ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

DESIGN IT RIGHT

Make circular systems the norm

POLICY INSTRUMENTS FOR A RESILIENT AND COMPETITIVE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

THIS POLICY BRIEF SERIES AIMS TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENTS IN ACCELERATING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY TRANSITION.

Building on the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Universal Circular Economy Policy Goals, the series provides a shortlist of actionable policy instruments that can unlock circular economy outcomes.

They not only have international relevance and clear momentum in policy development, but they can also be adapted to the diverse needs of national, regional, and local contexts. The series provides key design principles underpinning policy instruments. Illustrated by case studies, policy options and recommendations, it aims to inspire action for accelerating the transition to the circular economy.

KEY INSIGHTS

Design decisions determine how resources are used and value is created.

Once locked-in they are costly to reverse. By embedding circular economy principles into key systems governments can shape how materials are selected, and how products and parts circulate through successive value-retention loops.

Three systems stand out as particularly important to the circular economy transition: products, agricultural systems and cities.

Together, they account for the vast majority of resource use, waste generation, and environmental impact, and crucially, all three are shaped by policy-led design decisions made upstream.

Product policies shape the design of goods and value chains to keep products, parts, and materials in use at their highest value. Setting requirements upstream addresses material inefficiency, premature obsolescence, and low-quality recycling, while creating a level playing field that encourages innovation, supply-chain adaptation, and investment in circular business models. When tailored to specific product categories, aligned with international frameworks, and combined with robust enforcement and adaptive design, product policies can reduce reliance on virgin resources, lower environmental impacts, and decrease the overall cost to consumers over a product's lifetime.

Agricultural policies shape the design of land-use systems at the field, farm, and landscape level. They impact soil health, ecosystems, nutrient cycling, water retention, and resilience to price volatility and climate risk. Well-designed agricultural policies can shift incentives away from input-intensive production towards regenerative practices,[1] while maintaining long-term productivity, increasing nutrient reuse, reducing pollution, and strengthening rural livelihoods.

Urban planning policies shape the design of city systems, determining how materials, energy, water, and nutrients flow, as well as how people live, move, work, and interact within cities. By influencing the spatial distribution of neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and public facilities, they affect emissions, waste generation, and resilience to climate and social pressures. When designed to integrate circular principles, these policies can reduce waste generation, limit urban sprawl, enhance climate resilience, improve air quality and access to green spaces, strengthen liveability, and generate economic opportunities. Applying place-based systems thinking, long-term adaptive planning, and targeted strategies across both existing and new developments creates durable, multifunctional, and inclusive urban environments.

KEY INSIGHTS (cont.)

Prioritising upstream interventions is essential to lock in long-term and system-level impact,

determining material flows, infrastructure needs, and environmental impacts for decades. Combining shared objectives with strong multi-level coordination and continuous alignment across value chains helps avoid policy silos and keeps policies effective over time.

Circular design policies deliver their full potential when combined into coherent, mutually reinforcing packages.

Design-focused instruments must be complemented by economic and fiscal measures, enforcement capacity, and cross-ministerial coordination to translate upstream ambition into durable, system-level change.

Circular design policies are most beneficial when they deliver tangible benefits for people:

reducing living costs, creating local jobs, supporting farmers, and improving access to services and green spaces. Embedding liveability, health, social inclusion, affordability, and climate adaptation into policy design from the outset ensures the transition is inclusive, people-centred, and just.

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSAL CIRCULAR ECONOMY POLICIES SERIES

Our current economy is depleting resources, destroying economic value, and driving environmental harm at an unsustainable pace. Each year, the global economy consumes around 100 billion tonnes of resources,[2] three quarters of which are non-renewable.[3] Relying on a continuous flow of virgin raw materials increases the exposure to price volatility and supply chain disruption while wasteful resource use undermines overall economic efficiency, resilience and competitiveness. If current trends continue, resource extraction could increase by 150% by 2060,[4] eroding economic resilience and compounding the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.[5]

Governments can play a decisive role in addressing these challenges by developing policy mixes that accelerate the circular economy transition, delivering not only economic gains but also environmental and social benefits.[6] While voluntary business initiatives can foster change, policy is essential to ensuring and delivering these benefits consistently and at scale, whilst also providing regulatory certainty and a level playing field across market actors. Yet, current policy approaches remain driven by cost structures and incentives that favour sales volumes reliant on virgin materials and fast production cycles. The transition to policies underpinned by the circular economy will enable governments to create more resilient, socially inclusive, and fairer value chains that eliminate waste, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate nature by design.

DESIGN AS THE PRIMARY LEVER OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Framing design as the primary lever of the circular economy allows for a systemic approach that determines how resources are used and how economic, environmental and social value is created. Embedding circular economy principles into the design of key systems — including but not limited to products, services, value chains, urban and agricultural systems[7] — allows resources to be optimised from the outset, reducing waste and environmental pressures while preserving long-term economic value.

Today's linear, resource-intensive systems dictate the very design of products, services and value chains; and once these choices are locked in, they are difficult and costly to reverse. By influencing strategic design decisions, governments can not only influence product and component design but also shape markets and business models, creating the conditions for high-value resource loops to become viable at scale.

A wide range of policy instruments, implemented across national, sub-national, and local levels of government, can be leveraged to advance a circular economy by design. These include, but are not limited to:

Product policies, including design requirements, performance standards, and information requirements, to ensure products, parts, and materials are designed to be kept in use at their highest value

Chemical legislation, including restrictions, phasing outs, and bans of substances of very high concern to human health and the environment, while encouraging reused products and secondary raw materials to be safely circulated in the economy

Standards and traceability requirements, including voluntary and mandatory standards and certificates, increase transparency and help build confidence in the quality, safety, and performance of circular products, services, and systems, reducing risk and enabling trade

Policies defining land-use determine which activities are permitted across territories, while complementary agricultural and resource policies govern how land and resources are managed. Together they support regenerative practices, and enable circular use of materials, nutrients, and infrastructure

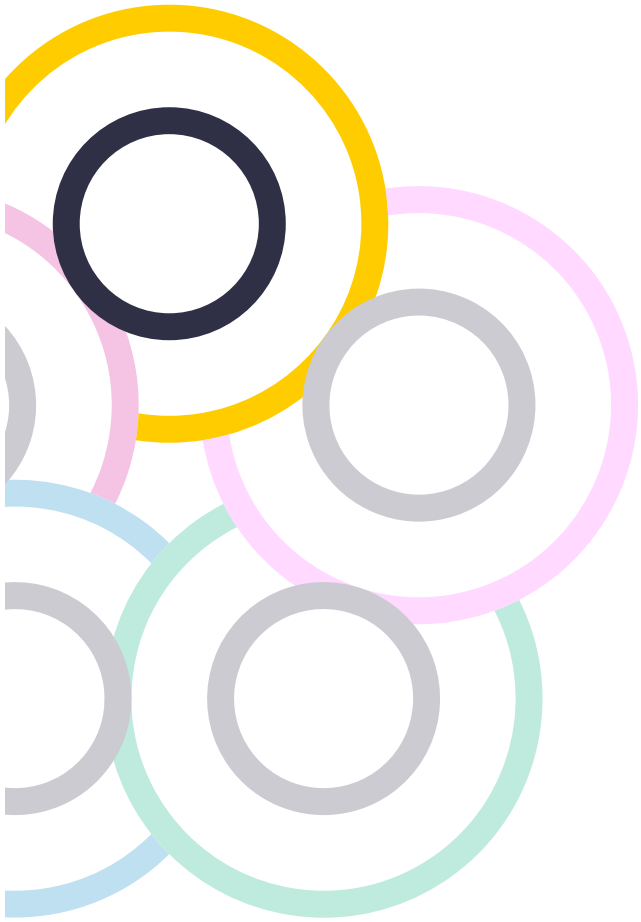
Urban planning policies shape the spatial organisation of cities and territories, determining how land is allocated, how infrastructure and mobility networks are designed, and how materials, energy, water, and nutrients flow across urban systems, optimising their use, incentivising shared systems, creating resource-efficient urban environments, and enabling neighbourhood-level circular opportunities for city residents

Construction policies, including building codes, regulations, and incentives that inform design decisions (e.g. material selection, modularity and deconstruction) for both new and existing assets, enabling extended and flexible use of space

A STRATEGIC TRIO OF SYSTEMS TO OPTIMISE RESOURCE USE

Three systems stand out as particularly important to the circular economy transition: products, agricultural systems, and cities. Together, they account for the vast majority of resource use, waste generation, and environmental impact. Crucially, all three are shaped by design decisions made upstream, including through opportunities to prevent waste by reducing material extraction and increasing product durability. These systems establish the structural conditions for a circular economy by shaping how materials are sourced, designed, produced, and circulated across value chains and places. By acting upstream, at the points where material demand, agricultural practices, and urban infrastructure decisions are locked in, these instruments can help reduce reliance on virgin resources, improve material circulation and nature regeneration, and enable long-term resilience through reduced dependency on finite resources, cost stabilisation, and protection against supply shocks.[8]

The way these systems are designed matters. Well-designed systems facilitate the circulation of products, parts, and materials at their highest value; enable regenerative agricultural and land-use practices; and shape urban environments that reduce waste and resource demand. In doing so, they support circular business models, create markets for secondary materials and by-products, reduce dependence on virgin resources, and deliver economic, environmental, and social benefits across value chains and communities.[9]



01 PRODUCT POLICIES

02 AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

03 URBAN PLANNING POLICIES

01 PRODUCT POLICIES

PRODUCT POLICIES

Product policies regulate the way goods are designed, produced, and placed on the market, shaping aspects such as material composition and performance, and influencing how products and materials flow through the system.[10] They encompass a wide range of policy instruments, such as material and product metrics, standards and requirements (including market-entry requirements and sourcing from regeneratively produced or recycled feedstocks), the rollout of digital product passports to support compliance and traceability, and the integration of Product-as-a-Service models.

By setting requirements upstream, at the point where most environmental and economic impacts are shaped, product policies can direct products towards greater durability, reparability, reuseability, and recyclability. This enables their parts and materials to be circulated at their highest value, and, in the case of bio-based resources, ensuring that they can safely return to natural systems.[11] They are a powerful lever to move beyond downstream waste management and address material inefficiency, premature obsolescence, and low-quality recycling.[12] As product design will have a long-term impact on material demand, recovery potential, and exposure to input cost volatility, product policies play a central role in aligning value chains with circular design principles.[13]

Product policies are fundamental to shifting the system: setting a mandatory baseline for circular design, reshaping incentives across value chains, and building data infrastructure needed to normalise longer-lasting, repairable, regeneratively produced, and recyclable products across markets.

Product policies for a circular economy can deliver multiple, reinforcing benefits:

Deliver economic value within planetary boundaries.

Improved product performance can lower the overall cost to consumers over a product's lifetime (e.g. longer-lasting products that reduce replacement costs or repairable devices that avoid premature obsolescence), support service-based employment, and improve material efficiency across value chains, while reducing waste and pollution.[14]

Drive better material choices and enable recirculation from the outset.

By establishing minimum requirements for safety, durability, repairability, recyclability, and recycled content, product policies influence which materials are used — including avoiding the use of hazardous substances — how products are assembled, and whether they can be upgraded, repaired, easily disassembled and remanufactured, and safely returned to the ecosystem. This directly affects the quantity and quality of materials that can be recovered and recirculated, reducing reliance on virgin resource extraction.[15]

Create a level playing field that disadvantages less resource-efficient products, thereby accelerating the scale-up of circular design.

Mandatory and harmonised requirements set a minimum bar for all products placed on the market, reducing first-mover disadvantage and mobilising investment in innovation, supply-chain adaptation, and supporting infrastructure.[16]

PRODUCT POLICIES

To be most effective, product policies should:

1

Tailor requirements to product groups and use-cases.

Product policies are most effective when performance requirements are defined at the level of specific product categories, reflecting differences in use patterns, material and chemical composition, failure modes, and existing infrastructure. Minimum criteria for safety, durability, repairability, recyclability, or recycled content should be informed by preparatory studies and life-cycle analysis, and complemented by place-based considerations such as the need to develop collection, sorting, repair, and recirculation capacity over time.[17]

2

Ensure alignment between international frameworks and reliable, proportionate product information.

Mutual recognition of international frameworks and harmonised standards for product performance, labels, and digital product passports enable traceability, consistent implementation, support to cross-border value chains, and provide reliable information to consumers, repairers, recyclers, and regulators.[18]

3

Combine robust enforcement mechanisms with adaptive policy design.

Product policies only deliver impact if they are enforceable. This includes the necessary inspection capacity from governmental services, clear test methods, robust market surveillance, and penalties for non-compliance. Phased implementation, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive updates to requirements, alongside support packages for SMEs, allow ambition to increase over time while supporting businesses in the transition to delivering products, services and systems that enable the circular economy.[19]

The following examples from the EU and France show that early stakeholder engagement, transparent methodologies, and dedicated enforcement capacity are critical to preventing policy ambition from being diluted during implementation

CASE STUDY

EUROPEAN UNION: Regulating product design by establishing minimum criteria

Setting minimum performance and information requirements to reduce environmental and climate impacts of products across their full lifecycle. The EU's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)[20] entered into force in July 2024 and applies directly to all products sold across EU Member States, replacing and expanding the scope of the Ecodesign Directive. It covers more product categories and introduces requirements linked to durability, reusability, repairability, recyclability, recycled content, and energy performance, among others. It also addresses broader environmental impacts beyond the energy efficiency focus of the Ecodesign Directive – which saved 10% of the EU's primary energy consumption.[21]

The ESPR includes the possibility to set both product-specific and overarching horizontal requirements through Delegated Acts to progressively raise circular performance across markets. For each prioritised product group — such as textiles, tyres, and furniture — ecodesign requirements will be defined progressively through Delegated Acts, informed by preparatory studies and public consultations between 2026 and 2030.[22] Staged, multi-year implementation timelines will provide the predictability businesses need to invest and adapt. These requirements may include relevant aspects, such as reusability, repairability, use and content of recycled material, and carbon footprint disclosures. In addition, the European Commission is developing horizontal requirements that apply across multiple product groups, with repairability currently being the priority focus. If a product does not meet the product-specific and horizontal requirements, it cannot be sold on the EU Single Market.

Mandatory digital tools enhance transparency and traceability. Digital Product Passports (DPP), as defined in the ESPR, are sets of product-specific data designed to be electronically accessible and to provide information to actors across the value chain. They are required to be user-friendly, interoperable and accessible, and they will be progressively mandatory across product groups.[23] The inclusion of DPPs for products covered by horizontal requirements is still under consideration in the preparatory process.[24]

Complementing the product requirements, the ESPR introduces supporting waste-prevention measures, particularly a ban on the destruction of unsold and returned goods.[25] From July 2026, large companies operating in the EU market are prohibited from destroying unsold and returned apparel, clothing accessories and footwear, with the scope potentially expanding to other product categories in the future.[26] Businesses will be required to report on their efforts to prevent the destruction of unsold products, the number and weight of products withdrawn from sale, and how these unsold products were handled. Exemptions may apply to specific circumstances, such as health and safety risks, counterfeit products, or failed donation attempts.[27]

The ESPR has the potential to significantly influence how products are designed, but its impact will depend on its ambition level, implementation and enforcement. Implementation challenges might involve the administrative and financial burdens for SMEs, as well as the need for sufficient staffing, resources, and harmonised standards and data formats to monitor compliance effectively by market surveillance authorities. Additionally, the level of ambition in Delegated Acts must balance developing standards to be technically and economically feasible within a reasonable timeframe, while remaining sufficiently ambitious to shift the market toward circular economy outcomes. Particularly, a key design question will be the balance between information and performance requirements. While information provisions improve transparency, performance requirements are more likely to drive tangible changes in product design.

A phased and sector-sensitive approach, combined with complementary measures, helps mitigate implementation challenges and create a coherent policy mix balancing ambition and feasibility. The ESPR tailors rules and support to different sectors and company sizes. For example, offering support for SMEs – particularly in SME dominated sectors such as textiles – in the form of guidance, funding instruments, simplified procedures, and a four-year additional period for medium-sized companies before the ban on destroying unsold goods applies to them. Although the ESPR is still in its early implementation phase and there is no aggregate information on environmental impact yet, if fully implemented, the EU's new ecodesign rules are likely to transform product lifecycles across sectors both within and outside of the EU.[28]

CASE STUDY

FRANCE: Mandatory repairability and durability indices to promote circular design

France is the first country to introduce a mandatory repairability index on electronic and electric products, aimed at increasing the proportion of products that get repaired by providing accurate information to consumers, guiding them towards more reparable products, and fostering the ecodesign of products. Adopted in 2020 as part of the French Anti-Waste and Circular Economy Law,[29] the repairability index came into force in 2021.[30] It provides a score from zero to ten based on availability of repair manuals and technical information, ease of disassembly, availability and pricing of spare parts, and other product-specific criteria.[31]

The repairability index has influenced manufacturers to design for repair and consumers to prioritise repairable products. Manufacturers increasingly consider repairability at the design stage, and consumers are better informed about repairability options when purchasing a device. A 2022 independent assessment by Halte l'Obsolescence Programmée (HOP) found that three-quarters of consumers considered the index useful when making their purchase decision.[32] More recently, a 2023 government report, based on sales data from the two main sellers of electronic and electric products, observed an increase in sales of repairable products both in-store and online, alongside a rise in product ratings since the introduction of the index.[33]

A highly collaborative approach was key to the policy's success. More than 70 working meetings steered by the Ministry of Ecological Transition's team, with a wide variety of stakeholders from industry and civil society, helped to both identify actions to facilitate repair and develop a method for calculating the repairability score. The index is complemented by a EUR 410 million fund, collected and managed from producers by the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, to support out-of-warranty appliance repairs for consumers.[34]

The government combines supporting infrastructure for consumers and iterative improvement. Consumers can find repair tutorials, a repair professional locator and consumer guidance on the website of the environmental agency ADEME.[35] Stakeholders' feedback gathered by ADEME in 2022 — from retailers, manufacturers, associations, NGOs, repairers, spare parts sellers, professional federations, and consumers — informed a first assessment of the index methodology and scoring criteria.[36]

Compliance and monitoring reviews have revealed challenges around the accuracy of scoring and uneven uptake across products. Inspections by France's anti-fraud authority to verify the accuracy and display of the indices, and impose sanctions for fraudulent practices, together with a government review in 2022 and an independent assessment by HOP, identified inflated scores and issues with 65% of repairability scores, leading to a number of warnings, injunctions and fines.[37] These assessments highlighted varying levels of uptake and ambition across product categories, and the need for further transparency, as the parameters of the repairability calculation were not publicly available at the time; this has been addressed since early 2025, as producers are now required to display the scores and the parameters on an open data platform.[38] In addition, producers have highlighted the risk that very high scores on specific product categories, like lawnmowers, could disincentivise further eco design improvements, potentially limiting future innovation and further enhancements in durability and repairability..[39]

National policies can drive changes in product design, but alignment with broader frameworks matters. From early 2025, the French repairability index is being gradually replaced by a broader durability index (*indice de durabilité*), which incorporates repairability, reliability, ease of maintenance, software obsolescence mitigation, and the existence of both commercial guarantees and quality processes.[40] While the EU is working towards a harmonised approach across member states,[41] France implemented the new durability index for two product categories — televisions and washing machines. France's experience shows that mandatory display of aggregated repairability and durability information can encourage both manufacturers and consumers to opt for longer-lasting, more circular products, highlighting the potential of national initiatives to drive meaningful change while international coordination continues to evolve.

02 AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

Agricultural policies are one of several policy domains through which land and resource use are designed. While their remit spans a wide range of objectives, from shaping regenerative capacity, resilience, and food sovereignty, to public health, they play a central role in shaping how land is managed and, in turn, what is produced and how — since different production systems place very different demands on land and inputs. Through regulatory frameworks, fiscal incentives, and public investments, they can reduce food loss and waste, and valorise by-products, reducing pressure on primary production and natural resources; determine whether agricultural practices build or deplete natural capital, and whether productivity and livelihoods can be sustained in the long term.[42] In this way, agricultural policy is also a form of system design, one that shapes whether land-based production systems can serve as the foundation for circular bio-based value chains, ensuring long-term biomass regeneration, securing farmers' incomes, and reducing reliance on finite and polluting inputs.

Well-designed agricultural policies can unlock regenerative, resilient outcomes, while reducing cost pressures for farmers, by shifting incentives and investment away from intensive production systems reliant on finite and polluting inputs towards regenerative practices that rebuild rather than deplete natural capital.

In particular, they can deliver benefits including:

Regeneration of natural capital and long-term productivity.

Agricultural policies can encourage the adoption of practices such as diverse crop rotations, agroforestry, managed grazing, and a shift away from input-intensive production methods. When sustained and adapted to local context, these approaches are associated with improved soil structure, biodiversity, water retention, and climate resilience. In doing so, they also help maintain productive capacity over the long term.[43]

More efficient use and reuse of soil nutrients and reduced pollution.

Agricultural policies can require practices such as nutrient management planning,[44] set conditions on pesticide and fertiliser use, and support soil regeneration. In doing so, they shape how nutrients flow through the system, reducing nutrient losses to air and water, increasing the use of recycled nutrients, and lowering the dependency on finite and polluting inputs.[45]

Rural value creation.

By steering agricultural practices towards improving soil health, water quality, carbon storage, and biodiversity, agricultural policies can help farmers access additional income support, including payments for ecosystem services. At the same time, these practices can reduce reliance on costly inputs dependent on global supply chains, such as synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and energy. Together, this improves farm profitability and strengthens rural livelihoods and resilience to climate and market shocks over time.[46]

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

To deliver these benefits, agricultural policies must go beyond high-level ambition and be designed to change decisions from field to farm and landscape scale. Three design principles have an outsized impact on whether these policies translate into durable outcomes.

1

Make schemes place-based, co-designed, and farmer-owned.

Agricultural policies work best when co-designed with farmers and local stakeholders, reflect agro-ecological conditions, and respond to local contexts. Ownership by land managers is critical as adoption depends on trust, relevance, and the ability to manage transition risks over time. In some contexts, particularly where farmers operate at subsistence levels or lack formal organisation, effective co-design requires prior investment in community structures and support to manage transition risks. Place-based approaches can ensure that schemes are grounded in the realities of different farming systems, rather than applying uniform requirements that may not deliver intended outcomes. In peri-urban areas, these approaches may also need to be aligned with land-use planning to address the pressures associated with urban expansion and competing land uses.[47]

2

Invest in capability and innovation ecosystems, with adaptive management.

Scaling regenerative production requires more than the adoption of new practices; it depends on a broader innovation ecosystem that enables farmers and value chains to transition with confidence. Effective policies pair financial support with long-term capability, including demonstration, peer learning, and trusted technical assistance. Advances in areas such as bio-inputs (e.g. biofertilisers, biopesticides, and microbial soil stimulants), soil diagnostics, and tailored agronomic advice play a key role in restoring soil health while maintaining productivity. Continued research on soil systems further strengthens the evidence base needed to adapt practices across crops and geographies. Embedding adaptive management, through iterative updates to recommended practices, eligibility rules and support mechanisms, ensures schemes remain effective as conditions change and avoids penalising early adopters when metrics improve.[48]

3

Redesign grants and payments to reward verified outcomes and landscape-scale performance, replacing or reforming existing incentives that reward intensification and input use.

Results-based and outcome-oriented schemes must align incentives with soil health, biodiversity gain, carbon sequestration, emissions reduction, and water outcomes, and be designed to operate at the appropriate spatial scale (i.e. whole-of-farm, landscape or catchment area) that reflects ecological outcomes, and be supported by robust monitoring, reporting, and verification. To be effective, the burden of monitoring, reporting and verification should be appropriately shared across the value chain, with farmers adequately compensated for data collection and reporting. Schemes focused narrowly on individual practices or short-term compliance often fail to deliver system-level change, particularly where economic considerations dominate design choices or where landscape context is ignored. Incorporating landscape-scale ecological principles, equitable-benefit sharing and adaptive parameters allows policies to evolve as evidence accumulates, strengthening impact over time rather than locking in ineffective approaches.[49]

The following examples from India and California highlight specific policy instruments that shape how agricultural systems operate in practice. They demonstrate how targeted interventions can enable circular outcomes, including nutrient reuse, reduced reliance on finite and polluting inputs, and the production of regeneratively produced inputs for bio-based value chains. The examples further illustrate how these instruments influence the design of the underlying systems that determine what materials and ingredients are available to the market.

CASE STUDY

INDIA: Enabling circular nutrient flows through farmer-led natural farming programmes

This case illustrates how agricultural policy can act as a design lever for circular economy outcomes, by enabling on-farm nutrient cycling, reducing reliance on external inputs, and supporting demand for diverse, regeneratively grown ingredients.

The planned expansion of natural farming[50] in India reflects a shift from input-intensive agriculture toward locally resourced, ecological practices. India's National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) aims to accelerate a shift away from synthetic input-intensive agriculture by scaling regenerative farming approaches that support nature positive outcomes, including healthy and stable soils, improved local biodiversity, and improved air and water quality. This includes replacing synthetic fertilisers and pesticides with biological inputs and locally available resources, for example, cow dung/urine-based preparations, mulching, and diversified cropping, effectively closing on-farm nutrient loops and reducing dependence on external inputs. These approaches embody circular economy principles in biological systems by cycling nutrients locally, minimising external inputs, and regenerating natural capital rather than depleting it. The mission seeks to consolidate and scale earlier state-level efforts, with targets including 10 million farmers, 750,000 hectares.[51] 10,000 bio-input resource centres, and 2,000 model demonstration farms between 2024–2026, supported by an estimated INR 2,481 crore (USD 200 million) through to 2026.[52]

A state-level model established proof of concept. Prior to NMNF, in 2016, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, a heavily agriculture-dependent state in the southeast of India, established the Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme, a concrete example of how policy can operationalise circular agricultural systems at scale. Rather than relying on subsidies or one-off input support, APCNF demonstrated the value of sustained, field-level accompaniment and peer learning delivered through existing community institutions, with women playing a key role. By 2025, APCNF had reached 1.13 million farmers, with first year net income increases of 19%-36%, driven by reduced input costs and yield improvements. Evidence from APCNF also points to greater resilience to floods and weather variability, in a range of crops and agro-ecological contexts, linked to longer root systems, larger rhizosheath perimeters, and stronger plant cell structures, alongside iterative learning loops that refined recommended practices over time.[53] India's NMNF acts as a national scaling instrument for the APCNF programme. The implementation model has influenced the design of national policy, with NMNF designating APCNF as a Centre of Excellence. RySS, the implementing organisation of APCNF, is establishing proof of concept of this model in 22 states across India as well as internationally as a co-adaptation model in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Zambia.[54]

National ambition is advancing faster than implementation. NMNF has progressed rapidly on paper with scheme guidelines issued in late 2024, most States and Union Territories approving annual action plans, central funding linked to training via Natural Farming Centres, and efforts to stimulate market linkages through retail outlets and partnerships. However, uptake and implementation capacity vary significantly across states. Despite evidence from APCNF demonstrating multiple benefits to natural farming, mainstream research and extension systems often continue to promote input-

CASE STUDY

INDIA: Enabling circular nutrient flows through farmer-led natural farming programmes (cont.)

intensive models, slowing adoption across states. APCNF has shown that overcoming this requires deliberate change management. Women's collectives play a central role in supporting household transitions and peer learning, while farmer-led extension, where experienced practitioners act as trainers, builds trust and enables experiential learning. These elements have been critical to driving behavioural change at scale, yet in some states policy approaches have prioritised financial incentives over the institutional and social infrastructure required for implementation, including dedicated delivery institutions and the central role of women farmers.

Strong demand-side measures can link land-use transitions to product design, procurement and processing standards, helping create the market conditions that sustain natural farming without continued public support. Encouraging businesses to adopt circular design for food principles,[55] particularly those that prioritise ingredient sourcing compatible with regenerative production, can help translate on-farm change into durable market demand. At the same time, policy misalignment across research agendas, education systems, and existing agricultural incentives can actively slow the uptake of regenerative production practices unless parallel measures shift in the same direction.[56] Himachal Pradesh's Certified Evaluation Tool for Agriculture Resource Analysis-Natural Farming (CETARA-NF) model demonstrates a potentially scalable self-certification approach, however, its absence at the national level hinders scalability.

Implementation systems translate land-use policy into lasting change. The Indian experience underscores that national ambition alone is insufficient: credible implementation depends on trusted local institutions, demonstration and peer learning, and the capacity to support farmers through early transition challenges such as access to bio-inputs, knowledge gaps, and market barriers. These are the elements APCNF invested in, creating a model that is now shaping national direction.[57] Over time, durable impact will depend on complementary measures beyond the farm, including procurement policies, governance structures, product design policies and market mechanisms that reward regenerative performance rather than continued reliance on public payments.[58]

CASE STUDY

CALIFORNIA: Incentivising circular nutrient management through soil health practices

This case illustrates how agricultural incentive schemes can support circular economy outcomes by enabling nutrient cycling, reducing reliance on synthetic inputs, and supporting regenerative production systems. California's Healthy Soils Program (HSP) provides a concrete example of a practice-based incentive instrument that combines financial support with technical assistance to shift agricultural resource use.

Financial and technical support enable farmers and ranchers to adopt soil-health enhancing practices. California's Healthy Soils Program (HSP) aims to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, sequester carbon, and improve long-term soil function. Managed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the program began supporting farmers in 2017, and became a key component of the state's 2022 Scoping Plan, which aims for carbon neutrality by 2045.[59] The HSP currently supports 29 eligible practices that enhance soil organic matter, support on-farm nutrient cycling, and reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers. These include hedgerows, riparian buffers,[60] no-till, cover cropping, compost application, and mulch. It is delivered through three mechanisms: Demonstration Grants, Incentive Grants directly to farmers, and a Block Grant Pilot that allows organisations to fund on-farm projects while providing technical assistance to farmers.[61]

Having begun with simple flat-rate incentives, the program now employs a mix of adoption-focused methods that recognise that sustaining soil health depends on both finance and technical know-how, helping producers balance agronomic goals with commercial pressures.[62] The program has diversified its payment structures: reimbursements are used for materials like biochar and mulch, while compost can be supported either through flat-rate payments per ton or through reimbursement. Newer Block Grant designs allow for invoiced-based payments with cost caps, or for bulk purchases and direct services provision by local administering organisations, enabling farmers to cover specific operational needs like transport and spreading.[63] Fixed rates are still used for planting practices; simple reimbursements for these practices are more difficult to fit into an adoption-based model, given the watering, attention, and maintenance needed for them – especially for permanent plantings such as hedgerows and windbreaks. The program's financial support is paired with technical assistance from trusted intermediaries such as Resource Conservation Districts, UC Cooperative Extension, and nonprofits.[64]

Reported outcomes indicate meaningful scale and strong demand. As of March 2024, the CDFA reported a projected 1.6 million metric tonnes of CO_2eq will be sequestered over project lifespans, 190,000 acres enrolled, 2,340 incentive projects funded, 72 demonstration projects funded, and 14 block grant recipients supporting several hundred of the on-farm incentive projects.[65] The program is consistently oversubscribed, signalling strong producer interest. Participating farmers report that HSP has prompted new approaches to soil management with multiple benefits, including improved water infiltration, reduced soil erosion, enhanced nutrient cycling, and increased

CASE STUDY

CALIFORNIA: Incentivising circular nutrient management through soil health practices (cont.)

climate resilience, supporting the uptake of regenerative[66] farming practices.[67] Participation in the research track of the Demonstration program requires monitoring and reporting tailored to project type, including field-level GHG emissions, soil health data, and cost-benefit analysis of practice adoption and anticipated barriers.[68] Such monitoring is essential for verifying outcomes across different contexts and, over time, could be strengthened by expanding coverage to include biodiversity outcomes.

Addressing systemic bottlenecks, such as equipment access, is essential for a circular bioeconomy. For example, a major barrier to applying organic amendments like compost is the shortage of specialised spreading equipment.[69] To solve this, USD 15 million has been allocated for a new Regional Farm equipment sharing programme.[70] This initiative aims to provide small-scale farmers with access to the machinery needed to implement practices supportive of regenerative farming, including shifting away from the use of synthetic fertilisers to spreading compost without prohibitive upfront costs.[71]

California's experience illustrates both the value and the limits of policy instruments that play an enabling role in the transition to a circular economy, but cannot by themselves deliver systemic change. Multi-year incentives, demonstration-led learning, and frontline technical assistance can catalyse the adoption of soil-health enhancing practices that rebuild the living infrastructure of food production and reduce reliance on finite and polluting inputs. CDFA's iterative improvements (including making applications more user-friendly, particularly for smaller operations) underline a broader lesson: agricultural policy should be adaptive, pairing finance with capacity-building and equity-focused design to sustain impact over time.[72] At the same time, long-term outcomes will depend on whether soil-health performance becomes embedded in local waste recycling policies, procurement standards, land valuation, insurance models, and ecosystem service markets, shifting incentives beyond the life of public grants.

03

URBAN PLANNING POLICIES

URBAN PLANNING POLICIES

Urban planning policies shape the way cities grow and function to achieve economic, social, cultural, and environmental objectives. They determine what gets built where, under what conditions, and for which purposes — allocating space across housing, industry, green areas, transport, and public infrastructure, and setting the environmental and performance standards that shape how development happens.[73] They encompass a wide range of instruments such as spatial planning, zoning regulations, land-use strategies, infrastructure planning, and redevelopment frameworks. These instruments can be used to prioritise brownfield redevelopment, set requirements for green and blue infrastructure, and enable co-location, industrial symbiosis, circular neighbourhoods.[74] And community-level circular infrastructure, including repair and reuse facilities and secondary material markets.[75]

Cities are powerful engines of economic growth, and they account for the majority of global food consumption, energy use, and GHG emissions.[76] With the urban population expected to reach 7 billion people by 2050, these trends are set to intensify.[77] By shaping the spatial distribution of neighbourhoods, public facilities, and infrastructure networks, urban planning policies determine how resources flow through cities.[78] As dense and complex systems, cities are both highly vulnerable to resource inefficiencies and uniquely positioned to implement circular solutions with long-term impact.

By embedding circular principles into these instruments, urban planning can act as a lever for the circular economy, shaping how materials, energy, water, and nutrients flow, as well as how people live, move, work, and interact within cities.

With the support of other enabling conditions, such as investment in circular urban development, urban planning can create the following benefits:

Reduce structural waste and long-term material demand in the built environment.

By shaping how neighbourhoods, residential areas, infrastructure and buildings are planned, designed, and redeveloped, through circular economy strategies such as revitalising land and assets, and maximising nature, urban planning policies can avoid unnecessary demolition and new construction, reducing waste generation and material demand over multiple decades.[79]

Lower emissions, environmental impacts and climate risks.

Connected, mixed-use neighbourhoods shorten travel distances and reduce car dependency, cutting transport-related emissions. Industrial parks designed for symbiosis enable shared resources and waste valorisation, lowering industrial pollution. Revitalising brownfield sites and vacant commercial buildings concentrates development within existing urban footprints, limiting urban sprawl without consuming additional land. Integrating and protecting green and blue infrastructure (e.g. parks, ponds and rain gardens) within the urban fabric improves water management, reduces heat and flood risks, and supports biodiversity and climate resilience.[80]

Enhance liveability, economic opportunities, and social value.

By improving access to green spaces and services, enhancing air quality, and creating more attractive and multifunctional urban environments, circular transformation into urban planning can strengthen citizens' health and well-being. At the same time, it can reduce living costs (e.g. energy and water charges) and lower infrastructure expenses, generating economic opportunities for households, businesses, and municipalities.[81] Ensuring these benefits are distributed equitably across communities, including underserved and marginalised groups, is critical to delivering fair and inclusive outcomes. This is particularly relevant in post-industrial cities, where urban regeneration[82] can redistribute prosperity by restoring public spaces and bringing declining areas back into productive use.

URBAN PLANNING POLICIES

To realise these benefits, urban planning policies must consider the following key design principles:

1

Apply place-based systems thinking for resource management.

Design policies with a whole-systems approach grounded in local context, recognising cities as systems where material, energy, water, and nutrient flows interact. In many cities, this includes recognising and integrating existing informal circular systems as a foundational part of resource management. This includes coordinating across agencies, levels of government, and stakeholders — from policymakers to asset owners, businesses, civil society organisations, and citizens — and supporting connections between sectors and value chains, so that resources are shared, reused, repaired, and regenerated. This also requires integrating environmental, social, economic, and resilience objectives.[83]

2

Ensure long-term, adaptive planning.

Ensure policies are designed with long planning horizons and can be adapted in the future. This includes analysing current and projected local conditions — material stocks, land availability, climate risks, technological readiness, innovation capacity, and demographic and social needs — and adopting phased approaches, to create resilient, flexible, and future-proof urban development strategies.[84]

3

Implement targeted upstream strategies across both existing and new urban developments.

Urban planning policies can rethink the urban fabric as a whole, simultaneously transforming the existing infrastructure and ensuring all new developments — including industrial parks, roads, green spaces and other urban facilities — are circular by design. This can be achieved by deploying policies that promote circular neighbourhoods.[85] maximise nature in cities (e.g. expand tree canopies and green-blue space), revitalise land and assets (e.g. redevelop brownfield sites, convert vacant commercial buildings), and improve water management (e.g. rainwater harvesting, nutrient recovery from wastewater, stormwater management).[86]

The following two examples from Japan and China show how phased approaches, strong coordination across levels of government, ministries and stakeholders, and long-term planning horizons can turn circular ambitions into practical implementation. Together, they demonstrate how to reshape resource flows in urban systems and enable action at scale.

CASE STUDY

CHINA: Reframing urban development through a zero-waste, circular systems approach

China's Zero-Waste Cities initiative moves beyond waste management to integrating circular thinking into the core of city planning and governance. The programme is designed to align urban material flows with the broader objectives of carbon neutrality and Ecological Civilisation.[87] The scale of the initiative currently encompasses 113 prefecture-level cities and eight special regions, with the goal of achieving 60% national coverage by 2027 and 100% by 2035.[88] Rather than viewing waste as an isolated problem, the initiative reframes the city as an interconnected system where production and lifestyle patterns are fundamentally redesigned according to city archetypes (e.g. resource-output cities, manufacturing-oriented cities and comprehensive cities).[89]

Shanghai and Hangzhou are two examples of Zero-Waste Cities, demonstrating the results of redesigning urban production and material flows. Shanghai was the first to adopt a dedicated zero-waste city regulation, and in 2024, advanced 450 municipal industrial restructuring projects, supporting 113 factories and 20 supply chain companies.[90] Hangzhou has expanded its resource recovery system to collect 2.34 million tonnes of secondary materials in 2024, with its 48 sorting centres providing an annual capacity of 1.7 million tonnes.[91]

Systemic change is operationalised at the micro level through the establishment of "Zero-Waste Cells" that mainstream circular practices into daily social and economic units.[92] These units, ranging from schools and factories to residential communities and shopping malls, act as the building blocks of the urban system.[93] To date, between 25,000 and 44,000 of these cells have been established nationwide, ensuring that circular design principles permeate every level of urban systems.[94]

Financial commitment and project density support the transition toward these integrated urban resource systems.[95] Under the 14th Five-Year Plan, the initiative has run more than 3,700 demonstration projects, including community sorting systems and industrial by-product recovery facilities, with total investment exceeding RMB 1 trillion (USD 140 billion).[96] Financial institutions have actively supported this; in 2023, over RMB 50 billion (USD 7 billion) in funding was allocated specifically to Zero-Waste City-related developments.[97]

Strong cross-ministerial coordination and monitoring underpin the programme. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment leads implementation, working closely with the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Finance, and other relevant agencies.[98] This coordination ensures alignment across regulations, funding mechanisms, and policy instruments, creating a coherent framework. Progress is monitored via performance review indicators, including waste reduction rates, recycling and resource recovery rates, coverage of waste-sorting systems, the share of circular industrial activities, and co-benefits for the environment and climate, such as ecosystem restoration.[99] These indicators enable policymakers to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and adjust programme design to ensure long-term effectiveness.

China's Zero-Waste Cities initiative illustrates how national ambition can drive local action, but challenges to scale remain. Despite central guidance, capacity and governance challenges limit the initiative's potential, including uneven capacity for waste treatment and recycling across regions, emerging waste streams (e.g. from batteries and renewable energy equipment), and insufficient financial, land and market incentives. In addition, cities risk prioritising visible targets, such as pilot labels or new facilities, rather than systemic changes, limiting the translation from short-term gains into sustained circular outcomes. These challenges constrain the expansion of the initiative, but learnings from the pilot experiences provide important lessons for improving coordination, enforcement and incentives as the initiative expands.[100]

Embedding waste and material management into urban planning can enable cities to move from waste treatment towards a circular system that optimises the use of resources. China's Zero-Waste Cities initiative demonstrates how piloting, data generation, and institutional coordination can support this shift over time.

CASE STUDY

JAPAN: From successful industrial revitalisation with the Eco-Town Programme to circular economy action

Improving resource efficiency across Japan through the revitalisation of local industrial areas. Launched in 1997 and running for ten years, the programme aimed to tackle shortages of landfill space while revitalising local industrial areas with ageing infrastructure. Over the decade, it helped establish 26 Eco-Towns (13 municipalities and 13 prefectures), supported 60 projects, and mobilised around JPY 170 billion (USD 1.6 billion) in total investment.[101] The programme led to a decrease of the amount of waste sent for final disposal by approximately 960,000 tonnes per year, a CO_2e emissions cut by 460,000 tonnes/year, and a 25% increase in resource circulation inside Eco-Towns Regions.[102]

The programme combined local planning and stakeholder engagement with public funding and government support. Local governments developed Eco-Town Plans in consultation with private companies, research institutes, community groups, and citizens. These plans included initiatives aimed at dissemination and information sharing — such as town planning, community recycling, outreach and education — and initiatives focused on infrastructure development of a cluster of recycling industry, including the construction of innovative recycling facilities and the creation of research and development bases. Both types of initiatives were reviewed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE).[103] Once approved, the towns received grants covering up to 50% of project costs, typically JPY 3–5 million/year for 3–5 years. Private companies could also access METI investment subsidies ranging from JPY 100–7,000 million (USD 70 million), with local government co-financing of 1–10% of the METI grants.[104]

Among the 26 Eco-Towns, Kitakyushu emerged as a standout success due to the economic and environmental benefits delivered, including over JPY 90 Bn in investments, 67 practical research projects, 25 recycling businesses, more than 1,000 new jobs and CO_2 reduction of 450,000 tonnes/year.[105] This success has been recognised internationally, with the Global 500 Award by UNEP (1990), and the Green Growth City and SDGs Pilot Model City by OECD (2011, 2018), among others.

Kitakyushu Eco-Town Plan involved a comprehensive set of both upstream and downstream activities. Specifically, the local government played an active role by implementing separate waste collection systems, creating a one-stop service centre for businesses, streamlining administrative procedures, and fostering a market for secondary materials. The programme also involved information sharing and public engagement through educational initiatives aimed at students, citizens, and other stakeholders, industrial symbiosis projects converting by-products and waste streams from one facility into inputs for another, and the deployment of renewable energy initiatives, particularly wind turbines.[106]

Building on the Eco-Town success, Kitakyushu is now pursuing a broader and more ambitious circular economy and decarbonisation agenda. Since 2019, local stakeholders, including government, industry, and academia, have formed the Kitakyushu Circular Economy Committee to develop a long-term circular economy vision for the city. It includes both technical and biological cycles,[107] from automotive rechargeable batteries to food resources, and five priority areas, including biomass, bamboo, reuse of PV panels, waste concrete, and information platforms.[108] This initiative is designed to accelerate material circularity and reduce carbon emissions, coordinating local municipalities, the private sector and academia.

Japan's Eco-Town Programme demonstrates how locally driven industrial revitalisation, supported by public investment and stakeholder engagement, enables the emergence of ambitious local agendas for the circular economy. While primarily focused on industrial areas, the programme illustrates how place-based approaches can lay the foundations for industrial symbiosis, local resource circulation, and longer-term circular economy strategies.

A POLICY MIX FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

This brief focuses on design as the primary lever of the circular economy, through product, agricultural and urban planning policies. However, these policies should not be viewed in isolation. They form part of a wider ecosystem of policies needed to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, including climate and nature policies that safeguard ecosystems and ensure environmental and social benefits are realised in full. Ensuring coherence across this policy landscape is vital — for example, by requiring ministries to include circular economy impact assessments in budgets, and establish formal coordination bodies such as national circular economy councils or interministerial steering committees. Beyond embedding circular design into key systems, there are four additional Universal Circular Economy Policy Goals[109] needed for the transition.

Keeping products, parts and materials in use at their highest value — through instruments such as waste regulations, resource classifications, extended producer responsibility schemes and policies to strengthen secondary materials markets — enables a system of resource management that prioritises value retention and avoids landfilling and incineration.

Economic and fiscal instruments — including taxation, subsidies, state aid, and government funds; competition, labour, and trade policies; and procurement, disclosure, and accounting requirements — can be aligned with circular economy principles to make circular business models the norm rather than the exception. Without a focus on these instruments, the incentives and systems set up to stimulate circular design and manage circular flows can never truly scale and, at worst, be unintentionally undermined.

Public investment can directly fund the development of the infrastructure, innovation, and skills needed to scale the circular economy, while also unlocking private-sector capital for harder-to-finance opportunities through, for example, blended finance solutions. Targeted investments in these critical areas can be key for the successful implementation of circular design and material flow policies, while also creating economies fit to capitalise on new opportunities and support an inclusive transition.

Mechanisms that foster collaboration for system change, mainstreaming circular economy principles into existing and new policies fosters responsive collaboration across government departments, value chains, and economic sectors. Alignment and harmonisation locally, nationally and internationally are crucial, as is the development of inclusive and cross-value-chain processes, which provide policymakers with the feedback they need from implementers and users. Measuring and tracking progress, as well as identifying data sets, are also crucial to inform good policy design and ensure effective implementation.

GOAL 1
STIMULATE DESIGN FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

GOAL 2
MANAGE RESOURCES TO PRESERVE VALUE

GOAL 3
MAKE THE ECONOMICS WORK

GOAL 4
INVEST IN INNOVATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SKILLS

GOAL 5
COLLABORATE FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the policy instruments and design principles outlined in this brief are intended to be globally relevant, their implementation must be tailored to national and local contexts, recognising that different levels of government hold different competencies and levers. Policymakers should consider existing institutional capacities, economic structures, and social priorities to ensure policies are both effective and equitable, while also framing them around economic opportunity and resource efficiency to help gain support in contexts where environmental framing is politically contested.

For policies aimed at stimulating design for the circular economy to be effective, governments should consider the following:

1

Prioritise upstream interventions to lock in long-term impact.

Embed circular design principles early, right from the design, planning, and production stages in product, agricultural, and urban systems. The right design choices reduce the burden downstream, lowering the volumes to be collected, reused, and recycled, and ensuring that the materials entering these systems are high-quality feedstocks suitable for reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling — and, in the case of bio-based materials, for safe nutrient recovery to regenerate natural systems.

Use mandatory performance and information requirements to shape design and production decisions, and remove the worst-performing products from the market. Clear, enforceable standards set clear direction and minimum requirements for the market, helping to overcome first-mover disadvantage, while product information systems improve transparency, streamline processes and enable compliance.

2

Integrate policies into coherent packages that reinforce one another.

Combine design-focused policy instruments with enabling policy instruments such as extended producer responsibility schemes, fiscal measures (e.g. tax and subsidy reform) and public investment, to make circular solutions and business models the norm.

Complement supply-side requirements with demand-side measures. Public procurement, labelling, disclosure requirements and performance-based incentives can reinforce market pull for products and assets designed with circular and regenerative design principles in mind, accelerating uptake and scale.

Ensure mutual recognition of international frameworks while maintaining ambition. Align national standards with regional and international frameworks, and pursue mutual recognition to reduce duplication, support cross-border value chains, and strengthen competitiveness, while retaining the flexibility to deploy incentives and subsidies in line with domestic priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

3

Embed social outcomes, including inclusion and affordability, in policy design.

Integrate just transition measures, including financial support, reskilling, payment for services rendered, and technical assistance for affected workers and communities, to ensure that all stakeholders can adapt, participate and benefit from the transition.

Co-design (e.g. as part of public consultation processes) and regularly refine policy design with all affected stakeholders across the value chain, including SMEs, low-income communities, farmers, waste operators, and civil society, throughout design, implementation, and adaptation. This helps identify how policy changes affect different stakeholders, including potential risks, trade-offs, and distribution of benefits.

Ensure policies deliver inclusive outcomes in practice, for example, by:

- **Making circular solutions for products (e.g. sharing, reuse, repair) affordable and accessible to all.**
- **Supporting smallholders, farmers, and rural communities** rather than concentrating benefits among large operators.
- **Supporting connected multifunctional development through planning frameworks** that create healthy, accessible, and inclusive communities.

4

Build enforcement capacity and institutional capability to deliver impact at scale.

Invest in institutions, skills and the data infrastructure required to implement circular design effectively. This includes market research, digital product information systems, monitoring and verification frameworks, agricultural extension services, and coordination mechanisms across planning authorities.

Ensure enforcement is credible, proportionate, and effective, with clear test methods, transparent compliance systems and consistent application. Robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential to build trust and ensure regulatory outcomes are delivered in practice.

Strengthen cross-ministerial coordination and align national, sub-national and local governments to ensure policy coherence and avoid silos. Shared objectives are essential to avoid duplicated efforts or conflicting priorities and agendas.

5

Adopt an adaptive policy approach that evolves with new needs and circumstances.

Set phased implementations with progressive requirements and targets that can increase ambition over time. Phased implementation allows policies to remain feasible while driving continuous improvement in product performance, agricultural practices, and urban systems.

Build in regular review and update mechanisms. Definitions, performance criteria, standards, and incentive structures should be revisited in light of technological development, market maturity, observed outcomes, and lessons from implementation, including local and sub-national approaches that can be scaled nationally.

Build in flexibility to local and place-based contexts while maintaining policy ambition. Policies should accommodate sector-specific conditions, emerging business models and technologies, and place-based realities, while remaining anchored in clear, circular economy objectives.

Ensure governance structures support long-term policy continuity, including across political cycles, to maintain direction and investor confidence.

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ENDNOTES

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ABOUT THE ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is an international charity that develops and promotes the circular economy in order to tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution. We work with our network of private- and public-sector decision makers, as well as academia, to build capacity, explore collaborative opportunities, and design and develop circular economy initiatives and solutions. Increasingly based on renewable energy, a circular economy is driven by design to eliminate waste, circulate products and materials, and regenerate nature, to create resilience and prosperity for business, the environment, and society.

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