



The Circular Economy & Restaurants

Background Report

Momentum Novum



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FOREWORD

We are living in a time where the COVID-19 pandemic forces us to stay at home and prevents us from enjoying the implicitness of a social life together with friends and family. These months represent immense challenges for the health care system, as well as an imposition for self-employed individuals. A highly affected sector is most notably the food service sector, specifically restaurants - a place where people would gather to savor delicious food and drinks and talk about something other than the current concerning news. Missing customers, the more or less functioning delivery service, and the increasing expenses of restaurant owners pose alarming financial difficulties that seem insuperable. But we are also highly aware of the environmental enhancement the current curfew is causing. Being aware of both the unreasonable circumstances restaurant owners need to deal with, as well as the positive environmental impact that is indeed reachable, we, the team of Momentum Novum, believe that there is a solid way out of these uncertain times – a sustainable and efficient way.

In this report, after introducing the basic theories and concepts with which we shape our analysis and strategies, we delineate specific case studies of how the circular economy can be applied within the gastronomy industry. The case studies are followed by a description of Momentum Novum and our first ideas of what our collaboration with you could look like.

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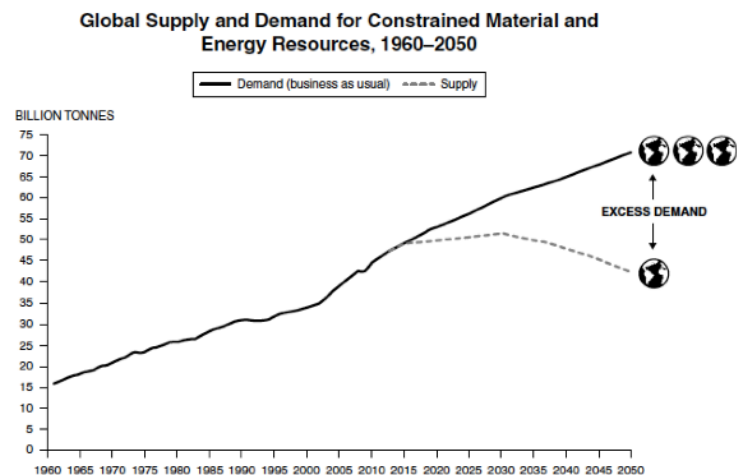
1. The Circular Economy

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WHY CIRCULARITY?

By 2030, a gap of eight billion tons between supply and demand of natural resources will develop. The reason: Earth's scarce resources (Lacy/Rutqvist 2015: xviii). The current linear economy model is built upon a resource-based growth, meaning that resources are taken from the ground and further processed into products, which after use are thrown away. However, this so-called "take, make, dispose" approach is reaching its limits (Ibid,: 4). Intensive mining in the last 250 years, immense population growth, as well as the increasing demand for goods and services has led to an explosive increase in the use of global resources (Ibid,: xvi).

But it is not only the pursuit of using virgin materials that puts the linear growth model in trouble. A total amount of 11 billion tons of waste results from the linear economy, whereas only 25 percent of that total waste is reused in the production process again (Ibid,: 8). Therefore, economic growth and resource availability of business-as-usual are no longer two sides of the same coin. Even now, the world is using the equivalent of 1.5 planets' worth of resources every year and by 2050 the world will require three planets' worth of resources (Figure 1). Consequently, prices of natural resources (i.e. metals, cotton, oil, agriculture commodities) increase, which in turn poses the risk of putting companies that rely on those scarce resources at a competitive disadvantage (Ibid,: 12). Summarized, the current linear economy model is unsustainable and thus, the circular model comes into play: the best alternative to the business-as-usual approach.



(Figure 1: Lacy/ Rutqvist 2015: 15)

- Between 2014 and 2030, 2.5 billion new middle-class consumers are expected to join the competition for natural resources (Ibid,: 6)
- A total of a \$1 trillion in annual lost value is generated from waste; for Germany it is a value loss of \$20 billion (Ibid,: 9)

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES



- More than half of the planet's ecosystem services that support human life have been degraded or are used unsustainably
- By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans in a business-as-usual scenario
- The average person consumes about 50,000 pieces of plastic per year and inhales the equivalent amount

Figure 2: Planetary Boundaries (Stockholm Resilience Centre 2015)

The planetary boundaries framework delineates the Earth system-processes and conceptualizes nine boundaries in which humans can operate safely. If boundaries are crossed, it could cause drastic damage to the environment. As illustrated in figure 2, four planetary boundaries, namely biochemical flows, land-system change, biosphere integrity, and climate change, have already been overstepped and represent an immense environmental harm. Scientists emphasize that soon the remaining boundaries, such as for freshwater use and ocean acidification, will also be reached. These catastrophic consequences of human activities show, yet again, why another approach to our economy, namely a circular and more sustainable model, is necessary.

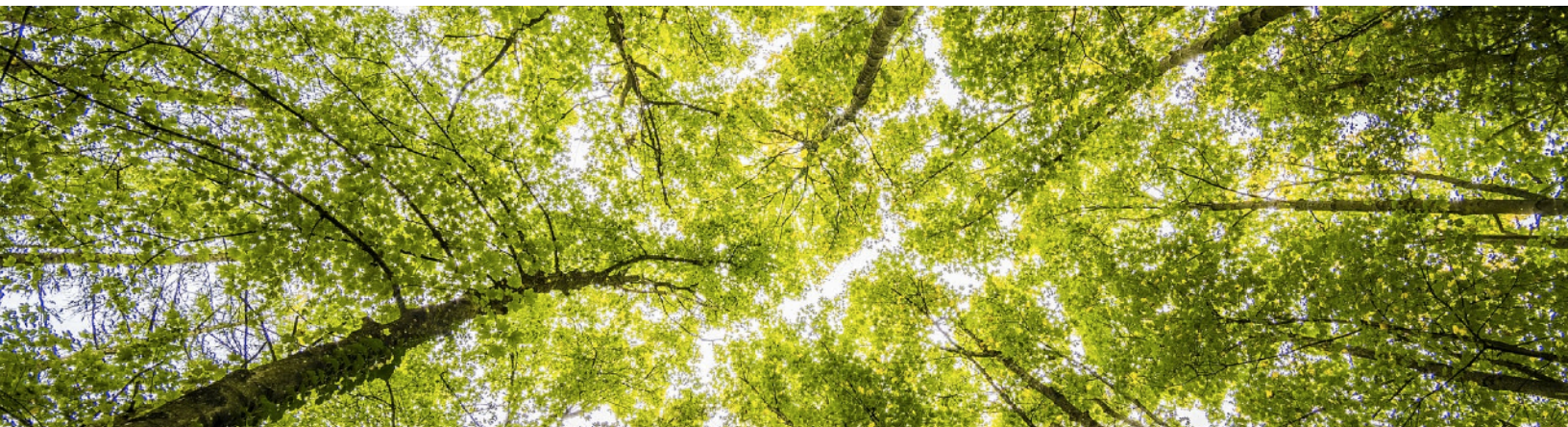
WHAT IS CIRCULARITY?

In the same way that a fallen tree becomes nutrients for the soil, in a circular economy, millions of tons of “waste” become “nutrients” for something new.



Our economic system is currently based on a take-make-dispose model, in which resources are taken, made into a product and, at the end of the product’s life, disposed of. In a world of finite resources, this linear model lacks long-term stability, as valuable resources are depleted and slowly converted into landfill.

The circular economy aims to create a loop out of this linear system by converting “waste” back into resources; keeping it within the production cycle. In the same way that a fallen tree becomes nutrients for the soil, in a circular economy, millions of tons of “waste” become “nutrients” for something new.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Economic prosperity can gradually be decoupled from the consumption of finite resources and, when combined with a transition to renewable energies, the circular economy builds not only economic capital but also natural and social capital.

By using efficient design to avoid the production of waste in the first place, materials and products (i.e. food, packages) can be reused, recycled or even composted. As a result, scarce natural resources can be reutilized and even regenerated and enhanced.

According to the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#), three basic principles underpin the circular economy:

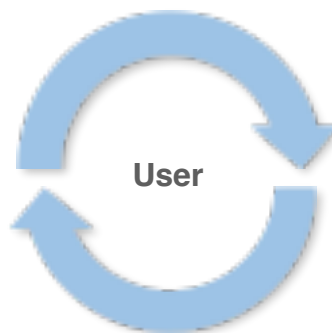
1. **Design out** waste and pollution
2. **Keep products and materials in use**
3. **Regenerate** natural systems

Organic Material



Renewables

Technical Material



Finite Resources

Resources are divided into two categories: organic material (**consumables**) and technical material (useful **durable components**). Consumables are non-toxic materials that can be returned to the biosphere safely and, ideally, also provide nutrients. Durable components, on the other hand, are materials such as glass, plastics or metals that may be kept in use through various repair, redistribution, remanufacturing or recycling processes. By differentiating consumables into these categories, organizations can increase their commitment to some of the strategies laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals.



2. Sustainable Development

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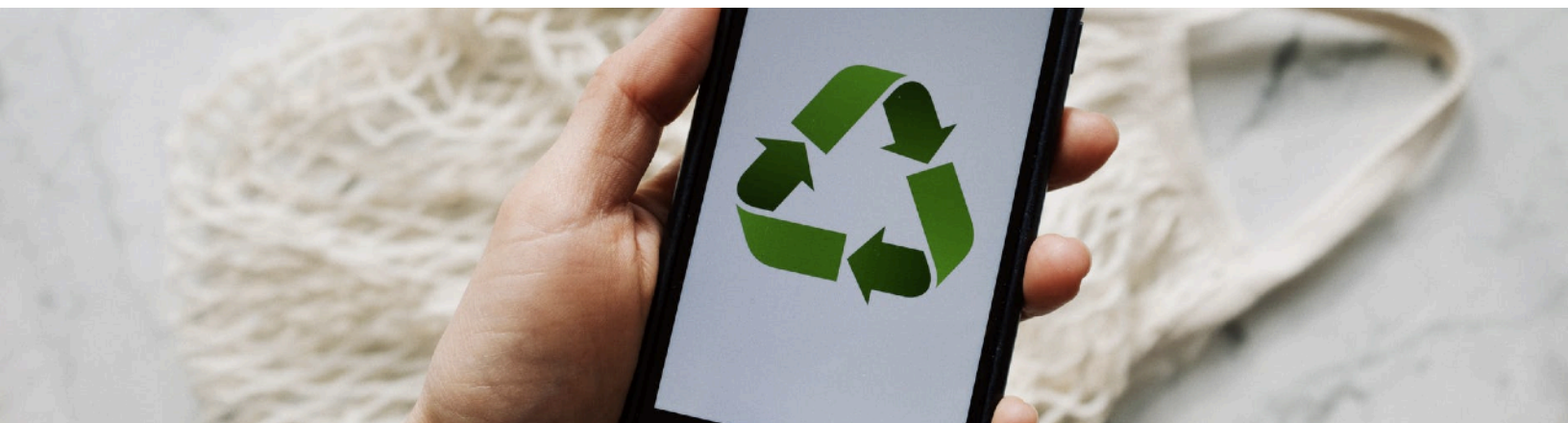


WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Sustainable development is development that **“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”** - *Brundtland Report, 1987*

While many definitions of sustainability and sustainable development exist, the most prominent and impactful definition stems from the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, from 1987, which describes sustainable development as development that **“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”**

Although the sustainability discourse originates from international negotiations on environmental and developmental issues, it has evolved to a wide spanning field that connects efforts in the fields of the environment, development, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and peace and security. The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) therefore address a wide range of topic areas and seek to move past thinking in silos and towards a connected understanding of the challenges and opportunities of sustainability.



WHAT ARE THE SDGs?

The 17 SDGs are set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and were adopted in 2015 by all UN Member States. In doing so, the Member States agreed to “commit [themselves] to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030.” It is also important hereby that all the 17 SDGs correlate. This means that this global partnership and strategy emphasizes that, for instance ending poverty (SDG 1) must come together with other strategies, such as the reduction of inequality (SDG 10) or economic growth (SDG 8), while simultaneously climate change needs to be tackled (SDG 13) and our oceans (SDG 14) as well as forests (SDG 15) need to be protected.



By introducing elements of the circular economy into your business, you will be directly contributing to the realization of the UN’s SDGs. The most relevant SDGs are:

- SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth**
- SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**
- SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production**
- SDG 13 - Climate Action**

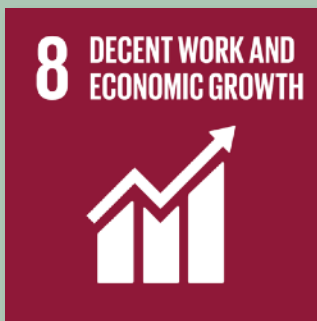




3. Nexus between Sustainability and Circularity

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THE SDGs AND CIRCULARITY



SDG 8: Target 8.4 seeks to improve “[...] global resource efficiency in consumption and production and [...] to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation [...]”. With a focus on utilizing human resources, rather than natural resources, the circular economy is an ideal model for achieving this aim. For example, if a company leases out appliances instead of selling them, it will require more human resources for the repair and maintenance of the returned items. Additionally, since the leased items are repaired or remanufactured, fewer new items are manufactured from raw materials. Therefore, by replacing the linear economy with the circular economy, we can significantly reduce our environmental impact and increase employment rates.

SDG 9: This goal fosters opportunities to promote innovation in all sectors, while working to promote economic growth and supporting structures. Goal 9 has important links to transportation, technological advancement, manufacturing, and economic infrastructure among others, all of which play an integral role for advancing the circular economy. SDG targets 9.4 and 9.5 have a strong impact on circularity through resource efficiencies that include waste reduction, or innovative research to improve packaging, quality, or reliability of products. Fostering innovation and industrialization is directly linked to the circular economy and improves sustainability throughout business practices.



THE SDGs AND CIRCULARITY

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



SDG 12: In order for businesses to be sustainable, they must use consumption and production techniques that can be utilized over and over again. Aspects related to this include utilizing procurement methods that ensure producers are receiving fair and equitable compensation, the products that are being sourced have the lowest impact on the environment, or contribute to social improvements for that business. For example, if a fast food restaurant were looking to source new utensils, they could look to purchase ones made of biodegradable or recyclable materials, which could be further broken down after use, and be made into either a new utensil, or another product (i.e. compost). In a sit down restaurant, they may elect to use cloth napkins, which have an almost endless number of uses.

SDG 13: On everyone's mind in the 21st century is climate change. Circularity has the potential to have a huge impact on reducing the effects of climate change. By implementing sustainable circularity practices, such as designing out waste, reusing materials, and the regeneration of farmland, a reduction of up to 9.3 billion tons of emissions could be achieved. This is equal to about half of the emissions from the production of goods, such as cars, clothes and food, and would be equivalent to eliminating the current emissions of all transportation globally.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



BENEFITS OF CIRCULARITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

REDUCE MATERIAL COSTS

By **recycling** and **up-cycling** components, you can save costs and protect the environment. In the mobile phone industry, for example, 50% of the costs can be saved through remanufacturing.

IMPROVE PUBLIC REPUTATION

Show the world how you contribute to the achievement of the **SDGs** that all countries in the world agree on. Be a **pioneer** in the circular economy and sustainable development and gain new customers as demand for sustainable products rises.

REDUCE RISKS

Avoid resource depletion and build stronger and more reliable supply-chains by unleashing the **potential** of **unused** recycled **resources**. Unused or underused resources can mitigate costs and improve your **bottom line**.

FOSTER INNOVATION

Promote creativity, **employee** and **customer satisfaction**, enhance **productivity**, and gain a **comparative advantage** by being at the top of your field.





4. Case Studies

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SELECTED CASES

01

SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

Innovative forms of packaging that design out waste and consist of recycled or completely compostable material and/or can be completely reused or recycled after use. [Example: Mushroom Packaging.](#)

02

RETURN OF THE MILKMAN

In the UK, milk and other groceries are again being directly delivered to people in reusable containers. In some cases, milkmen or milkwomen deliver by bike and thus save even more greenhouse gas emissions. [Background article.](#)

03

SHARING IS CARING

Local food sharing initiatives collect leftover food from restaurants and supermarkets and turn them into delicious, affordable and healthy meals or help those in need by delivering groceries to them. [Examples for Heidelberg, Germany.](#)

04

CLOSING THE LOOP

In 2019, a [German detergent manufacturer](#) received the German Environmental Prize for inventing packaging that is almost completely recyclable and consists out of mostly recycled plastics. They did what others deemed impossible: closing the loop of detergent containers.

05

VEGETABLE IVORY

[Taguarte](#), an Ecuadorian jewelry producer and client of Momentum Novum, produces sustainable jewelry made from local tagua, the seeds of special Ecuadorian palm trees.

CASE STUDY: Blue Hill



*“I’m thinking less about individual ingredients or plates of food, but more about a **whole pattern of eating** that supports the (...) landscape.”*



Dan Barber, the chef behind the restaurant Blue Hill, redefines the regional approach. Through his restaurant he created a farming entity, inclusive animals, vegetables, and grains, outside of New York City. This all evolved into a unique story of sustainably creating delicious dishes, starting from the seeds and soil. The whole agriculture system, including the supply from local farmers, as well as the sustainable and organic production and processing of food, is essential to change our way of eating, and in ensuring less harm to the environment and better tasting food.

Barber’s main observation was that the focus on one single special ingredient that seemingly leads to good tasting food is the wrong path. It is not the product itself but the system and the culture that produces it, hence people not only eat the food but a whole system that delivers the meat or the vegetables. Therefore, exploring local suppliers, farming possibilities and an organic food supply, can not only do good for the environment but also positively affect eating patterns.

*“We are told that everything begins with **seed**. Everything ends with it, too. As a chef I can tell you that your meal will be incalculably more delicious if I’m cooking with good ingredients. (...) seed influences (...) not only the beginning and the end of the food chain, but also every link in between.”*



CASE STUDY: Nolla

Only two years ago, three chefs from three different countries met in Finland, became friends, and developed one mission: pursuing zero waste. Being firstly skeptical, but also highly aware of the fact that European restaurants produce on average 70,000 kg of waste per year, Carlos Henriques, Luka Balac and Albert Sunyer decided to fight against the immense production of waste and show that there is a solution to it. Their restaurant Nolla, which means “zero” in Finnish, successfully implemented the zero waste approach in every aspect of the restaurant.



*“We were all deeply aware that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way in which food waste and food packaging (...) was handled. We eventually came up with the **concept of zero waste.**”*

*“(...) serve great food, make money but do so in a **circular economy way.**”*



Seasonal ingredients are provided from local suppliers who only deliver their products in reusable packages/pallets. Through the use of a composting machine, food waste can be transformed to soil that in turn is sent back to the local farmers. But the zero waste idea is also transferable to durable materials in the restaurant, such as napkins from recycled materials and cooking oil delivered in reusable containers. As a result, their ambitious work quickly paid off - within two weeks of opening their waste reduced by 80%.





5. Sustainable Restaurants

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SUSTAINABLE RESTAURANTS

Restaurants play a key role in society from both a consumer perspective, as well as providing economic growth for owners. From fast food, table service, cafes, and bars, each sub-category of the restaurant industry has a large impact on sustainability, and can also play a key role in improving circularity.

There are numerous examples of sustainability in the food industry, including how and what type of food is selected, its nutritional value, the recyclability of consumable materials, waste, staff wages, or restaurant infrastructure. Restaurants and the food industry also play a key role in reducing the impact of climate change, which can include food sourcing, availability, accessibility, their supply chain, waste, and carbon footprint. As the impacts of climate change continue to become increasingly apparent, it is important for restaurants to consider their impact on the planet, and implement solutions to support climate resilience. Circularity is one area that restaurants can directly influence. Many aspects of circularity are fairly simple for restaurants to implement, and these changes can lead to significant changes in their contribution to sustainability.

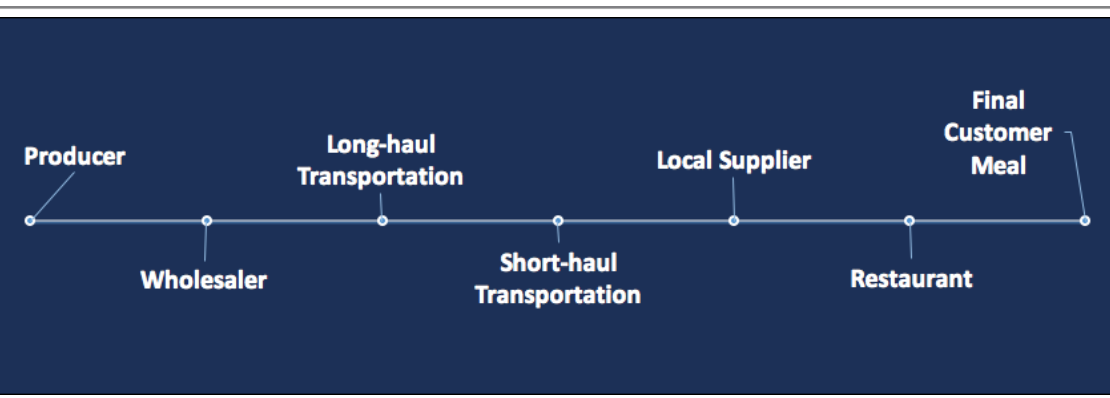


For each \$1 invested in food waste activities, restaurants could see \$14 return on investment

- Hanson & Mitchell 2017

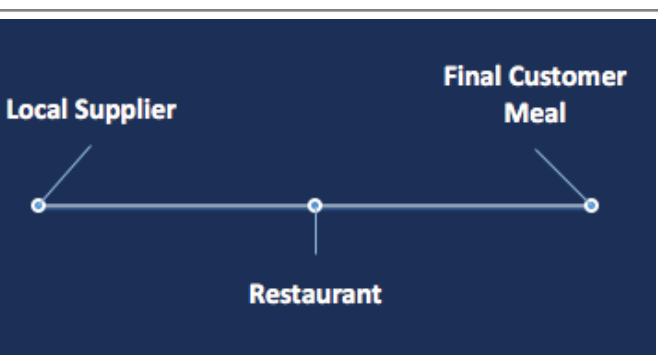


SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS



A critical aspect of circularity is that of food supply chains. A supply chain is the culmination of all activities that go into getting a product from its origin (usually its raw materials) to its final form for the end customer.

Standard Linear Supply Chain (ex. product purchased from overseas supplier)



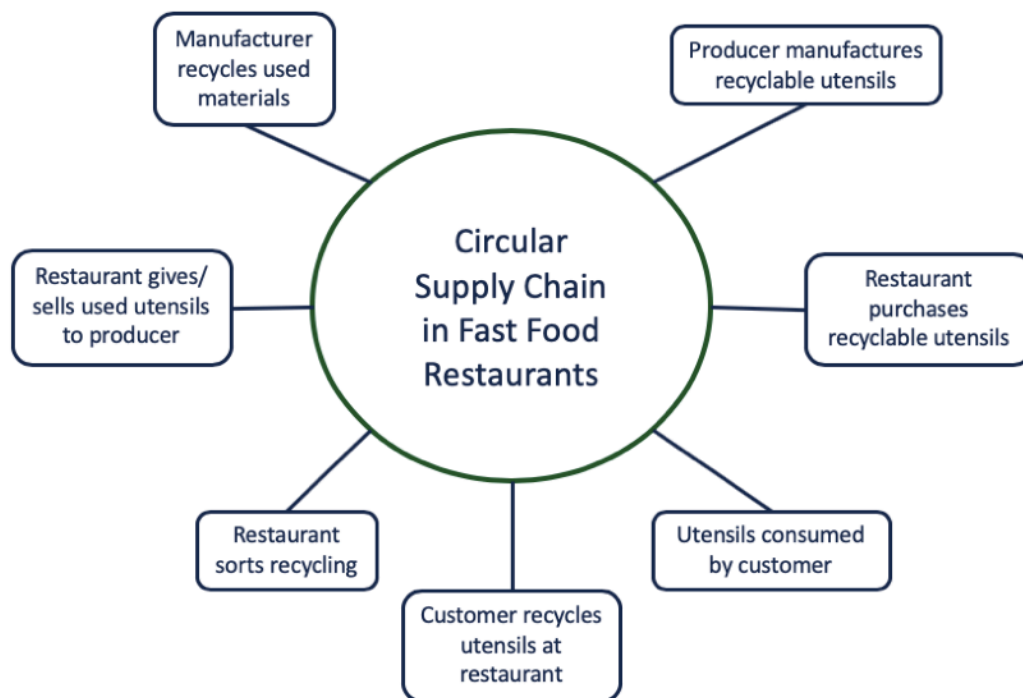
Short Linear Supply Chain (ex. product purchased from local supplier)

In the case of restaurants and food, this would be looking at getting food products from its origin through to its final presentation for the customer. Some of the activities that make up the supply chain include procurement (which include determining which products need to be purchased, or which suppliers are to be used), logistics and transportation, or storage and inventory management. Restaurants make these decisions on a daily basis, and it is common to forget how one decision could have many adverse impacts that often go overlooked.

A simple decision such as to source products locally or overseas has numerous additional impacts, such as an increase in the number of people or businesses involved in getting those materials to your restaurant. This increases the length of a restaurant supply chain, and can lead to drastically lower profit margins for those at the start of the process (farmers/producers). However, sourcing locally also allows for the highest profits to be gained by these producers and also reduces the carbon footprint of the product.

SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS

When selecting suppliers, it is also essential to ensure they follow the same ethical and sustainability practices that your organization identifies with. This can include ensuring suppliers pay their workers livable wages or participate in supplier sustainability audits.



Circular Supply Chain (ex. restaurant recycling used to make new materials for restaurant use)

While the supply chain is often viewed as linear, there is an argument that a supply chain could also be adapted to be circular. For example, a fast food restaurant could choose to procure utensils or other consumable products from an organization that uses recyclable products to make those items. For a restaurant to support an initiative like this, it requires a thorough understanding of each aspect of their business, including understanding both upstream and downstream aspects of their business. By adopting a circular supply chain model, restaurants have the ability to have stronger control over their supply chain, and create better relationships with both their upstream, and downstream partners

AVOIDING WASTE

Waste is a key component in managing an efficient and effective supply chain. Waste in restaurants can come in 3 key areas: **food** waste, **packaging** waste, and **processing** waste. Management of these wastes is essential in order to reduce economic impact, while also significantly improving your restaurant's bottom line. For many small restaurants, any level of savings can be critical for business performance.

WASTE REDUCTION THROUGH:

1. FOOD
2. PACKAGING
3. PROCESSING



First looking at **food** waste, it is important that the procurement practices of your business do not promote overconsumption or over-ordering. This can have a significant environmental impact, and over time can cause your business to lose money. When developing a sustainable food waste strategy, it is important to consider how food can be disposed of, such as through composting. A number of businesses engage in a food policy such that you only sell a certain number of dishes per day, and close the shop once sold out. This strategy allows your business to not only ensure food is not wasted, but also can be used as a marketing program to encourage people to dine before your dishes sell out.

AVOIDING WASTE

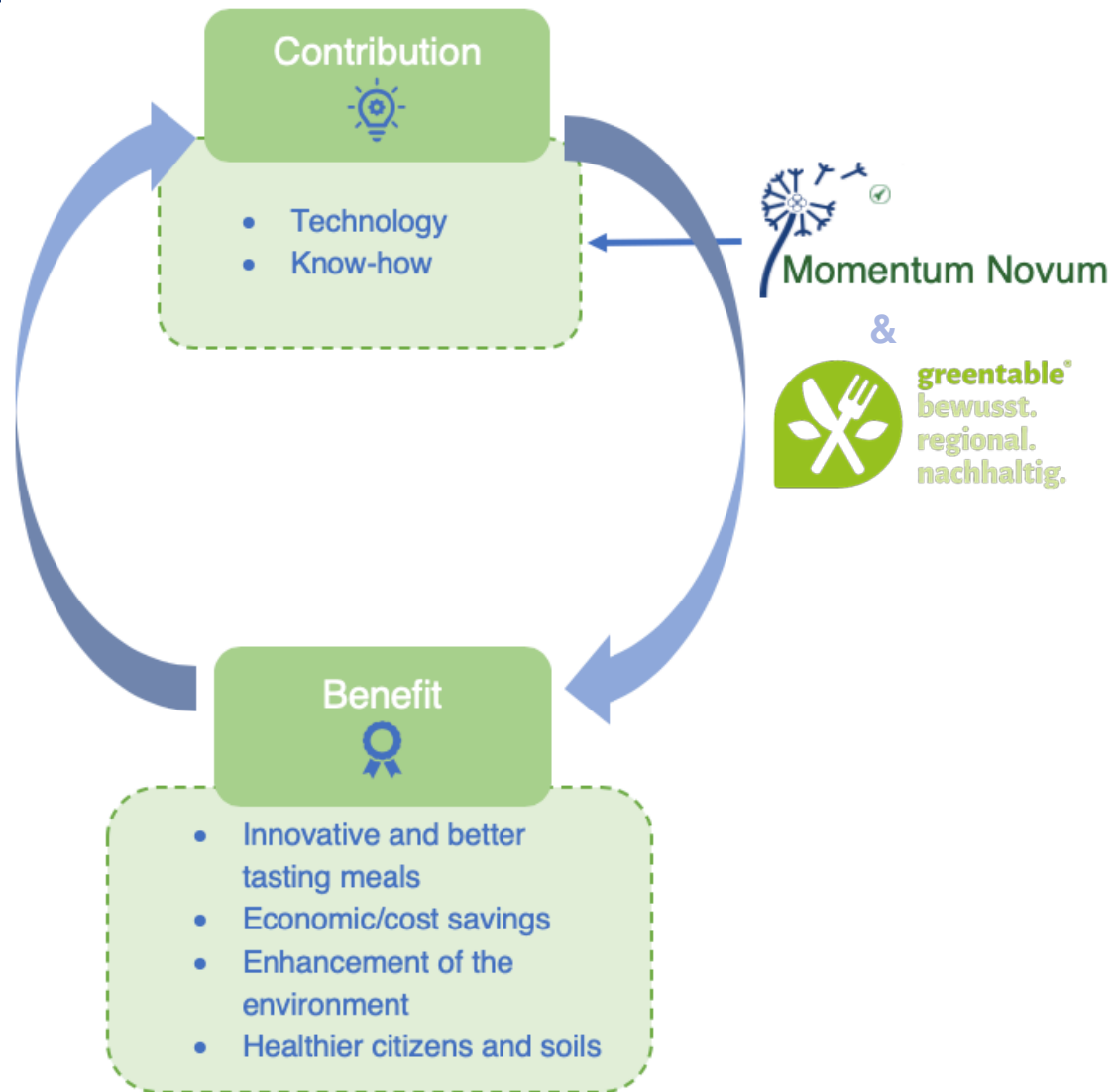
Secondly, food **packaging** is a large contributor to food waste in the restaurant industry. It is important when selecting which products to order, so that you are selecting those with the least amount of packaging, ordering items that have recyclable/compostable packaging, or ordering from a supplier that allows you to reuse packaging (e.g. plastic trays for fruit and vegetables).



The third aspect of waste in restaurants comes with **process** waste. While this is just another way to talk about inefficient processes, having waste or unnecessary steps in your restaurant can have impacts on both environmental and economic sustainability. This can be seen through excess, incorrect, or lengthy processes, such as throwing away items that can be recycled or reused, an inefficient kitchen layout, or packaging on customer “to-go” orders.

Moreover, **inventory management practices** are an essential aspect of maintaining a sustainable supply chain for numerous reasons including lower operating costs, reduced product waste, less overconsumption. While analyzing inventory to find the perfect mix and levels of products can be challenging, finding the optimal levels can be beneficial for all parties in the supply chain.

WHAT YOUR RESTAURANT CAN DO



What first seems like a big wave of novelties offers many innovative opportunities for restaurant owners - from working with your local suppliers and cost efficient cooking, to new and healthier delicious meals. With our cooperation partner greentable - an initiative that works towards a more responsible and sustainable food service landscape in Germany - we will develop strategies suitable for your restaurant. Your contribution together with us will open many doors and lead to prosperous achievements.



6. How We Can Support You

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INFORMATION

To contribute to a new narrative of sustainability, we offer a variety of informational services. Our regular podcast - Green is the New Black - designed to tackle and discuss the pertinent issues of sustainability, and our series of blogs and discussion posts written by our team and a wide network of experts.



EDUCATION

Our educational services span from lectures & workplace training to Momentum Action Labs, in which everyone can acquire the necessary skills to develop concrete solutions towards a more sustainable world. Our largest conference is the Sustainable Development in Action Conference (www.sdia.eu).




ADVISORY

We support businesses, governments and organizations of all sizes in achieving their sustainability goals. We offer sustainability assessments, use innovative methods to develop strategies, and facilitate the implementation and communication of sustainability projects.



MOMENTUM NOVUM AND CIRCULARITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



ANALYSIS

We have developed specific concepts and tools to **assess** the **circularity** and **sustainability** of your **products** and **services** and can directly relate the components to **cost savings** for your organization.

COACHING

We support you in the process of transitioning to sustainability and circularity by **coaching** your **team members** and facilitating **learning opportunities** on sustainability and circularity in your organization.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

We develop tailored sustainability and circularity **strategies with you**. Through **innovative methods**, such as co-creation and scenario techniques, we facilitate the inclusion of diverse stakeholders to build effective and robust strategies and plans.

COMMUNICATION

With years of experience in journalism and public relations, our team can support you in **effectively** and **creatively communicating** your sustainability initiatives to your designated **target groups**.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



WE HELP YOU TO UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL



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We hope this short introductory report has given you an idea of why sustainability and circularity are the way forward. We are convinced that focusing on the nexus between sustainability and circularity can help you to unleash your full potential and become a leader in your field. With our international team of experts on different areas of sustainability and specific methods to turn ideas into practices, we are here to facilitate your success.

**Contact us for a free introductory
consultation at
info@momentumnovum.com
www.momentumnovum.com**

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