

What is a circular economy?

In our current economy, we take materials from the Earth, make products from them, and eventually throw them away as waste – the process is linear. In a circular economy, by contrast, we stop waste being produced in the first place.

The circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design:

- [Eliminate waste and pollution](#)
- [Circulate products and materials \(at their highest value\)](#)
- [Regenerate nature](#)

It is underpinned by a transition to renewable energy and materials. A circular economy decouples economic activity from the consumption of finite resources. It is a resilient system that is good for business, people and the environment.

The circular economy is a systems solution framework that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution.

Ellen MacArthur on the basics of the circular economy



We must transform every element of our take-make-waste system: how we manage resources, how we make and use products, and what we do with the materials afterwards. Only then can we create a thriving circular economy that can benefit everyone within the limits of our planet.

A way to transform our system

What will it take to transform our throwaway economy into one where waste is eliminated, resources are circulated, and nature is regenerated?

The circular economy gives us the tools to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss together, while addressing important social needs.

It gives us the power to grow prosperity, jobs, and resilience while cutting greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and pollution.

How the circular economy works

Get the basics or explore the circular economy in detail.



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Yes

No

A circular economy is based on three principles, all driven by design.

Eliminate waste and pollution

Circulate products and materials

Regenerate nature

Circular economy examples

See the circular economy in action with these case studies from brands, businesses and policy makers.

Apeel **Gerrard Street** **Natura Brazil**

Working with nature to make food last longer

Apeel is a company that has come up with an innovative way to eliminate single-use shrink wrap plastic packaging on fresh fruit and veg, while at the same time tackling food waste.

Apeel is a layer of edible, plant-based coating applied to fresh products that mimics and enhances the natural defences of fruit and vegetables. This slows down the two main things that cause spoilage – water loss and oxidation.

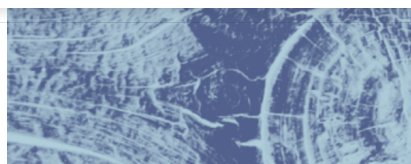
[Explore the example](#)

Dig deeper

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Yes

No



Circular economy examples

Our curated collection of case studies presents circular economy success stories from around the world...



The Circular Economy Show

Stay up to date with our latest conversations exploring the transition towards a circular economy



Podcast: What is the circular economy?

Ellen MacArthur discusses a range of topics in a conversation about the circular economy.

Video series: What is the circular economy?



Building a Regenerative, Restorative Economy

An Introduction to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation



Basics of a circular economy

Our team discuss what the circular economy means to them.



Discussing Circular Economy and What It Means

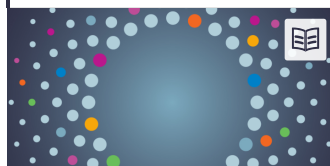
In this live conversation, members of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation team will discuss and debate...



What If We Don't Buy Products and We Buy Service? Circular Economy Explained

With the price of resources and energy becoming increasingly volatile, can today's linear economy...

Explore the circular economy by topic



Biodiversity and the circular economy

This topic area examines how the circular economy can help shape a nature-positive future.



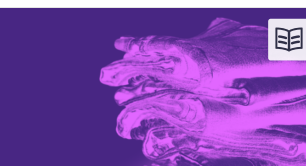
Cities and the circular economy

This topic area looks at the role cities play in the transition to a circular economy.



Climate and the circular economy

This topic area looks at how fixing the economy can help fix climate change.



Fashion and the circular economy

This topic area explores how the circular economy works for the fashion industry.



Finance and the circular economy

This topic area looks at the role of the financial sector in the shift to a circular economy.



Food and the circular economy

This topic area shows how moving to a circular economy for food will help people and nature thrive.



Plastics and the circular economy

This topic area shows how the circular economy can help keep plastic in the economy and out of the...

Resources, guidance and tools

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Yes

No



Working with circular economy principles within governments and policy

The circular economy provides a framework which allows governments and cities to realise many of...



Education and learning towards a circular economy

We support circular economy learning across a growing global community of schools, colleges and...



Design and the circular economy

These resources are for everyone who wants to learn, apply, and contribute to circular design.



Business and the circular economy

A circular economy transformation will empower us with the tools to tackle global challenges, and...