



# Circular (bio)economy: a promising pathway for sustainable farming and development in rural areas?

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Aligning the circular economy and the bioeconomy at EU and national level



# Pathway to change

## Key drivers

- ▶ The power of local community-led action and **innovation**
- ▶ Community and citizen **empowerment** and **participation** in local development
- ▶ **Green and digital** investing in sustainable practices, circular economy, and digital infrastructure.
- ▶ Local **evidence** and experiences to guide policy developments
- ▶ **Alliances, partnerships** and **networking**



# Developing policy recommendations and tools



**Behavioural Change Towards Climate-Smart Agriculture –** focuses on behavioural analysis to develop transformational pathways to foster the transition to fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food systems and the adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and smart farming technologies in five Use Cases.



**SMART community-led transition for Europe's Rural Areas –** aims at reducing vulnerabilities and fostering resilience introducing Smart Innovation Packages (SIPs) as a framework addressing rural challenges with interconnected technological and non-technological solutions. Expected outcomes are: rural empowerment, solutions for rural needs and fostering smart village networks.



**Empowering Rural Communities to act for change –** aims to foster a just and sustainable transition of rural areas by developing smart, community-led, tailor-made, place based and inclusive solutions within local Multi-Actor Rural Innovation Ecosystems (RIEs) in 12 pilot area.

# Key policy momentum

- ✓ **2011 - Green economy** defined by UNEP
- ✓ **2012 - the EC communication A [bioeconomy strategy](#) for Europe.**
- ✓ **2015 – the EC **Circular Economy Package****
- ✓ **2018 – A [review](#) of the **EU's Bioeconomy Strategy****
- ✓ **2019 – European Green Deal**
- ✓ **2020 – [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) and [2030 Climate Target Plan](#)**
- ✓ **2021 – [Commission Communication: a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas](#) targets at 2040**
- ✓ **2022 – [Circular Economy: Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation](#); [Proposal for a first EU-wide voluntary framework to reliably certify high-quality carbon removals](#) and [Proposals to make sustainable products the norm in the EU, boost circular business models and empower consumers for the green transition](#)**
- ✓ **2023 – Council Conclusions** emphasise the need to **focus on rural areas in developing a bioeconomy**

Connections—whether **direct (D)**, **indirect (I)**, or **undetermined (-)**—between policy objectives and targets and the Climate-Smart Agriculture principles



Source: AEIDL, 2024

Climate-Smart Agriculture related main EU policies analysed	CSA Objectives		
	Sustainably increasing agricultural PRODUCTIVITY and incomes	ADAPTING and building resilience to climate change	MITIGATING, reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions
Common Agricultural Policy	D	D	D
Farm to Fork Strategy	D	D	D
Biodiversity Strategy 2030	I	D	I
European Climate Law	-	D	D
Organic production and labelling of organic products	D	I	I
Food quality certification schemes	D	-	-
Protection of geographical indications	I	-	-
Fruit and vegetables and processed fruit and vegetables sectors	I	-	-
Nitrates Directive	I	I	-
Pesticides Directive	I	I	I
Water Framework Directive	I	I	I
LULUCF Regulation	I	D	D
General Food Law	D	-	-
Food safety regulations	I	-	-
Health rules as regards animal by-products	I	-	I
EU animal health law	I	-	-
Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas	I	I	I
EU Digital Strategy	I	D	D
EU Mission: a Soil Deal for Europe	D	D	D
Industrial Strategy agri-food pathway	D	D	D
Nature Restoration Law	-	D	-
Framework Law on Sustainable Food Systems	I	I	I
EU carbon removals certification framework	-	D	D

# CAP to support the integration of EU agriculture into the circular economy system

- ✓ The primary sector needs to improve the **management of agricultural by-products and waste** in the framework of the circular economy.
- ✓ Promote **efficiency in the use of local natural resources and the circular bioeconomy at local level.**
- ✓ Exploit the **connections of the circular economy and the bioeconomy, especially in the treatment of livestock manure, closing nutrient loops and agri-food waste.**
- ✓ Exploit the existing **potential for the development of business models related to the circular bioeconomy to generate employment and wealth in rural areas and industrial base of rural areas**
- ✓ The circular economy, a facet of **agriculture rooted in innovation.**

## Support from CAP

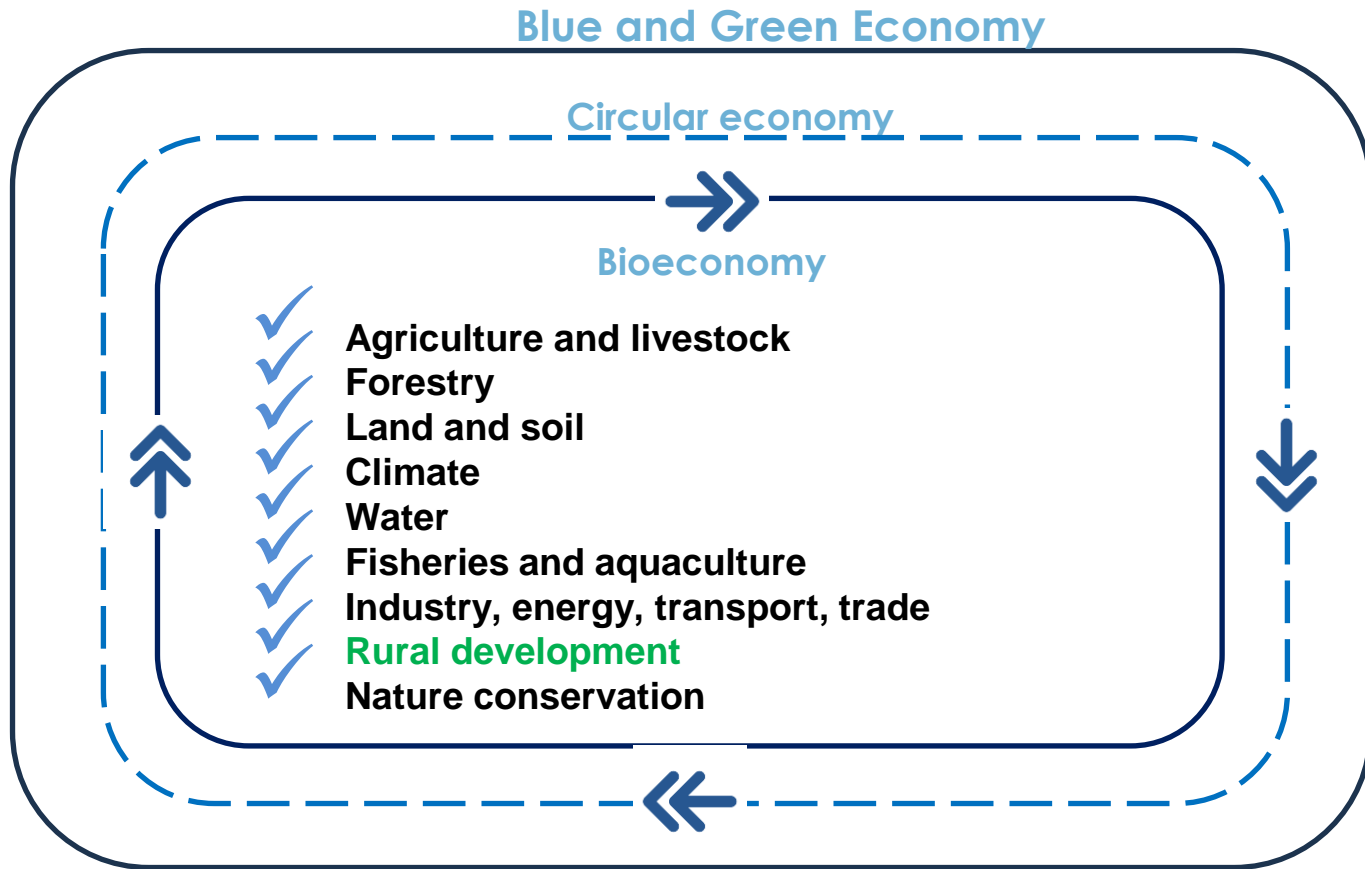


Direct payments eco-schemes when linked to environmental objectives

Rural Development interventions: Enviclim, Invest, Cooperation

*Ex (IE): Acquisition of equipment to convert fruit and vegetable waste into raw materials to improve the circular economy*

# Defining the concept and understanding the contribution of/to rural development



**Sustainable  
bio- and circular  
economy**

# Looking at the barriers and opportunities

- ✓ **Balance various materials re-uses, ensuring economic benefits while preserving social equity and enhancing ecosystem services avoiding intensification of natural resources.**
  - ✓ **Risk that sectoral approaches miss out on opportunities and synergies.**
  - ✓ **Lack of coherent policy support for a transition into circular (bio)economy.**
  - ✓ **Lack of funds for investment in circular technologies and products.** In particular for small-medium farms and rural businesses.
  - ✓ **Carbon removal technology is still far from being viable at the scale needed.**
  - ✓ **Need for specific advisory services.**
  - ✓ **Lack of public awareness and pressure.**
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- ✓ **Contribute to the modernisation and strengthening of the food sector as well as the industrial base of rural areas.**
  - ✓ **Creation of new, more diverse value chains and greener, more cost-effective processes, while protecting biodiversity and the environment.**
  - ✓ **Within rural areas, the circular (bio) economy can:**
    - ✓ **drive innovative business solutions** and can be supported through initiatives such as Startup Villages and support to SME's.
    - ✓ **lead to an improvement of the provision of infrastructure and services.**
  - ✓ **EU policies, such CAP, to support the integration of EU agriculture into the circular economy system.**



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✓ European Council (2023) Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 25 April 2023. Main results Agriculture: Opportunities of the bioeconomy <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/agrifish/2023/04/25/>

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✓ Ronzon, T., et al., Developments of Economic Growth and Employment in Bioeconomy Sectors across the EU, Sustainability 12, no.11:4507, 2020.

✓ Wieliczko, Barbara. (2019). What role for the CAP in making agriculture part of the EU circular economy?. Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development. 53. 10.17306/J.JARD.2019.01103.

# Thank you!

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