



National Circular Economy Programme 2023-2030

Summary



A fully circular Dutch economy by 2050!

At present we face daunting sustainability issues: global warming, a drastic decline in biodiversity and increasing pressure on human habitats around the globe. This is largely due to the vast quantity of raw materials we use to produce goods, energy and food – the pressure this places on the environment is systematically exceeding the Earth’s capacity to regenerate. At the same time, we need to ensure resilience to geopolitical shifts by becoming less dependent on other countries for the supply of raw materials.

We owe it to future generations to ensure that our planet remains habitable. That’s why we need to make the transition to a circular economy.¹ This involves adapting our use of raw materials to cut carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, improve air, water and soil quality and ensure the security of raw materials supply.

Circular economy flows are made up almost exclusively made of reusable primary, secondary and sustainable bio-based raw materials. Products are manufactured, distributed and consumed in closed-loop systems. As a result, the value of natural resources, materials and products is retained as long as possible, virtually eliminating waste.²

Ambitions and targets for 2050 and 2030

By 2050, the Netherlands aspires to have a fully circular economy. This means that the environmental effects of the use of raw materials for Dutch production and consumption will fall within ‘planetary boundaries’. The government is working to give concrete shape to these boundaries and the resultant ‘safe operating space’ for the Netherlands’ use of raw materials, and is also pressing at European level to operationalise this further. This will allow us to show what impacts we are aiming for and how the circular economy will

contribute to this process. In addition, circularity targets on the use of raw materials have been set at product group level.

Measures to achieve a circular Dutch economy

To date, circular economy policy has focused primarily on a voluntary, noncommittal approach. To achieve our ambition, however, measures of a more target-oriented and mandatory nature are required.³ To this end, we will be adopting a mix of pricing, standard-setting and stimulus measures.

The National Circular Economy Programme 2023-2030 (NPCE) elaborates the ambitious circular economy goal, which is simultaneously a climate goal. After all, by steering and facilitating national and international sustainable, circular systems, circular economy policy also promotes climate targets.

The government needs to shape the economic, physical and social environment so as to make sustainable, circular products the obvious, easy and fair choice for businesses and members of the public.

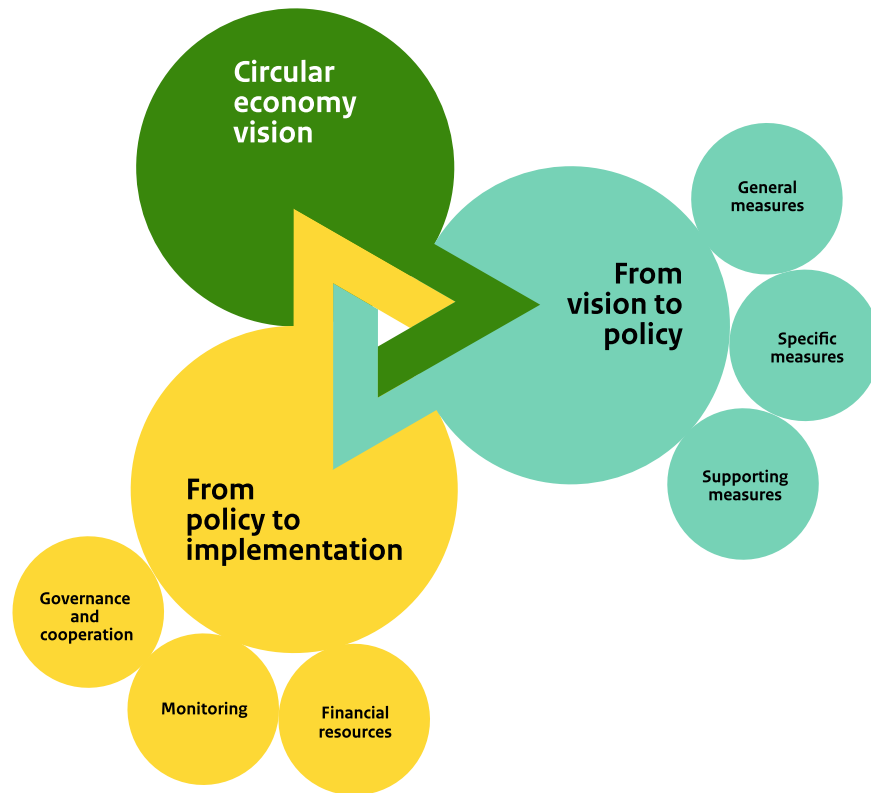
Whereas policy had previously focused primarily on the back of the supply chain, we will now be targeting measures more at the input side (such as circular design) and the user phase. Based on the findings of the biennial Integral Circular Economy Report issued by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), we will be augmenting the package of measures and where necessary extending it to other sectors and product groups.

1 The [report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) shows that there are sufficient affordable options to achieve this. They entail a complete transition to renewable energy and a circular economy.

2 Even in a fully circular economy there will always be some residual flows that cannot be put to good use and will have to be disposed of as waste.

3 The [Integral Circular Economy Report 2021](#) by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) recommends ‘more use of coercive measures’.

Figure 1: National Circular Economy Programme 2023-2030



International and integral approach

Globalisation of value chains means that the negative impacts of production are often felt outside the Netherlands. If a just transition is to be achieved, international agreements on environmental standards, sustainable jobs (employment conditions) and working conditions in production processes need to be transposed into legislation. Moreover, we must link the transition to a circular economy with efforts to achieve climate, environmental and biodiversity goals. These endeavours will thus reinforce each other, jointly contributing to make the Netherlands fit for the future.

General measures

There are four ways in which we can make our use of materials more circular, and they are accordingly the focus of measures set out in the NPC.

- 1 Reducing raw material usage:** using fewer (primary) raw materials by abstaining from the production or purchase of products, sharing products or making them more efficient ('narrow the loop').
The NPCE has for example set the target of a lot more government-wide circular procurement by 2030. This covers everything from desks and chairs to roads and waterworks.
- 2 Substituting raw materials:** replacing primary with secondary raw materials and sustainable bio-based materials (in high-value applications), or with other, more generally available raw materials with a lower environmental burden.
An example is a mandatory percentage of recycled content.
- 3 Extending product lifetime:** making longer and more intensive use of products and components through reuse and repair will slow demand for new raw materials ('slow the loop').
An example of a measure aimed at increasing longevity is the introduction, as of 2023, of a registry of repairers of electric and electronic goods, so that people can easily find a technician to repair their appliance or device;

4 High-grade processing: closing the loop by recycling materials and raw materials.

This will not only reduce the amount of waste being incinerated or dumped, but ensure a more high-grade supply of secondary raw materials ('close the loop').

By 2050, incinerating recyclable material will be a thing of the past. This will require measures at the front of the supply chain. We will therefore be helping Dutch municipalities and residents, amongst others, to separate waste yet better.

Specific measures for priority supply chains

In 2018, transition agendas were drawn up for the five supply chains with the most harmful environmental impact. Concrete targets have been formulated and specific policy developed for the most impactful product groups within these chains, namely:

- **Consumer goods:** electric and electronic goods; packaging and disposables; textiles; furniture.
- **Plastics:** plastic packaging; plastics in the construction industry; plastics in agriculture.
- **Construction:** housing; offices and industrial buildings; concrete viaducts and bridges; road surfaces.
- **Manufacturing:** Capital Equipment; wind farms; solar PV systems; climate control systems.

Activities within the **biomass & foodstuffs** supply chain fall under the transition agenda for circular agriculture.

Supporting measures

In addition to general and specific measures aimed at circular economy, the government is creating a conducive environment for the circular economy transition. For instance, we seek to increase relevant knowledge and skills on the circular economy and on sustainability in the broader sense and give scope for giving these subjects due attention within education, based on demand. Circularity will also be covered in short courses aimed at, for instance, procurement and marketing professionals. We will additionally be supporting the transition through funding, behavioural change, the Circular Economy Accelerator⁴ and regional circular economy networks.

Joint effort needed

The government is responsible for policy on the transition to a circular economy and is accountable to the House of Representatives in this regard. Within the government the State Secretary for Infrastructure and Water Management is responsible for coordinating the transition, while the members of the government at the line ministries most closely connected with this issue are each responsible for circularity within their own remit.

A successful transition to a fully circular economy in the Netherlands demands a joint effort by all parties: businesses, authorities, the public, and knowledge and educational institutions. After all, it is businesses and their employees who produce and sell products, and consumers who acquire them. Other actors, in turn, speak for nature and the environment, or for young people. Local and regional authorities also have a big role to play in steering developments at community level.

Funding

The transition to a fully circular economy requires both public and private funding. To this end, central government has various financing options at its disposal. These are set out in the NPCE. Legislative measures, both national and European, will impact enforcement, implementation and oversight, including financial supervision.

The NPCE represents another step towards a fully circular economy. But more is needed to achieve our aspirations. In the coming years, therefore, the government seeks to move ahead and find ways of making the goals attainable. In the run-up to this programme, many actors indicated their willingness to contribute. Together, we will carry the transition forward.

4 Versnellingshuis Nederland Circulair!

This is a publication of The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.
In cooperation with the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, The Interior
and Kingdom Relations, Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Foreign Affairs.

www.rijksoverheid.nl/circulaire-economie
www.nederlandcirculairin2050.nl

Lay out: Optima Forma bv
Illustration: Beautiful Minds

February 2023