



Media release

Launch of the first Circularity Gap Report Switzerland and kick-off of a nationwide Circular Economy Roadmap:

## **Inefficient material use and a high carbon footprint: Swiss economy only 6.9 % circular**

Zurich/Bern, 20.3.2023. This first *Circularity Gap Report* for Switzerland reveals the country's high material consumption and greenhouse gas emissions to satisfy its residents' needs and wants. According to the report, just under 7% of the raw materials used in the Swiss economy come from secondary sources like recycling—leaving a Circularity Gap of just over 93%. This means that the vast majority of material inputs to the Swiss economy come from virgin sources, mostly through extraction taking place abroad—contributing to significant environmental impacts, from emissions to waste generation.

The *Circularity Gap Report Switzerland*, initiated by Circular Economy Switzerland and Deloitte Switzerland with the support of Impact Hub Switzerland and Kickstart Innovation, was authored by impact organisation Circle Economy. The report underlines the urgent need to act and marks the launch of an ambitious national multistakeholder process to achieve a truly circular economy in Switzerland. More than 200 leading actors from the private and public sectors, government agencies, policymakers, academia and NGOs registered to participate in today's launch event to develop a roadmap for Switzerland.

The circular economy is defined as a system in which waste is minimised, products and materials are reused at their highest possible value, and natural systems are regenerated. Common circular strategies include reuse, refurbish, repair or recycle, to name just a few. There are enormous deficits in this worldwide. Globally, the extraction and processing of materials are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions and for more than 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress. The study published today shows that Switzerland consumes around 163 million tonnes of new materials per year, which is 19 tonnes per capita. This is far more than the estimated sustainable level of 8 tonnes per capita.

**Manufacturing, construction and agrifood industries account for the bulk of Switzerland's material and carbon footprints.** Together, manufacturing, construction and agrifood account for 73% of the material and 63% of the carbon footprint (including other greenhouse gases). Swiss manufacturing has a substantial environmental impact, contributing just over 40% of the country's material footprint and accounting for 36% of the carbon footprint. The report notes its innovative strength: applying circular solutions in the sector could have a substantial positive impact, lowering environmental consequences. Swiss construction comes in second, consuming huge amounts of materials, energy and water: it accounts for 18% of the total material footprint and 14% of the total carbon footprint. Older, less energy efficient buildings make up a large share of the building stock, contributing to these figures. Finally, the agrifood industries feeding the Swiss population account for 14% of the total material footprint and 13% of the carbon footprint: most of this is accounted for by processed food, meat and the cultivation of crops for animal and human consumption.

Although these three sectors are very material and carbon-intensive, Switzerland is well-positioned to make a change.

**Huge improvements are possible.** The report identifies five areas where Switzerland needs to act:

1. Advance circular manufacturing;
2. Rethink transport & mobility;
3. Build a circular built environment;
4. Nurture a circular food system;
5. Embrace a circular lifestyle.

By pursuing these five areas, Switzerland's circularity could almost double (from 6.9% to 12.1%), and material consumption could be reduced by a third (-33%), and the carbon footprint could be almost halved (-43%).

For these five areas, the comprehensive analysis done for the Circularity Gap Report Switzerland identifies the main levers to progress towards a more comprehensive circular economy. "It is clear that achieving a more circular economy requires more than just technical solutions," explains Carlo Giardinetti, Consulting Sustainability lead at Deloitte Switzerland. "Increased coordination and cooperation between all the actors involved, a cross-cutting, holistic approach and consideration of the decentralised governance structure are equally indispensable. Stakeholders from the private and public sectors, civil society organisations and academia need to join forces to drive meaningful change."

"Circular economy is an imminent opportunity and challenge for Switzerland as a whole, and the manufacturing industry specifically. If our current rate of consumption continues, demand for goods will grow year-on-year without a change, the world would consume increasingly more goods. This requires more energy- and resource-efficient machines, new technologies and business models. Herein lies an opportunity for the Swiss manufacturing industry, which, thanks to its exports, can help contribute to circular solutions worldwide," explains Christine Roth, Head of Environment Policy association for Switzerland's mechanical and electrical engineering industries, Swissmem, who was part of the scientific committee of the report.

The report notes that with a more circular economy, Switzerland could also benefit from many other advantages: improved average health of the population, increased well-being through more sustainable food, more resilient social communities, protection of nature and strengthening of biodiversity, to name a few.

Behind all the figures mentioned in the report lies enormous potential for improvement for the Swiss economy. The potential for the Circularity Metric to grow to 12.1% should not be underestimated - 100% circularity is technically not possible. Raw materials and processed materials cannot be cycled back into the economy infinitely due to quality losses with each cycle. Furthermore, as a small country with few raw materials, Switzerland is strongly integrated into the global economy, with difficult-to-control production and trade conditions. Nevertheless, the advantages of taking action in the five areas listed by the report are obvious.

"Supporting Switzerland's transition to a circular economy can help create a more resilient, sustainable country," says Felix Stähli, member of the executive board of Circular Economy Switzerland, which is the coordination and network platform for the Swiss circular economy movement. "If Switzerland follows the basic principles of the circular economy—use less, use longer, use again, and do it all as cleanly as possible—the country has the opportunity to seriously address its status quo on environmental issues and make real progress towards its various environmental goals."

**About the report:**

The *Circularity Gap Report Switzerland* was initiated by [Circular Economy Switzerland](#) and the audit and consulting company [Deloitte](#), with the support of [Impact Hub Switzerland](#), [Kickstart Innovation](#) and [Circle Economy](#), which wrote the report based on their methodology. The comprehensive analytical study on the current state of Switzerland's circularity has been developed by the Amsterdam-based foundation Circle Economy, author of the yearly global *Circularity Gap Report*. More than 60 people from the Swiss private, public, and civil society contributed to the production of the report, which lasted almost one year.

[Download](#) the full report.

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