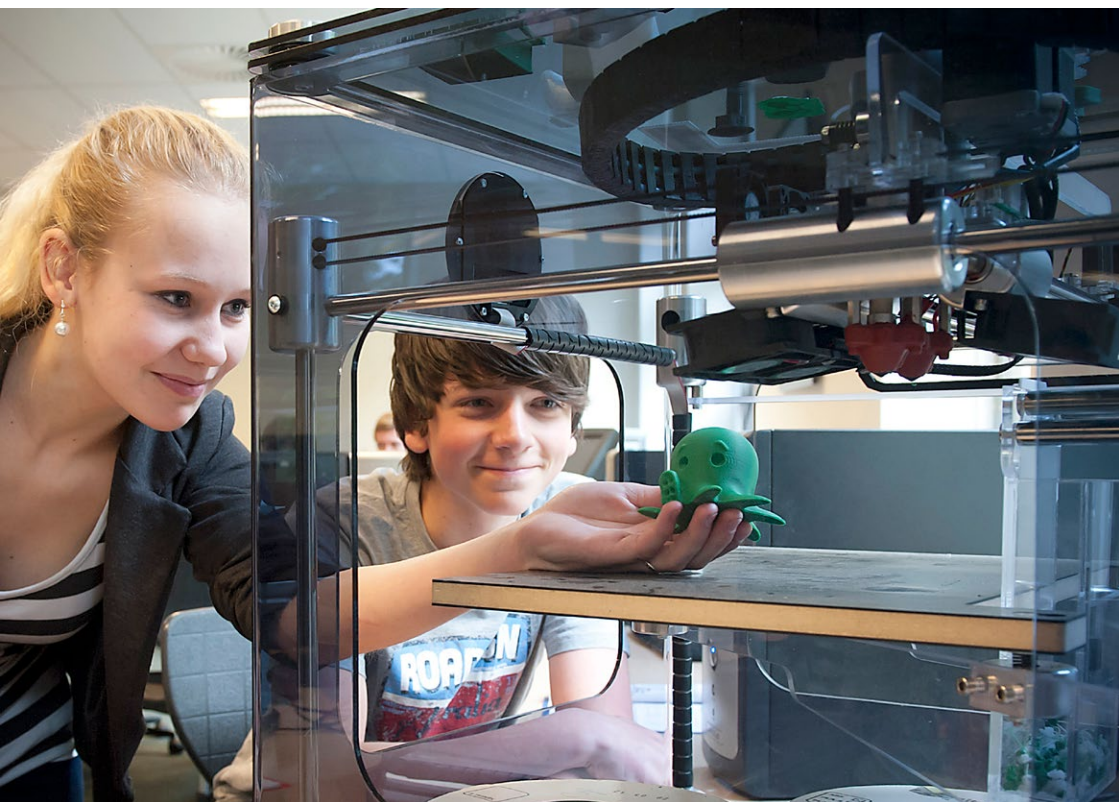




# A circular economy in the Netherlands by 2050

Summary





# Working together for a planet with a future

Everything that we do as human beings relies on what our planet gives us. We use its raw materials for food, drinking water, and shelter, as well as for clothing and electrical equipment. Our cars, trains and planes run on fuels from our planet. It keeps us warm and cool. We would literally be nowhere without our planet.

Unfortunately, there are limits to the capacity of the earth, while the human population keeps on growing. The world's population has quadrupled over the past 100 years. The expectation is that in 2050 it will actually exceed nine billion. Our appetite for raw materials is increasing rapidly, while available resources keep on falling.

We can only lead prosperous lives on a healthy planet in the future if we start managing our raw materials in a smarter way today. It is time to build a new system that will take us to a circular economy by 2050!

## **A circular economy in the Netherlands by 2050: what does that mean?**

Currently, we still use our raw materials and fossil fuels too often as if they are

inexhaustible. We make products as cheap as possible and too frequently throw them away after use. In a circular economy, we will deal with our resources in a much smarter way. We will use and consume as little as possible, and we will maximise the reuse of raw materials. We will develop products that are more durable and find new, smart ways to produce them. And we will use them more intelligently by sharing them and passing them on. By doing that, we will build a circular economy together. By 2050, this circular economy must be a reality in the Netherlands.

## **Farewell to the throw-away society**

Waste will disappear in this circular economy. Waste will be a new raw material.

Soon, virtually everything that we use, will later be reused repeatedly. This means that

in a circular economy we step away from the linear make, take, waste approach. Instead, our approach will be circular.

We will not only save raw materials but also reduce the burden on the environment and have a positive impact on other major issues of this age, including climate change.

### The circular future started long ago in the Netherlands

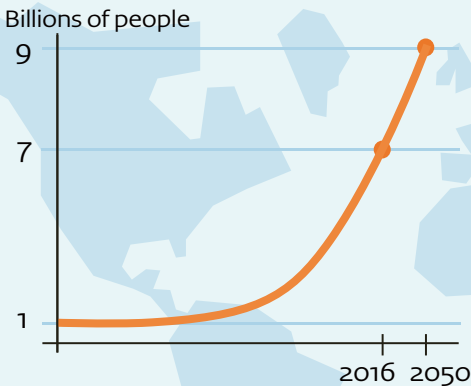
In the Netherlands, we are definitely not starting from scratch. For example, the recycling of plastic packaging has almost doubled in six years' time, and in 2014 we were already recycling 82% of our paper and cardboard. For metals, the level is even 94%.

Moreover, many municipalities have worked hard to achieve spectacular reductions in residual waste.

The business community too is actively working on realising a circular economy. For instance, the Dutch clothing brand G-Star Raw uses recycled materials to produce its jeans, and FrieslandCampina uses manure to generate energy.

And consumers are also playing their part. Over 80% of people say that they now often or always use their own shopping bags rather than plastic bags available at shops. In recent years, citizens, companies and authorities have made good progress in

## A CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE NETHERLANDS BY 2050



Smart design:  
Fewer resources



Conscious use:  
Extending product life



More and better reuse:  
Waste as a raw material



World population growth



Consumption growth

dealing with our scarce raw materials more effectively, more intelligently and more profitably. The first section of the circle is already in place. But this is just the beginning.

### **Circular thinking is a global issue**

The Netherlands cannot make the world circular on its own. Across the globe, significant steps have been taken along the road to a new, more sustainable economy.

At the global level, agreements have been made and set down in the Sustainable Development Goals. The aim is to reduce global food waste by 50%, support sustainable production and consumption patterns, combat poverty, improve human rights, encourage the sustainable use of natural resources and, of course, reduce waste including combating marine litter (often referred to as plastic soup).

### **Citizens, businesses and government: together we can close the circle**

To realise a circular economy, we not only have to change our way of producing and consuming, but also – and most importantly – our way of thinking. And we need to do so together!

This requires businesses that no longer simply create value for themselves, but will also take the interests of society into account. And consumers will more often share things rather than own them. Take cars, for example: Greenwheels proves that it can be easily done. Or what about tools – just look at Peerby. Good examples of a “new way of

thinking” are springing up everywhere. Ricoh is another example: customers can lease their scanners and printers, and we have Mud Jeans where you can hire jeans.

A circular economy needs more than technical innovations alone: social and economic innovations are essential. After all, circular solutions have an effect on consumers, businesses and authorities. For example, when designing a product, the period after end of life has to be taken into account. It is therefore important that together we look for opportunities to implement innovations.

### **The government is doing its bit**

The cabinet will take various measures in order to give the circular economy the space it needs. For instance, regulations and legislation will be amended to the benefit of the circular economy and there will be support for entrepreneurs who make raw materials savings. The measures will focus on legislation and regulations that have a stimulating effect, smart market incentives, funding, knowledge and innovation, and international cooperation.

### **The first milestone on the road to a circular economy: 50% less raw materials in 2030**

In the government-wide circular economy programme A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050, the cabinet outlines how we can convert our economy into a sustainability-driven, fully circular economy by 2050.

To achieve this goal, we need to take action at every level of society and set clear objectives. The first objective is ambitious but not unachievable: a 50% reduction in the use of raw materials like minerals, fossil-based fuels and metals by 2030. This objective is in line with the level of ambition of countries comparable to the Netherlands.

To realise the objectives set for 2030 and 2050, this year the cabinet wants to conclude a circular economy agreement with a variety of stakeholders.

Together, we will investigate the problems that are impeding the realisation of our circular economy, and together we will come up with appropriate solutions.

### **A circular economy in the Netherlands by 2050: five major chains and sectors have priority**

To accelerate the transition to a circular economy, the government plans to draw up “transition agendas” in which the five following chains and sectors have the highest priority: biomass and food, plastics, manufacturing, construction, and consumer goods. We, as the government, will support these priority chains and sectors so that by 2050 they will only be using sustainably produced, renewable or generally available raw materials, and be generating as little residual waste as possible. Another of our aims is for products that reach their end of life to undergo high-quality recycling and be used

to make new products. Smart return and collection systems will be set up to this end. We will do everything we can to ensure that consumers, businesses and authorities handle their products with due care, also when they reach their end of life. In this way, end-of-life products and materials remain invaluable in our economy.

### **Like to know more about a circular economy in the Netherlands by 2050?**

The Netherlands is on the brink of great changes as far as the circular economy is concerned. This not only means we will be facing challenges, it also offers significant and good opportunities for businesses and education, for instance. If you would like to know more about A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050.

You can find all information on the programme at [government.nl/circular-economy](https://government.nl/circular-economy).

The website also provides an overview of appealing, profitable examples from the circular economy in practice.



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**CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

[www.government.nl/circular-economy](http://www.government.nl/circular-economy)

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