

Policy Brief: Takeaways from ValuSect vouchers

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ValuSect aims to strengthen the development of insect-based products in North-West Europe. The success of introducing entomophagy in Western societies strongly depends on legislation. This policy brief presents the takeaways from two voucher calls which were launched by ValuSect during the course of its activities.

1. Context on the ValuSect voucher calls

From 2021 to 2022, ValuSect launched three voucher calls, in order to promote the insect-based food sector and contribute to the development of the sector in the North-West Europe region. In total, 47 companies from 7 different countries benefited from various services offered by ValuSect experts in various fields: technological services, food development and innovation, consumer acceptance and strategic business services. All companies targeted by ValuSect fall into the category of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as ValuSect believes in the value of helping small businesses to set up in the emerging insect food sector.

The first call was launched in December 2020 and the results were published in April 2021, with 17 SMEs selected out of 60 applications received, for a total of 410,000 euros. The second call was launched in December 2021. In April 2022, 18 applications out of 26 were selected and awarded a total of 460,000 euros. Both calls were focused on human consumption of insect-based food. In addition, ValuSect also decided to contribute to the promotion of the insect-based feed sector, with a specific call for vouchers launched in January 2022, which selected 12 SMEs from among 15 applications in July 2022, and awarded them a total of 350,000 euros.

The SMEs selected all come from the Interreg region in which ValuSect is being developed: North-West Europe. More specifically, they are located in the United-Kingdom (13), Netherlands (11), Germany (8), Belgium (4), France (4), Switzerland (4), and Ireland (3).

ValuSect has collected feedback from the SMEs that were selected in the first and the second calls for vouchers in order to hear from them about the way in which the partnership with ValuSect has helped them in the insect-based food sector.

2. Main takeaways

❖ Time saving

Most of the companies highlighted the value of the time they have saved by working with ValuSect. It is well known that time is an economic value, especially for SMEs and start-ups, and the expertise and knowledge that ValuSect was able to bring to the companies in their first steps on the insect-based food market, was seen as a significant time saving. This is also relevant in terms of the administrative burden carried by SMEs: the ValuSect experts helped to reduce this burden and to gain time for the establishment of a promising business.

❖ Effective research delivery

ValuSect was able to broaden the scope of research, in particular market research (target group, market drivers, trends, consumer behaviour etc.) for companies that did not necessarily have the resources to carry out such extensive analysis. In particular, this added value of working with ValuSect was observed in different ways: for example, ValuSect experts were able to analyse five different life cycle assessment scenarios to identify hot spots in mealworm production for a single company; they were also able to identify the data limitations of a business process in a shorter period of time than the company would have had, and to help come up with solutions. Furthermore, when one of the companies wanted to experiment with a recipe for an insect burger, ValuSect was able to come up with a different recipe, allowing the SME to experiment with both and broaden its market outreach.

❖ Tailor-made solutions

The ability of ValuSect to develop tailor-made solutions for each company was also praised in the feedback received. SMEs are unique in that they all have different and specific problems to overcome before they can establish themselves in the market. ValuSect expertise and help was therefore much needed, especially in such a competitive sector as the food-sector, and the emerging novel food sector.

❖ Handling the challenging economic context

Some of the companies that collaborated with ValuSect in the voucher calls had to cease their business activities before the end of the project. This reflects the complexity and the intensity of the competition in the insect-food sector, which has suffered from inflation and high interest rates, amongst other factors. In this context, initiatives like ValuSect are incredibly valuable, as they support and invest in a very promising sector.¹ However, while some of these companies

¹ see our [press release on the economic climate for SMEs in the insect sector](#) for more information.

were taken over by other businesses, the knowledge provided by ValuSect has been transferred, to the benefit of continued activity in the sector.

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