

REGIONAL
CIRCULARITY
CO-OPERATIVE

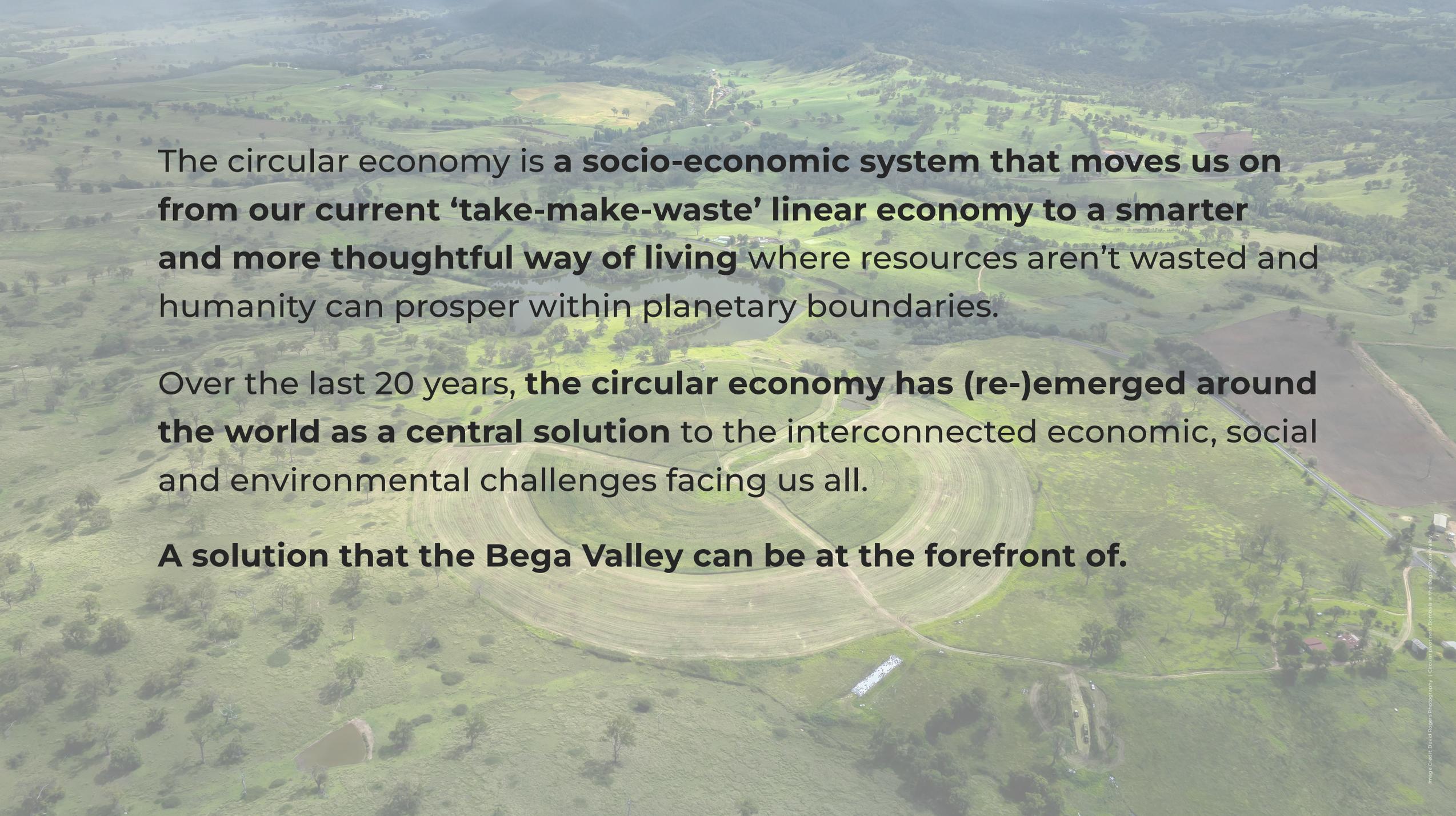
Bega
circular
valley

NATIONAL
CIRCULARITY
CENTRE

Circularity and the Circular Economy

Selected background and further reading

May 2025

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The scene is dominated by rolling green hills and fields. A prominent feature is a large, circular field in the center, which appears to be a recently plowed or harvested area, showing concentric tracks. To the right, there's a large, dark brown field, possibly a recently plowed area. In the foreground, there's a small pond and a white structure, possibly a shed or barn. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic, with a mix of natural and agricultural elements.

The circular economy is a **socio-economic system that moves us on from our current 'take-make-waste' linear economy to a smarter and more thoughtful way of living** where resources aren't wasted and humanity can prosper within planetary boundaries.

Over the last 20 years, **the circular economy has (re-)emerged around the world as a central solution** to the interconnected economic, social and environmental challenges facing us all.

A solution that the Bega Valley can be at the forefront of.

CIRCULARITY 101

Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

'The circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated.

In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting.

The circular economy tackles climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.

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

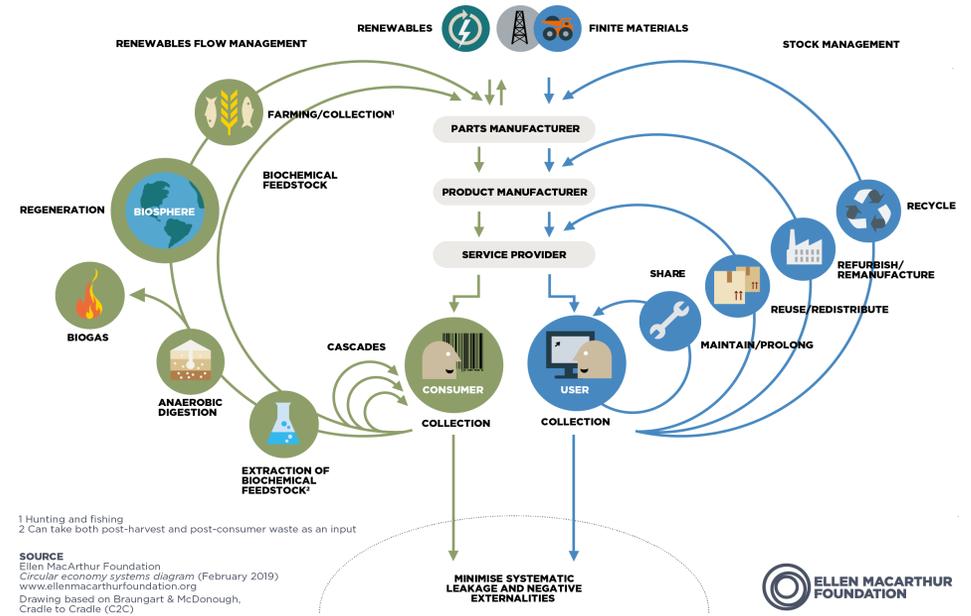
- 1) Eliminate waste and pollution;
- 2) Circulate products and materials (at their highest value); and
- 3) Regenerate nature.

Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy and materials, the circular economy is a resilient system that is good for business, people and the environment.

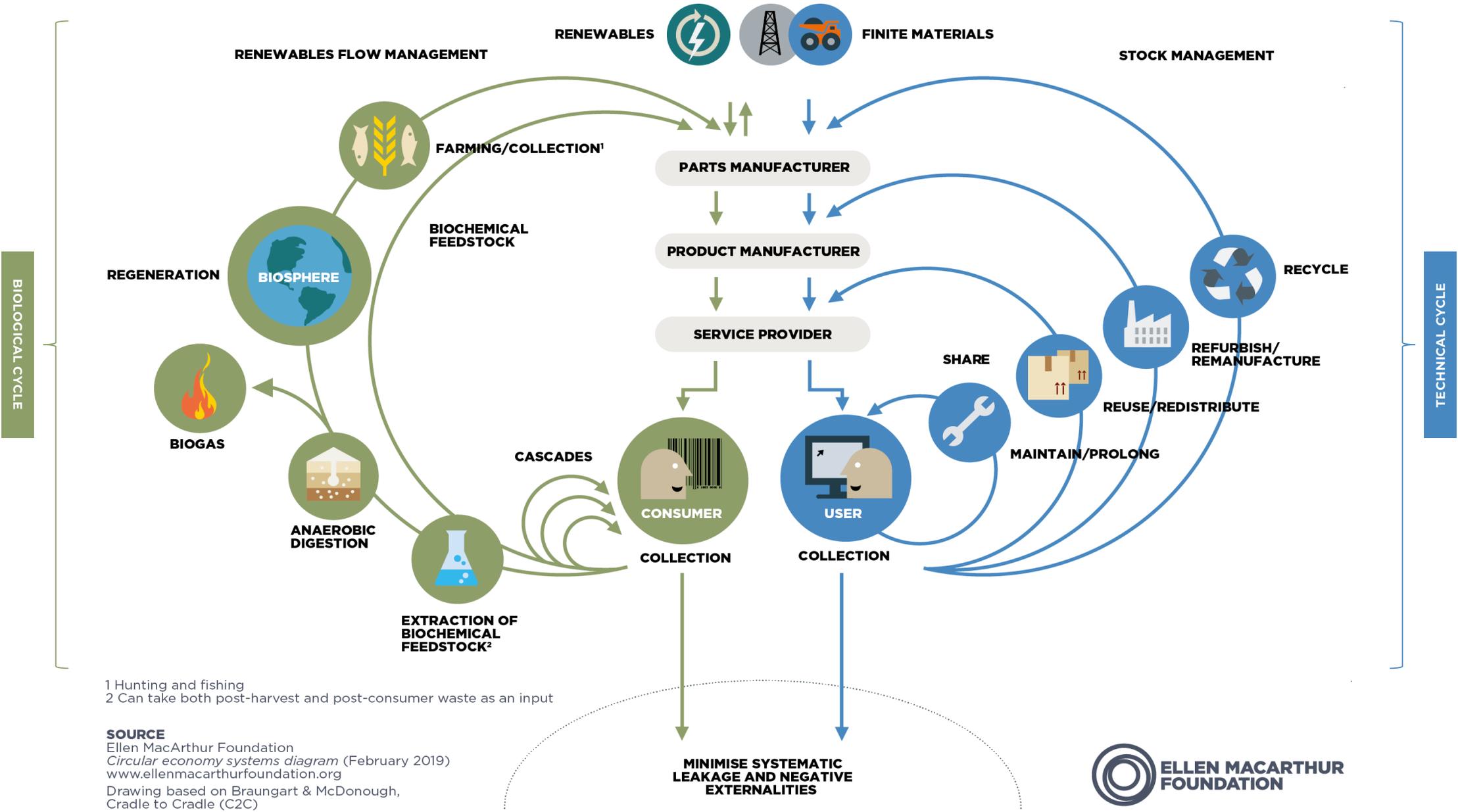
In our current economy, we take materials from the Earth, make products from them, and eventually throw them away as waste – the process is linear. In a circular economy, by contrast, we stop waste being produced in the first place.'

For more information, please visit www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org.

THE ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION'S 'BUTTERFLY DIAGRAM': VISUALISING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY



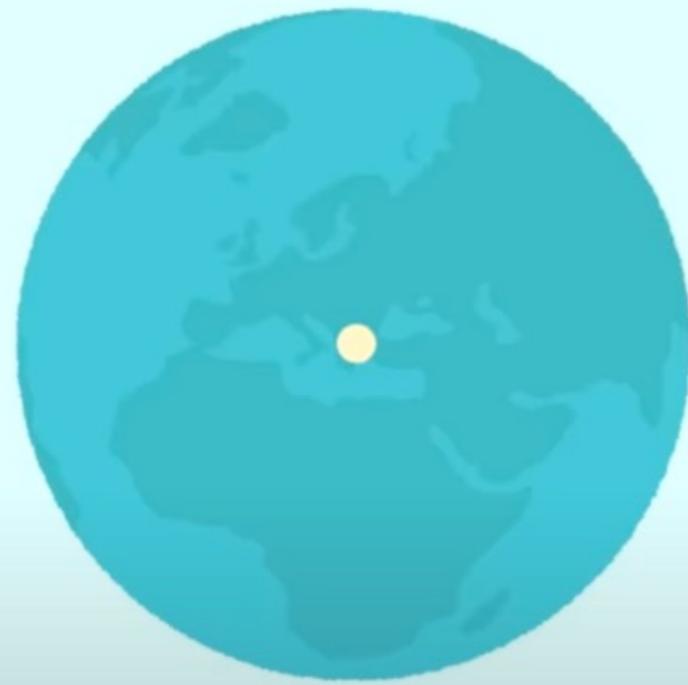
THE ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION'S 'BUTTERFLY DIAGRAM': VISUALISING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY



1 Hunting and fishing
2 Can take both post-harvest and post-consumer waste as an input

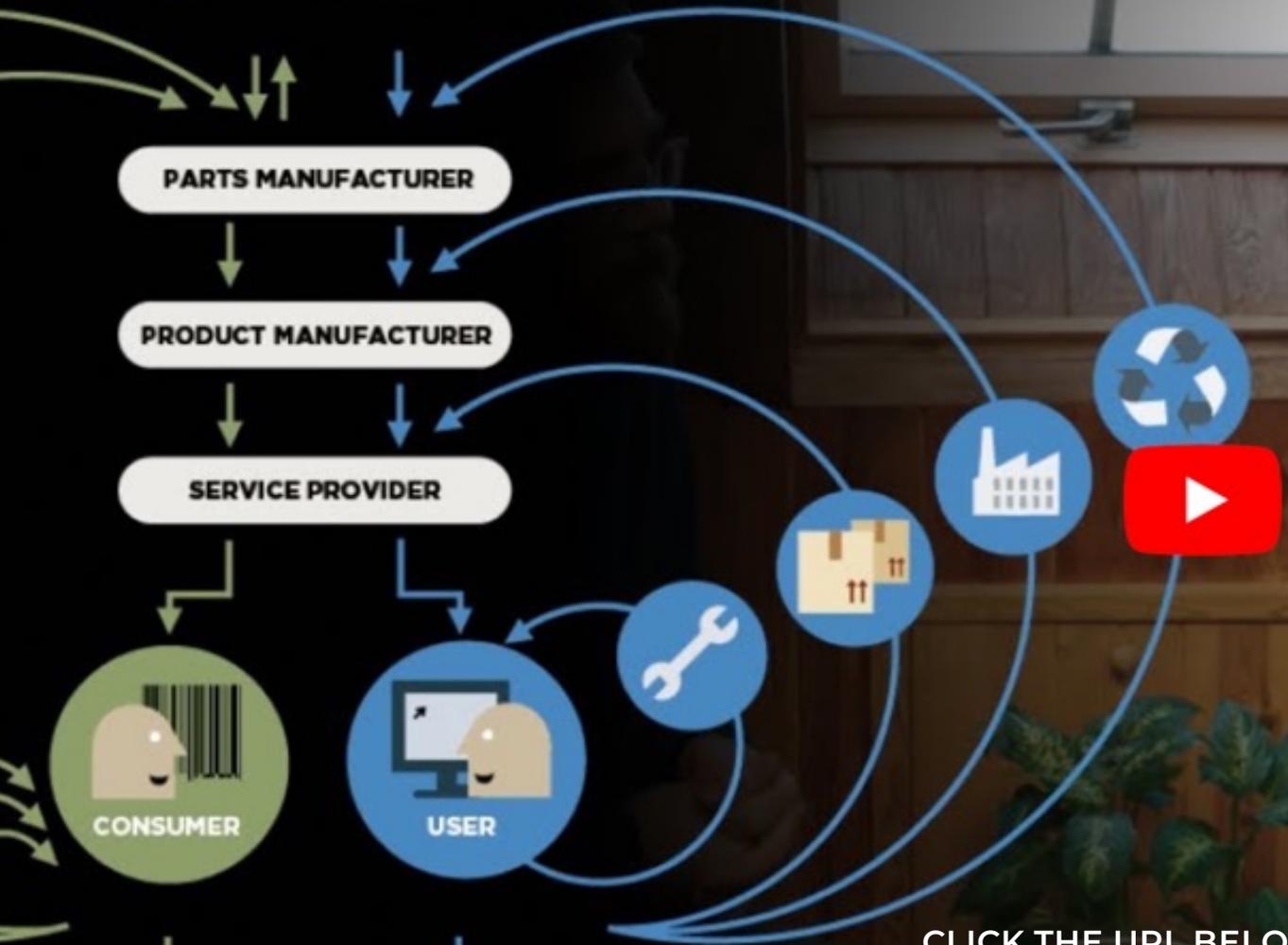
SOURCE
Ellen MacArthur Foundation
Circular economy systems diagram (February 2019)
www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org
Drawing based on Braungart & McDonough, Cradle to Cradle (C2C)





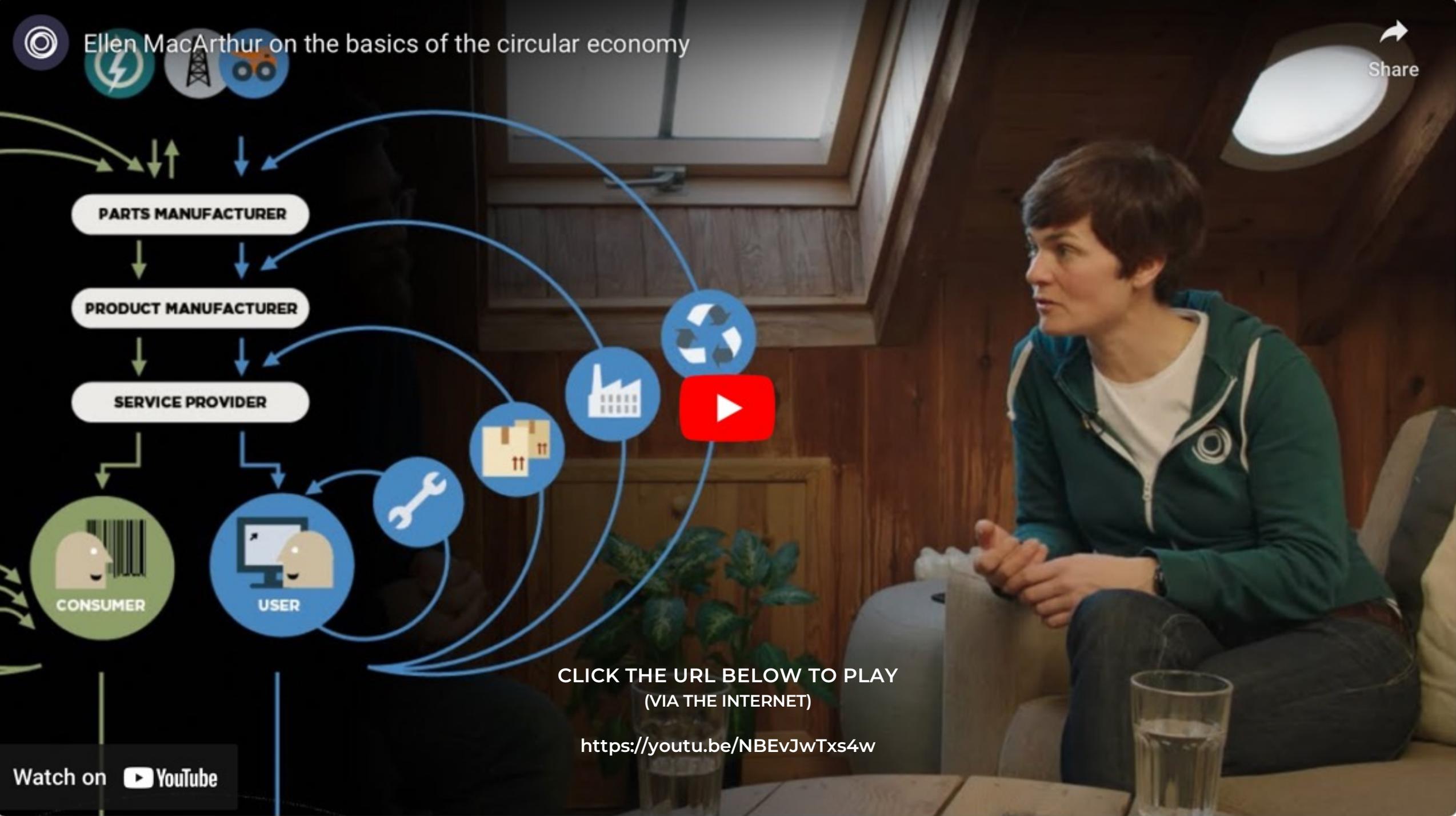
CLICK THE URL BELOW TO PLAY
(VIA THE INTERNET)

<https://youtu.be/zCRKvDyyHmI?si=5vFWCeKSg6STUBgQ>



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THE R STRATEGIES AS A PRACTICAL WAY TO 'THINK CIRCULAR'

Another way to look at the circular economy is through the 'R Strategies'.

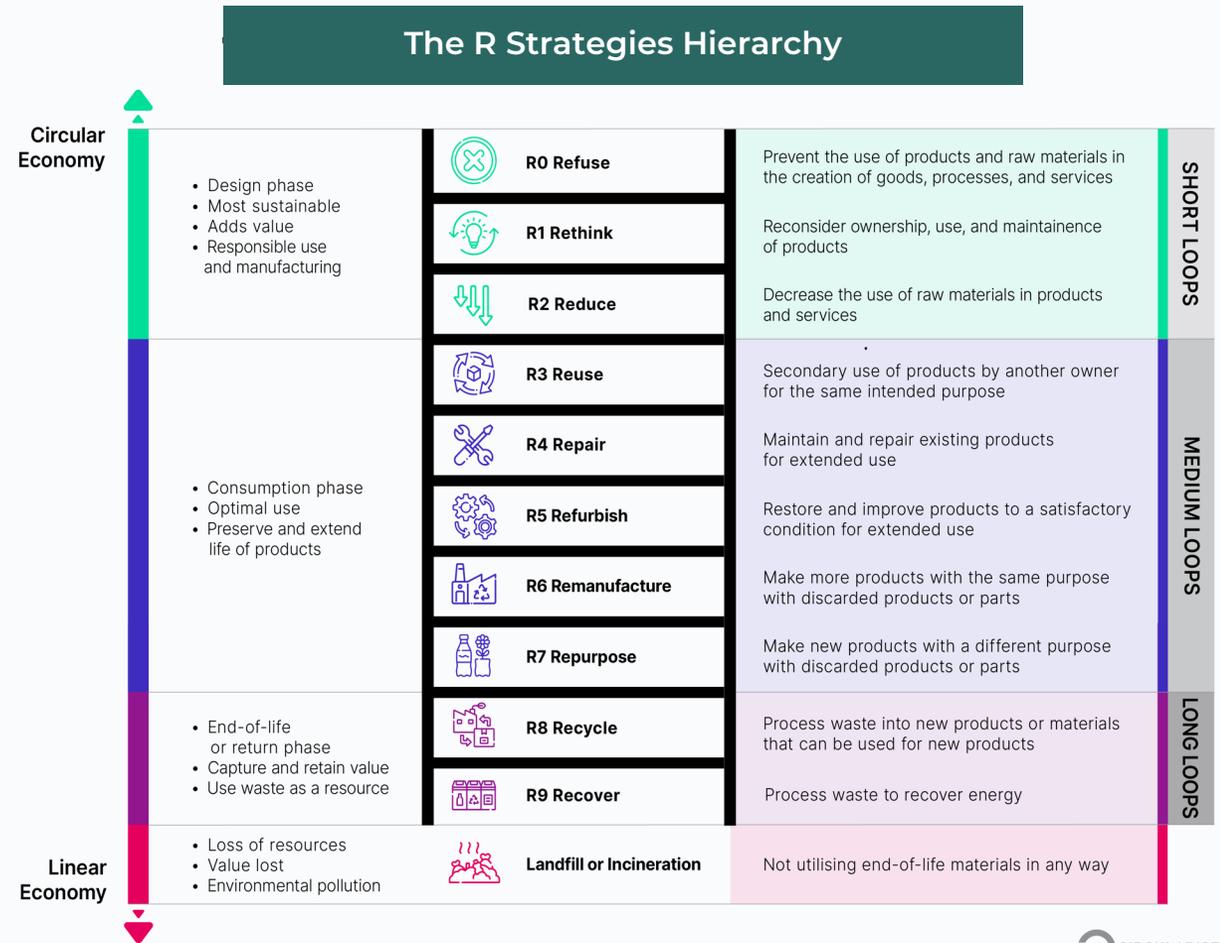
These are a series of principles designed to encourage organisations to think logically about what circularity means and assist them in identifying practical steps that can be taken to begin or accelerate their circularity journeys.

They are often represented as a 'R-Hierarchy or 'R-Ladder', as can be seen in the example graphic developed by Circularise on this page.

In this ladder, the nine Rs described are grouped in short, medium or long loops that demonstrate the length of the waste loop or product cycle each represents. The shorter the loop, the more circular the strategy is. The higher they are on the ladder, the tighter the loop, meaning the strategy requires fewer materials and is therefore more circular overall.

If you compare the R Strategies with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's 'Butterfly Diagram', the overlap between the two can clearly be seen in the technical cycle on the right-hand side.

Whilst the R Strategies have less direct relevance to the biological cycle within the circular economy, they are still a useful lens through which to consider how the production and manufacturing side can become more circular.





‘PLACE-BASED CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROJECTS THAT ARE MADE FOR AND WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES MAKE THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY TANGIBLE – SOMETHING THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED IN REAL LIFE.’

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

WHY PLACE-BASED CIRCULARITY IS SO IMPORTANT

Whilst the principles behind the circular economy are simple, changing the complex, intertwined systems underpinning our current linear economy to enable circularity is not.

Over the past two decades it has become evident that working to drive the circular transition at the ‘place-based scale’ – as exists in the Bega Valley – is particularly effective, as stated in multiple recent reports.

At the place-based level, new circular economy approaches can be developed and tested relatively quickly. Funding, resourcing and governance needs are lower than for large regional, city-wide or national programmes.

Additionally, working in a cohesive and enthusiastic community enables integration of all sectors and businesses when designing and executing the transition, enabling a much more comprehensive analysis of progress. Greater experimentation is possible because the risk vs. reward equation is so much more favourable.

Perhaps most importantly, local people reap tangible, immediate benefits. A focus on place-based circularity can quickly create jobs, support resilience, improve access to local, nutritious food, drive innovation and connect communities.

Made up of one river catchment, with mountains and forest to the west, north and south and the ocean to the east, just three main access roads, one airport and one port, the Bega Valley is also an ideal region within which to ‘measure what matters’ and ensure we track progress and quantify what works when it comes to regional, place-based circularity

As a clearly defined ‘place’ that is large enough to properly test circular approaches, but small enough that experimentation can be encouraged and scaled, the Bega Valley is perfectly positioned to be at the forefront of place-based circularity in Australia.

SELECTED SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please click on the logos or URLs below (or copy the URLs provided into your browser)



www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org



www.circle-economy.com



www.dcccew.gov.au/environment/protection/circular-economy



www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/community/future-waste-management-in-the-bega-valley-shire



www.csiro.au/en/research/environmental-impacts/sustainability/circular-economy



www.circularaustralia.com.au



www.circularaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-Circular-Precincts-Australia.pdf



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

www.uow.edu.au/global-challenges/adapting-to-future-environments/supply-chains-for-local-agri-food-systems/



www.circulairfriesland.frl/en/



www.huntercircular.com.au



www.vlaanderen-circulair.be/en



www.beamcircular.org

An aerial photograph of a pond surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation. The pond is filled with dark water and large green lily pads. The surrounding area is a mix of dense green foliage and open grassy areas. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

'What if we did the whole thing differently?'

Douglas McMaster, Michelin-starred Chef and Owner of the World's First Zero Waste Restaurant, 'Silo'

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Prepared by the Regional Circularity Co-operative (RCC).

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Much of the imagery used in this document has been generously provided free of charge by David Rogers (www.davidrogersphotography.com).

The RCC acknowledges and pays its respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and airspace of Australia.

We learn from these people about the traditions of stewardship of resources and working together as a community to have a lighter, more circular, impact on the environment.