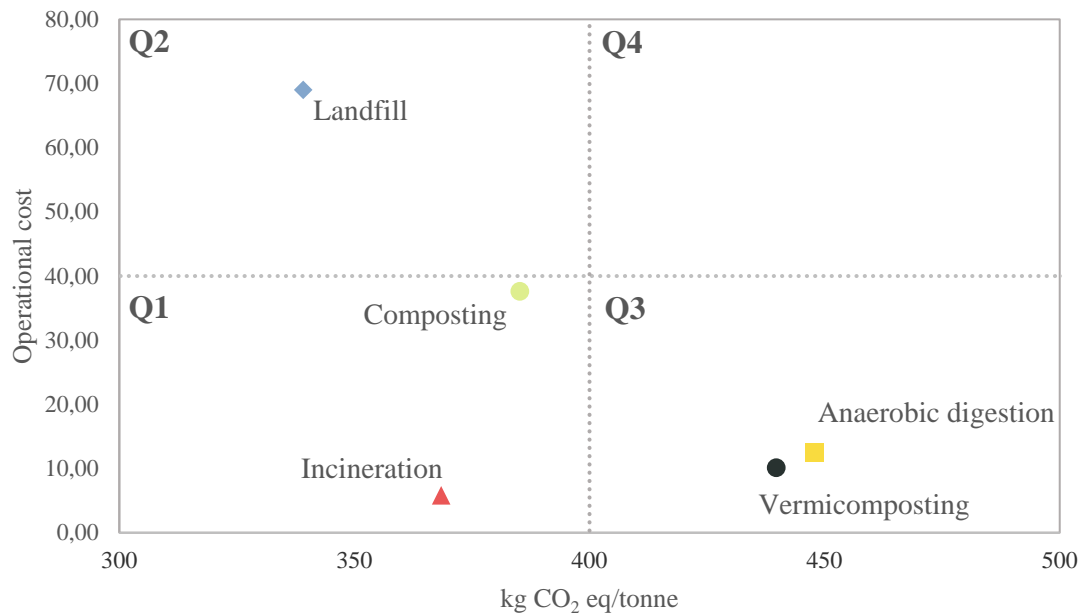
383 **Table 4.** List of Ecoinvent® database processes considered for end of life treatments

Treatment	Ecoinvent® database process
Landfilling	Inert waste {Europe without Switzerland} treatment of inert waste, sanitary landfill Cut-off, U
Anaerobic digestion	Biowaste {RoW} treatment of biowaste by anaerobic digestion Cut-off, U
Incineration	Biowaste {GLO} treatment of biowaste, municipal incineration Cut-off, U
Composting	Biowaste {RoW} treatment of biowaste, industrial composting Cut-off, U

384

385 Operational costs of the different scenarios were estimated based on different scientific
 386 publications. The operating costs of landfill and composting were taken from a study focused on
 387 the optimal design of the windrow composting system (Vigneswaran et al., 2016). The estimation
 388 of costs of anaerobic digestion and incineration was performed from a model that optimizes
 389 different waste treatments (Münster et al., 2015). Finally, as far as vermicomposting is concerned,
 390 an LCA study was used as the calculation base; in this study, the environmental impacts of
 391 vermicomposting are calculated in terms of global warming and eutrophication. In addition, an
 392 economic comparison of different manure management systems was carried out. The different
 393 alternatives studied were the use of fresh manure as fertilizer, vermicomposting and the dumping
 394 of untreated waste (Komakech et al., 2016).

395 The environmental burdens of each scenario were calculated by analysing the corresponding
 396 Ecoinvent® process while vermicomposting scenario corresponds to the present case study. The
 397 results of this comparative study have been presented in terms of two indicators: carbon footprint
 398 and the normalized impact index of the ReCiPe methodology. The normalized impact index
 399 reflects the results of environmental burdens in the form of different impact categories, offering
 400 a global view of the environmental performance of the process. In this case the same impact
 401 categories have been used as in Section 3.1. Figures 4 and 5 display the environmental impact in
 402 terms of carbon footprint (kg CO₂ eq) and normalized impact index (pts); and the operational
 403 costs (€/tonne) of the different scenarios present in the study. The comparative profiles for the
 404 different treatments considered have been obtained considering the treatment of 1 tonne of
 405 biowaste (grape marc) as functional unit.

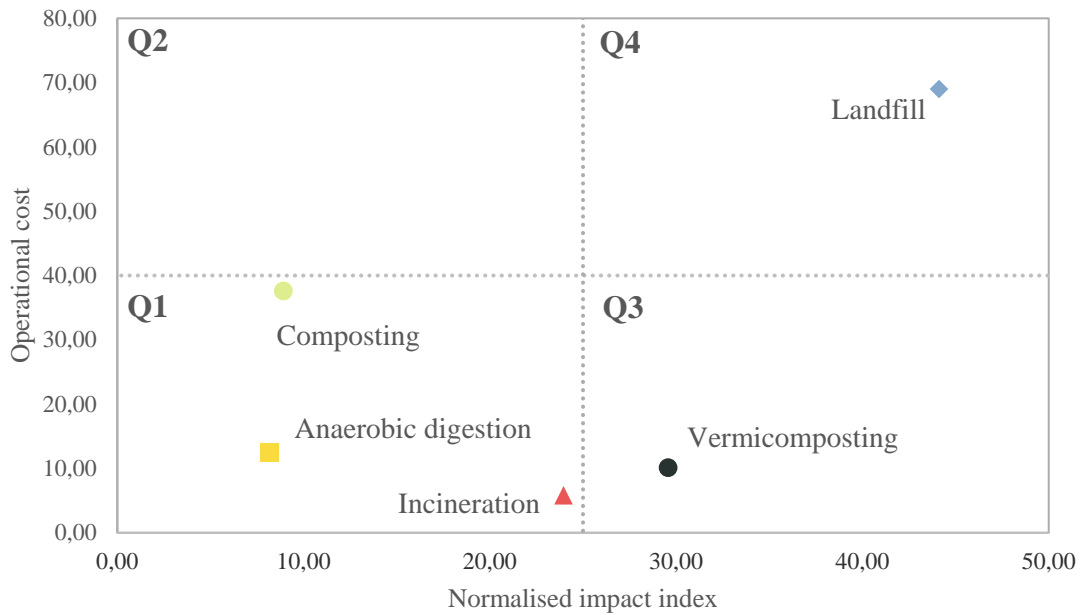


406

407 **Figure 4.** Comparative results related to different valorisation process considering the treatment
 408 of 1 tonne of grape marc in terms of carbon footprint.

409 Figure 4 presents the GW impact and the operational costs of all the alternatives considered in the
 410 study. In terms of carbon footprint, anaerobic digestion presents the worst environmental
 411 performance, due to the direct emissions of GHGs as methane. However, anaerobic digestion
 412 presents a low operational cost of about €12 per tonne of waste. On the contrary, landfilling is
 413 located in the second quadrant and presents the lowest environmental burdens of all the
 414 alternatives studied thanks to low GHG emissions when this process is compared with any of the
 415 other scenarios. However, operation costs derived from landfill are the highest of all the
 416 alternatives, since it is not possible to obtain revenues from the sale of a product with a market
 417 value that allows reducing the operation costs. Composting is located in the first quadrant, but
 418 very close to the second, mainly due to bad economic results. On the other hand, the other
 419 alternatives (incineration and vermicomposting) are situated in the first and third quadrant
 420 respectively, which correspond to low operational costs and low or medium environmental
 421 impact. It is quite relevant that biological treatments present the worst environmental results in
 422 terms of carbon footprint, mainly due to the GHGs emissions generated in the fermentation
 423 processes and anaerobic digestion. However, these processes produce value-added products

424 (biogas, compost, vermicompost...) which would improve the environmental profile if they were
425 considered.



426
427 **Figure 5.** Comparative results related to different valorisation process considering the treatment
428 of 1 tonne of grape marc in terms of normalised impact index of the ReCiPe methodology.

429 Figure 5 shows the environmental impact in terms of the normalised impact index of the ReCiPe
430 methodology. This approach provides a global view of the impacts generated within the process
431 in a single value that facilitates the communication of the results. Thus, the calculation of
432 environmental performance is not limited to a single impact category. The same importance is
433 given to other categories that are normally ignored in relation to the carbon footprint, such as
434 ecotoxicity, acidification or eutrophication.

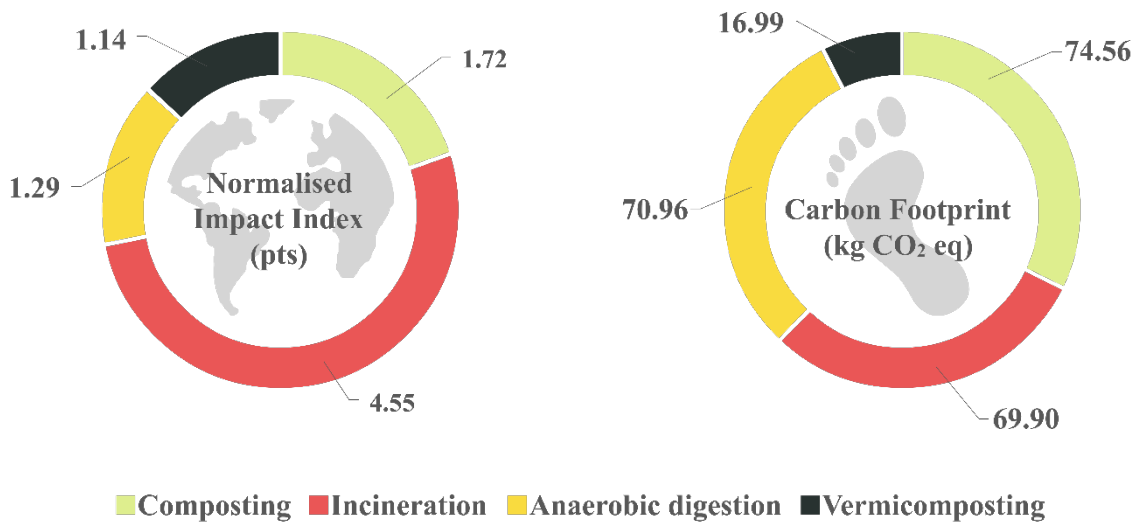
435 According to the results represented in Figure 5, landfilling and vermicomposting scenarios
436 reported the worst environmental profiles. In contrast to using the carbon footprint as the indicator
437 of environmental impact, the alternative with the worst environmental profile is landfill, as
438 ecotoxicity and human toxicity categories include heavy metals pollution. As for anaerobic
439 digestion, which presented the worst environmental profile in previous graph, it has the lowest
440 environmental impact value in this case. Vermicomposting presents a relatively high
441 environmental impact in both indicators (carbon footprint and normalised impact index).

442 However, the multi-product nature of the vermicomposting process must be taken into account, in
443 the next section an additional analysis that considers the outputs of the different processes is
444 carried out

445 *3.3 Environmental implications of switching from mass-based FU to a benefit-based one*

446 The results shown in section 3.2 were related to a functional unit based on the amount of biowaste
447 treated: 1 tonne of grape marc. This functional unit is useful when analysing valorisation systems
448 where multiple by-products are obtained as it corresponds to the amount of valorised. However,
449 the quantity of valuable by-products, which also have different market prices, is variable and
450 depends on the alternative. Therefore, the potential revenue obtained per alternative is different
451 and depends on the technology used. Thus, in addition to the environmental characterisation of
452 the process, it is important considering the production of value-added products that have certain
453 environmental benefits. These environmental benefits come from the environmental credits
454 produced by not manufacturing these products which consume raw materials and energy. The
455 selection of an economic-based Functional Unit has been discussed in previous studies where
456 different biorefinery-based systems have been assessed (Budzinski and Nitzsche, 2016; González-
457 García et al., 2018; Pérez-López et al., 2014)

458 To consider the market price of all outputs produced, an alternative functional unit based on the
459 economic benefit expected in each scenario was chosen. The alternative functional unit proposed
460 for this section is the generation of €100 of economic revenue from the sale of the different
461 outputs. The landfill scenario was not included in this comparative analysis since no outputs with
462 market value was considered.



463

464 **Figure 6.** Comparative environmental impacts in terms of the normalised impact index (pts) and
 465 the carbon footprint (kg CO₂ eq) considering €100 of revenue as a functional unit.

466 Figure 6 shows the main environmental indicators in terms of Normalised Impact Index and
 467 Carbon Footprint considering €100 of economic revenue as a functional unit. Different results
 468 can be obtained if a mass-based FU or an economy-based FU is chosen. According to the results,
 469 as previously reported in Figures 4 and 5, vermicomposting involved low impact in terms of the
 470 two selected indicators. In this case, it had the lowest environmental impact in both cases (1.14
 471 pts. and 16.99 kg CO₂ eq). This can be explained by the fact that vermicomposting can be
 472 considered as a biorefinery-based process, from which several added-value products can be
 473 obtained.

474 The incineration scenario maintains a performance similar to that of the previous analysis, in
 475 terms of carbon footprint presents a relatively low impact (69.90 kg CO₂ eq). However, when the
 476 rest of the impact categories considered in the study are incorporated, the impact increases, being
 477 the alternative with the worst environmental profile in terms of the normalised impact index (1.29
 478 pts.). Anaerobic digestion presented the worst environmental profile in terms of carbon footprint
 479 (more than 450 kg CO₂ eq per tonne of biowaste) due to methane emissions, however, in this
 480 analysis, when considering the benefits provided by biogas, the carbon footprint of this alternative
 481 is almost equal to the alternatives of composting and incineration. In terms of the carbon footprint,
 482 composting shows the worst environmental behaviour (74.56 kg CO₂ eq), mainly due to the low

483 market price of compost and the amount of GHGs emissions during the process. It has been shown
484 that the use of an environmental indicator which assesses the complete profile of the process
485 (normalised impact index) and not only a specific aspect (carbon footprint) is appropriate.

486 In this way, not a single environmental aspect is enhanced, as shown in Figure 4, where the landfill
487 presented the lowest environmental impact in terms of carbon footprint, but the most shocking
488 profile when the normalised impact index was evaluated. In addition, if a global vision of the
489 different alternatives is considered (both waste treatment and production of added-value
490 products), vermicompost is proven as the best alternative to biowaste treatment.

491 **4. Conclusions**

492 In recent years, there is a growing interest in the exploitation of the waste generated by the wine
493 industry. This study has shown that grape pomace is a feedstock with the capacity to produce a
494 wide range of value-added products, which represents a great opportunity for the wine sector in
495 the future. Furthermore, it has been proven that vermicomposting is an innovative and
496 environmentally sustainable valorisation treatment. Using the LCA method, it has been
497 demonstrated that the energy needs of the distillation process are an important hotspot of the
498 process. On the basis of the results obtained in this study, it would be interesting to analyse, in
499 future research, a scenario in which most fossil energy sources would be replaced by renewable
500 energy sources. If economic allocation factors are considered, the environmental burdens of the
501 process can be distributed among the different products, which corresponds to 200 g CO₂ eq per
502 kg produced vermicompost. The comparative analysis between the end-of-life treatments has
503 shown that, although vermicomposting presents some poor results in terms of carbon footprint
504 and normalised impact index, its environmental performance is better than the other alternatives
505 when economic revenues are included in the analysis. This study provides relevant information
506 in the basic design of a patent on which the process has been developed on a commercial scale
507 and can contribute to the development of the process, not only from an environmental but also
508 from an economic point of view.

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