



**NEW
PLASTICS
ECONOMY**

**A VISION OF A CIRCULAR
ECONOMY FOR PLASTIC**



The New Plastics Economy is a vision of a circular economy for plastic, where plastic never becomes waste. It offers a root cause solution to plastic pollution with profound economic, environmental, and societal benefits.

For plastic packaging, specifically, we recognise a circular economy is defined by six characteristics:

1

Elimination of problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging through redesign, innovation, and new delivery models is a priority

- A** Plastic brings many benefits. At the same time, there are some problematic items on the market that need to be eliminated to achieve a circular economy, and sometimes, plastic packaging can be avoided altogether while maintaining utility.

2

Reuse models are applied where relevant, reducing the need for single-use packaging

- A** While improving recycling is crucial, we cannot recycle our way out of the plastic issues we currently face.
- B** Wherever relevant, reuse business models should be explored as a preferred 'inner loop', reducing the need for single-use plastic packaging.

3

All plastic packaging is 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable

- A** This requires a combination of redesign and innovation in business models, materials, packaging design, and reprocessing technologies.
- B** Compostable plastic packaging is not a blanket solution, but rather one for specific, targeted applications.

4

All plastic packaging is reused, recycled, or composted in practice

- A** No plastic should end up in the environment. Landfill, incineration, and waste-to-energy are not part of the circular economy target state.
- B** Businesses producing and/or selling packaging have a responsibility beyond the design and use of their packaging, which includes contributing towards it being collected and reused, recycled, or composted in practice.
- C** Governments are essential in setting up effective collection infrastructure, facilitating the establishment of related self-sustaining funding mechanisms, and providing an enabling regulatory and policy landscape.



5

The use of plastic is fully decoupled from the consumption of finite resources

- A** This decoupling should happen first and foremost through reducing the use of virgin plastic (by way of dematerialisation, reuse, and recycling).
- B** Using recycled content is essential (where legally and technically possible) both to decouple from finite feedstocks and to stimulate demand for collection and recycling.
- C** Over time, remaining virgin inputs (if any) should switch to renewable feedstocks where proven to be environmentally beneficial and to come from responsibly managed sources.
- D** Over time, the production and recycling of plastic should be powered entirely by renewable energy.

6

All plastic packaging is free of hazardous chemicals, and the health, safety, and rights of all people involved are respected

- A** The use of hazardous chemicals in packaging and its manufacturing and recycling processes should be eliminated (if not done yet).
- B** It is essential to respect the health, safety, and rights of all people involved in all parts of the plastics system, and particularly to improve worker conditions in informal (waste picker) sectors.

This vision is the target state we seek over time, acknowledging that realising it will require significant effort and investment; recognising the importance of taking a full life-cycle and systems perspective, aiming for better economic and environmental outcomes overall; and above all, recognising the time to act is now.