

# Sustainability Bulletin: March 2024

Discover how to integrate circularity into your business. From eliminating PFAS to radical recycling and addressing biodiversity loss, we explore three of the latest, most relevant cross-industry innovations from across the globe and provide actionable future strategies

Helen Palmer & Quinlan Yeung  
03.06.24 - 8 minutes



Pexels/Pixabay

# Audio summary

Listen to an audio recap by Helen Palmer, Head of Materials, Knit & Textiles



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# Executive Summary

Explore three cross-industry innovations in global sustainability progress in your monthly data-led bulletin.

## Overview

WGSN recommends that organisations commit to a circular design system, which applies the [three defining principles of the circular economy](#):

1. **Eliminate waste and pollution**
2. **Circulate products and materials**
3. **Regenerate nature**

Each month, we showcase real-world, cross-industry applications of circular principles from around the globe. Discover how to contextualise these innovations into actionable strategies to make your business more sustainable. This month's bulletin covers:

- **Legislations will enforce the removal of toxic PFAS (per- and polyfluorinated substances) across industries:** get ahead by removing PFAS and other toxic substrates from your products and operations
- **Overcoming the challenges of circularity:** invest in technologies, processes and infrastructures to turn your waste into valuable resources and revenue streams.
- **Reversing biodiversity loss through innovation and collaboration:** partnering with adjacent industries and investing in ingredients, materials and processes that support biodiversity

## Don't miss

### Last month's sustainability forecasts from across WGSN:

- **Insight:** [Business Strategy: Navigating the Water Crisis](#) - outlining six strategies to get ahead of water scarcity threats to build business resilience
- **Fashion:** [Sustainability & Innovation: Bacteria-Powered Materials](#) - highlighting microbes as potential 'living factories' able to make radically new colours, materials and products
- **Beauty:** [Intelligence 2026: Vertical Farming - Cultivating Beauty's Future](#) - vertical farming innovations, from skincare and fragrance to supplements
- **Food & Drink:** [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Food & Drink](#) - need to know legislation
- **Interiors:** [H2 2023 Trade Shows Round-Up: Key Trends](#) – key interior directions including the resourceful use of waste and nature-inspired design
- **Consumer Tech:** [CES 2024: Home Tech](#) – including climate change-ready solutions and food and relaxation tech highlighting important global consumer behavioural change
- **Packaging:** [Big Ideas 2026: Packaging](#) – from biomaterial innovations to fully circular products

“The problem with PFAS is widespread and complex, and avoiding them is difficult. But with growing evidence linking them to serious health concerns, including cancers, brands must look to switch out PFAS coatings wherever possible – especially with food packaging where a new generation of algae and chemical reaction alternatives are commercially available”

Katie Raath, Senior Trend Forecaster & Editor, WGSN Packaging

# Legislation will enforce the removal of toxic PFAS from industries

## Circular principle 1: Eliminate waste and pollution

**Strategy:** Lead on removing PFAS and other toxic substrates from your product lines and operations. Substance bans coming into force on per- and poly-fluoroalkyl chemicals (AKA forever chemicals) will require audits of supply chains and production.

### Action

- Get ahead of legislation. Europe's [REACH](#) restriction proposal aims to limit over 10,000 substances and over 30 US states are set to address PFAS, according to [Safer States](#), an environmental advocacy group
- Ensure alternatives are safe, fit for purpose and conveyed to consumers minus the science jargon or greenwashing

**Need to know:** There is evidence that PFAS are environmentally hazardous for humans. From food packaging grease barriers to cookware non-stick agents, they also make skincare spreadable and textiles water-resistant. They can be replaceable, but some industries find this challenging – chip firms Intel, IBM and Nvidia are set to oppose upcoming US state legislations.

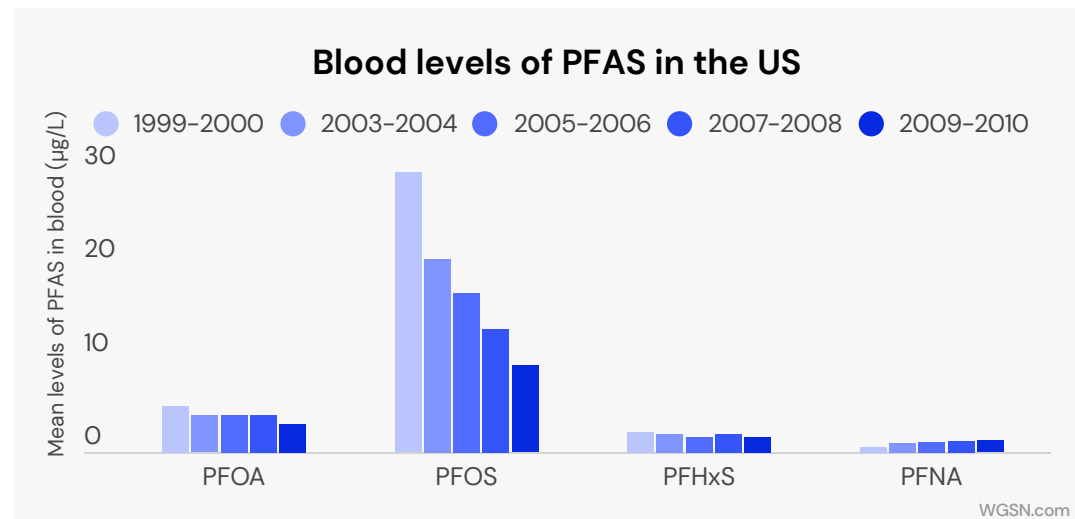
**WGSN confirmation:** [Sustainability & Innovation: Emission-to-Material](#), [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Fashion](#), [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Beauty](#)



Anchor Packaging (Australia ) offers PFAS-free pulp food packaging, in a move to give consumers safer options



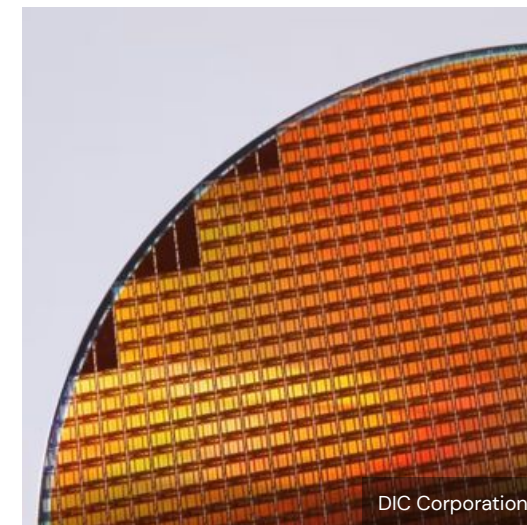
Outdoor apparel and surfwear brand Finisterre (UK) is committed to fluorocarbon-free DWRs for all outerwear



[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)



Cruelty-free cosmetic retailer Credo Beauty (California) has eliminated brands that use PFAS in its packaging



Japanese firm DIC makes a PFAS-free chip material from surfactant additives from photoresists of semiconductors

**Follow the trend:** [#CarbonNeutral](#),  
[#SustainableFibres](#)

# Recycling needs to scale to address the reverse in global circularity

## Circular Principle 2: Circulate products and materials

**Strategy:** 80% of consumer goods waste is burned or landfilled due to poor design or lack of end-of-life collection. A radical understanding of a product or service's impact and building in feedback loops to identify and address unwanted consequences will lead to a deeper understanding of true circularity.

### Action:

- Build up circular expertise and skills within your business
- Remove ingredients, components, packaging and labelling hampering end-of-life product recycling and investigate the potential of mono-material innovation
- Invest in technologies, processes and infrastructures to turn your waste into valuable resources and revenue streams. If made in-house, waste can be cheaper than virgin material, reducing waste disposal and procurement costs.

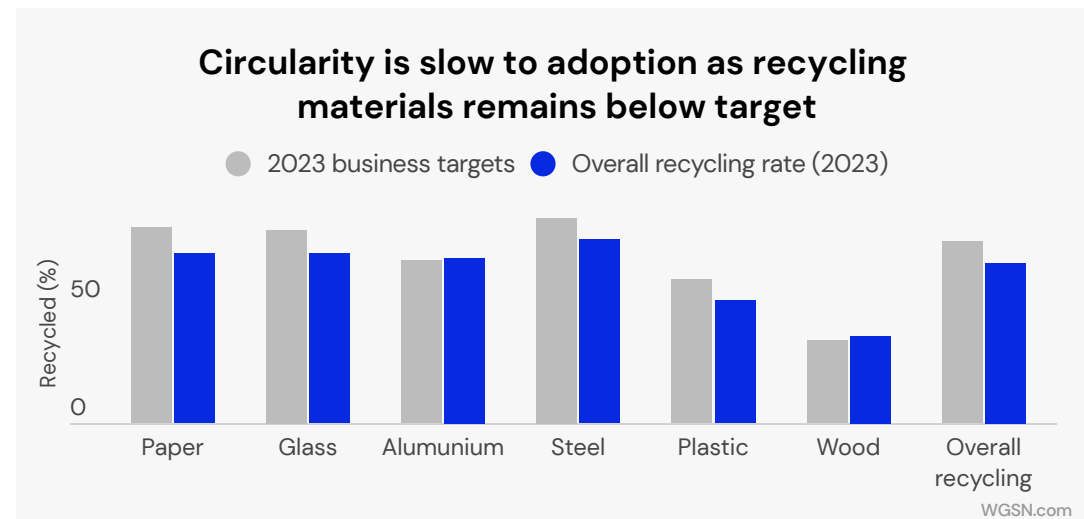
**Need to know:** The Ellen MacArthur Foundation cites circular economy strategies could help reduce global emissions by 40% by 2050. However, the Circle Economy Foundation's sixth 2023 Circularity Gap Report revealed that global circularity fell to 7.2% – down 1.9% from its earlier 2018 9.1% estimation.



Up to 150 UK public swimming pools could have lower energy bills by recycling heat from computer data processing centres after a £200m investment by Octopus Energy into green tech firm Deep Green trialing in Devon



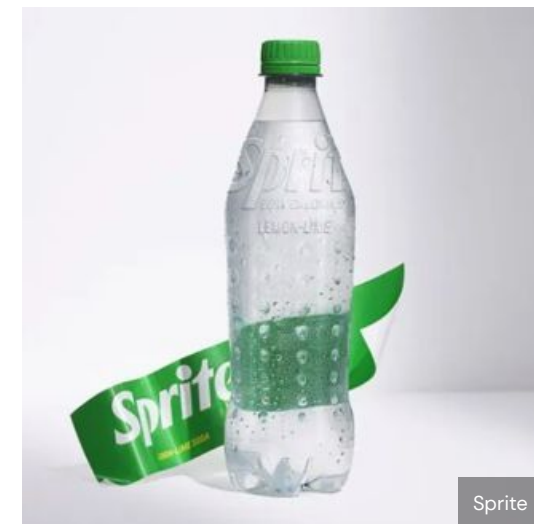
BASF's circular textile-waste nylon Loopamid is piloted by Zara's mono-material jacket; fabric, fill, fastenings and zip made of the same polymer (Germany, Spain)



Greenbank Recycling Solutions



Swedish homeware firm IKEA has launched a new range of textile items made of its own faulty worker uniforms in Europe, managing all recycling processes in-house.



Coca-Cola has temporarily removed labels from Sprite and Sprite Zero on-the-go bottles, testing 'label-less' packaging to simplify recycling processes (US, UK)

**WGSN confirmation:** Intelligence:  
Sustainability Legislation for Food & Drink,  
Retail Strategy: Managing and Mitigating  
Returns, Sustainability & Innovation: Polyester  
– the Push to Circular

**Follow the trend:** #CircularEconomy,  
#CloseTheCircle, #DeadStockDesign,  
#WasteMadeWonderful

# Collaborate and innovate across industries to support biodiversity

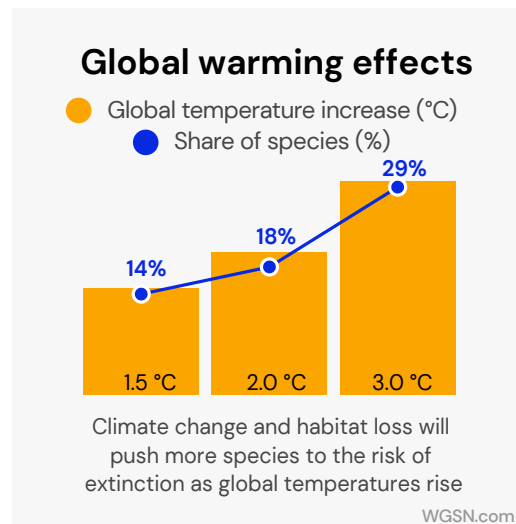
## Circular Principle 3: Regenerate nature

**Strategy:** Businesses linked to agricultural, livestock and chemical industries face the same biodiversity challenges. Work with adjacent industries and experts to drive change.

### Action:

- Invest in ingredients, materials and processes that promote diversity. Economies of scale will reduce long-term costs
- Support regenerative cultivation and comply with restricted chemical and wastewater guidelines. The EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy plans to support a green recovery
- Factor biodiversity impact in financial reporting and link environmental profit-and-loss accounting to performance. 2023's [Taskforce for Nature-Related Financial Disclosures](#) framework guides assessing, reporting and acting on nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities

**Need to know:** natural ecosystems have declined by about 47%, according to [Earth.org](#), with climate heating being a chief causal factor. Biodiversity provides food and energy, water and soil and sustains air quality and climate regulation – but one million marine and terrestrial species face extinction.



[Statista](#)



Vyld

Vyld, the female-founded startup (Berlin) making period products from renewable algae has secured a seven-figure sum in seed funding



Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation and Miguel Mesa del Castillo

Architects [Andrés Jaque](#) and Miguel Mesa del Castillo built a climate-conscious house that restores the drought-tolerant ecology of a site on the outskirts of Murcia (Spain)



Ganni

At Copenhagen Fashion Week Danish fashion brand Ganni showed bags in BioFluff's Savian fibre- the 'plant-based' fur comes from crop-waste nettle, hemp and flax fibres



Wildway

US-based company Wildway uses diverse ingredients including banana fruit and peel in its [Grain-Free Granola](#) for increased nutrition and less waste

**WGSN confirmation:** Intelligence: Future  
Proofing Crops, Intelligence 2026: Vertical  
Farming - Cultivating Beauty's Future,  
Sustainability & Innovation: Bast Fibres

**Follow the trend:** #RegenerativeAg,  
#SustainableFibres, #AlgaePower,  
#LeverageTheLocal

## Action points

1

### **Remove toxic PFAS from your products and operations**

As evidence of the harmful health and environmental effects of PFAS grows, get ahead of pending substance-ban legislation, and look to take these and other toxic substrates out of products and processes

*What available alternative solutions bring performance without the negative impacts?*

2

### **Invest in infrastructures and technologies that can transform waste into value**

Work with circularity experts to see where your industry waste can be used for new products or processes. Remove ingredients, components, packaging and labelling hampering end-of-life product recycling

*What waste streams exist in your product or supply chains that you could benefit from?*

3

### **Collaborate across industries to improve biodiversity footprints**

All industries associated with agriculture, livestock, and chemicals face similar biodiversity challenges. Collaborate across-industry to scale up efforts to reverse the worst impacts of biodiversity loss

*Which adjacent industries could you work with to collectively tackle biodiversity loss?*

4

### **Link environmental profit-and-loss accounting to performance**

The EP&L measures carbon emissions, water consumption, air and water pollution, land use and waste production along supply chains, making your environmental impacts visible, quantifiable and comparable

*How can you integrate environmental profit-and-loss accounting into your performance metrics?*

## Methodology

- WGSN uses AI and real-time social listening tools to identify trends, keywords and sentiments on social media. We capture intelligence from millions of posts by analysing text-based data in post captions and hashtags
- WGSN uses a proprietary search index to identify trends and keywords on what topics and areas people are engaging with worldwide. We capture intelligence from millions of searches by analysing text-based data and by understanding its evolution over time
- Index: refers to the use of a benchmark indicator as a reference to show a continuous increase of a trend vs a specific value
- In this report, data is also sourced from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Greenbank Recycling Solutions and Statista
- Data was collected in February 2024

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