

Linking organic waste and agriculture in a circular economy

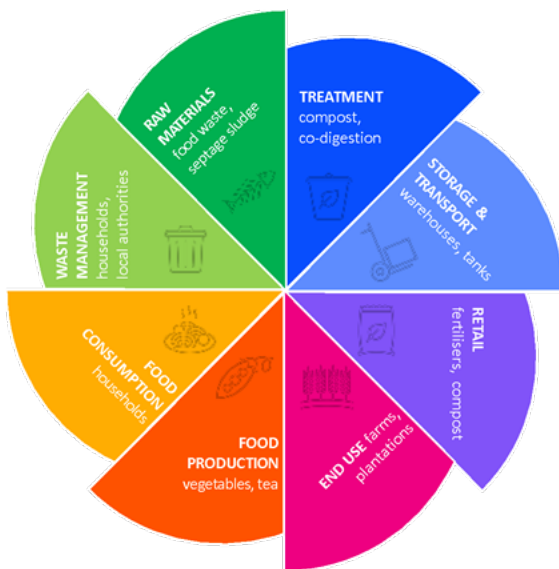
Multi - stakeholder sharing forum SUMMARY OF LEARNING

This summary document provides an overview of learning and insights from a multi-stakeholder networking forum held in Colombo Sri Lanka, 20 June 2024. The Forum sought to bring together representatives from the organic waste value chain to showcase best practices linking agriculture and organic waste, explore how this could be strengthened in the future and facilitate future collaborations by connecting relevant stakeholders. The forum included 39 organic waste value chain stakeholders - from government, civil society, private sector, academia, and development partners.

How can we **better link** organic waste and agriculture in a circular economy?

Through the Q&A with the panellists, the participants explored how we can better link organic waste and agriculture in a circular economy. During the group activity, participants explored how to address hypothetical scenarios that are based on knowledge of waste management in the Western Province. The hypothetical scenarios are:

1. Existing users are doing some composting but need to improve the quality in order to improve their home gardening
2. Households new to composting and waste segregation need access to equipment and training
3. Local authorities have difficulties in managing organic waste and they would like to reduce the cost burden
4. Selling organic waste-derived products is a challenge, but the Council wants to do so as a new revenue stream by 2030



The figure above shows the ideal flow of food waste in a circular economy.

About the Research Partnership

The forum was hosted by KMC in collaboration with the project, 'Sustainable Organic Waste Value Chains'. The project is implemented through a partnership between the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS-ISF), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Janathakshan (GTE) Ltd, and Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL).

The research project is funded under the Knowledge and Linkages for an Inclusive Economy (KLIE) Grants Program of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

See work from the research partnership to date: [Click here.](#)



What type of **technical and social processes** are needed to support better organic waste management?

The forum was an opportunity for various stakeholders to share their ideas on how the issues relating to organic waste management and potential solutions.

Key themes were:

- Supportive links needed**
 - The agricultural sector can work with waste suppliers to work out the best use for waste products and provide feedback.
 - Local authorities and the private sector can work together to provide funding and initiatives that improve waste management.
 - Community leaders and organisations can connect with their communities to get them involved and educate them on organic waste management.
- Education needed**
 - Communities need to be educated on how to separate waste.
 - Staff and stakeholders need training on best practices so they're aware of the benefits of organic waste products.
 - Have marketing experts promote organic waste products.
- Investment needed**
 - Investment is needed in equipment for home composting and gardening such as seeds, bins and tools.
 - Investment is needed in research programs.
 - Local businesses need to financially assist in the cost of composting.
 - Investment is needed in educational materials.

Linking organic waste and agriculture in a circular economy



Partial knowledge and still more to learn

The forum was an opportunity for a wide variety of stakeholders to share their ideas on how to address issues relating to organic waste management. They did this during the panel discussion and then during the group activity in which participants were asked to answer questions on hypothetical scenarios based on knowledge of organic waste management in the Western Province. A limitation was the lack of representation of the private sector, however, engaging them in general is a challenge to be addressed by the broader sector.



How can we **better link** organic waste and agriculture in a circular economy?



What needs to **change** to support links with relevant stakeholders to support the needs of improved organic waste management? Who is **responsible** for taking action on this?

The following topics were suggested by organisers. Participants highlighted how they can be addressed.

Topic	Ways of addressing the topic
 <p>1. Improving the quality of home compost</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness on use of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through the private sector. • Maintain Local Authorities responsibility for managing household waste. • Selling household's surplus compost. • Increase investment for composting equipment, research programs and capacity building. • Organise best practice competitions amongst households.
 <p>2. Removing barriers to entry for households new to composting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free/affordable composting equipment. This can be done through subsidies/local grants and/or through partnerships with local businesses. • Create community composting centres for residents to bring their organic waste. • Promote composting through community organisations. • Encourage peer-to-peer learning and mentorship as well as the formation of other support networks for new composters. • Invest in community organisers and trainers to assist the community as well as develop waste management infrastructure.
 <p>3. Reducing the cost burden of organic waste management on local authorities and improving its management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train staff on organic waste management best practices. • Educate community on what they can do to separate waste and compost. • Establish standards and procedures to assess the quality of compost. • Regularly test compost quality. • Invest in composting infrastructure, training, marketing and research. • Establish robust monitoring systems to ensure quality control. • Provide guidelines and regulatory support through environmental agencies. • Collaboration between the agricultural industry and the private sector on the development of markets and investments for organic products.
 <p>4. Turning waste management into a revenue stream for local authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership from Local Authorities on coordination and ensuring compliance with their standards. • Promote use of products and provide feedback for future improvements. • Create and run marketing campaigns promoting organic waste products. • Promote awareness campaigns or training to encourage the use. • Invest in areas such as marketing and sales, distribution, infrastructure and research to support this. Integrated and coordinated work from local authorities, marketing experts, distribution partners, the agricultural sector and community groups.

Invitation for continuing engagement



Our research partnership welcomes continuing multi-stakeholder engagement. To reach us please email: Keren Winterford (keren.winterford@uts.edu.au) or M Esham (esham@agri.sab.ac.lk)

See work from the research partnership to date: [Click here.](#)

