

Sustainability Bulletin: April 2024

Discover how to integrate circularity into your business. We look at the most relevant cross-industry innovations from across the globe and provide actionable strategies around carbon capture, from addressing plastic impacts to empowering women's initiatives in regenerative agriculture

Helen Palmer & Quinlan Yeung
04.03.24 - 8 minutes



Pexels / Vladimir Loginov

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:

- **Carbon tracking, capture and removal technologies:** it is largely agreed these technologies can help industries mitigate global warming, but investment is needed across the board
- **Earth Day 2024's focus on 'planet versus plastic':** we look at initiatives, innovations and solutions that could help industries reduce reliance on fossil-fuel-based plastic production by 2040
- **Empowering women to transform global regenerative food systems:** how promoting diversity, equity and inclusion for women in agribusiness could benefit industries and communities

Don't miss

Recent sustainability forecasts from across WGSN:

- **Insight:** [Sustainability Forecast 2026](#): from rethinking climate language to planet-centric business models, we outline insights and strategies for mitigating climate impact
- **Fashion:** [Trims & Details Sourcing Guide S/S 25](#): driven by tactility, environmental responsibility and innovation, this seasonal guide is delivered via WGSN's global manufacturer networks
- **Beauty:** [Key Ingredient 2025: Mediterranean Diet-Derived Ingredients](#): compelling longevity claims and sustainable farming drive humble yet powerful backyard beauty ingredients
- **Food & Drink:** [Key Trend 2025: Climate Hero Ingredients](#): ecological solutions for our future food system, outlining applications that deliver sustainability, health and new flavours
- **Interiors:** [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Interiors](#): need-to-know legislation
- **Consumer Tech:** [Intelligence: Transformative AI](#): how artificial intelligence is revolutionising industries, from environmental solutions to healthcare and efficient productivity
- **Packaging:** [Food & Drink Packaging Forecast A/W 25/26](#): sustainable approaches, technologies and aesthetics set to impact colour, material and surface designs

Investment will scale carbon tracking, storage and removal technologies

Circular Principle 1: Eliminate waste and pollution

Strategy: see where CO2 tracking and investment into carbon removal storage and utilisation (CCUS) technologies could help your business reduce pollution at source.

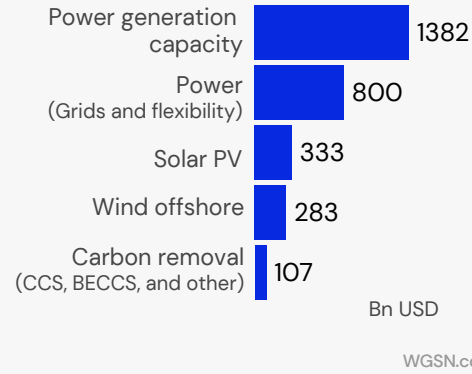
Action:

- Scientists agree that carbon removal technologies will be necessary to mitigate the climate crisis, but the carbon capture, usage and removal sector needs more investment
- Partner with CCUS innovations able to store and convert factory emissions into new polymers, concrete and biofuel, and emergent biotech that can sequester organic carbon into safe, carbon-zero products, materials, pigments and dyes

Need to know: by 2030, global investment in carbon removal capacity is predicted to reach between US\$100bn and \$400bn. To reach net zero by 2050, over \$6trn of investment is needed – with a minimum 2030 investment of half a trillion – but to date, the technologies have only attracted **\$13bn**.

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

Required annual investment to meet global temperature targets

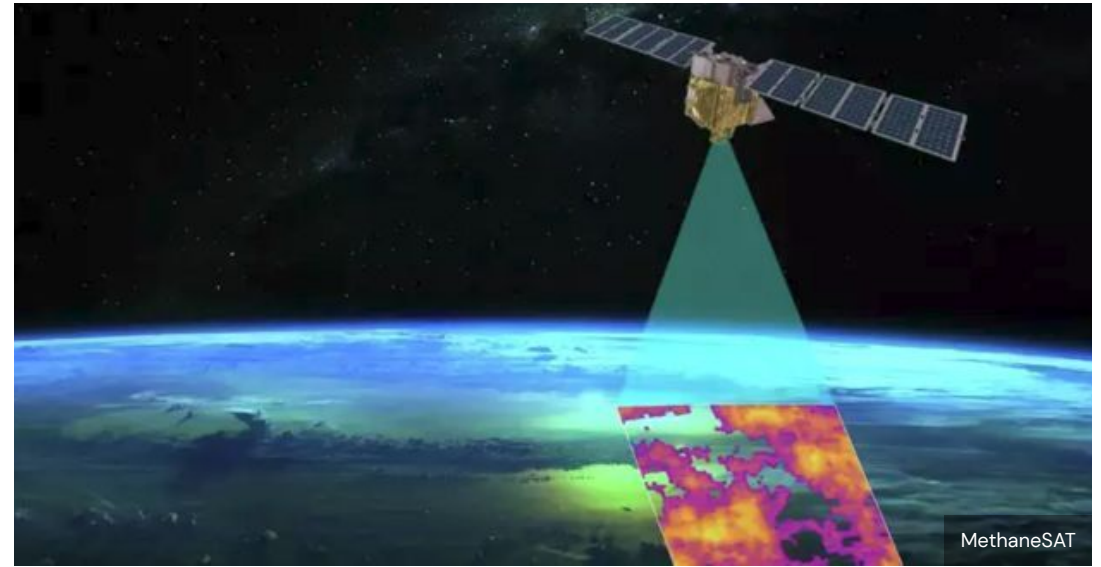


To meet the 1.5–2°C limit set in the Paris Agreement, CCUS would require less than 10% of the investment needed to keep power generation in line with targets ([Statista](#))



Mammut

A CO2 removal (CDR) agreement with Climeworks sees Swiss outdoor brand Mammut removing some of its emissions using direct air capture tech to help it reach net zero by 2050



MethaneSAT

A pollution-tracking satellite, [MethaneSAT](#), launched on a [SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket](#) (US/New Zealand) could force accountability on companies and governments underreporting emissions. It traces methane at its source anywhere in the world and shares findings online



OurCarbon

Bioforcetech's [OurCarbon](#) (US) can sequester carbon from agricultural, yard and food waste and wastewater solids to make carbon-neutral pigments, dyes, polymers and concrete additives



Israeli National Center of Blue Economy / Bomvento

Israel-based [BomVento](#) uses wind turbines to make clean energy and photocatalysis to convert CO2 and N2O into harmless nitrogen and oxygen, generating renewable energy while reducing greenhouse gases

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

Earth Day 2024 invites consumers to champion the Planet vs. Plastics

Circular Principle 2: Circulate products and materials

Strategy: Earth Day's Planet vs. Plastics focus on 22 April will see organisers asking the public to sign a Global Plastics Treaty petition calling for a 60% reduction in plastic production by 2040.

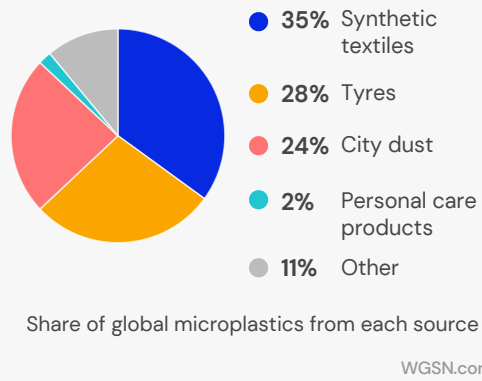
Action

- Swap single-use virgin plastic packaging for biodegradable options, and use refillable and reusable packaging. Ensure plastic-based textiles are recyclable; bio-recycling could enable the regeneration of hard-to-recycle polymers
- Use AI to verify and track post-consumer plastic waste collected at your stores or collection points or to aid plastic identification and sorting in your recycling processes

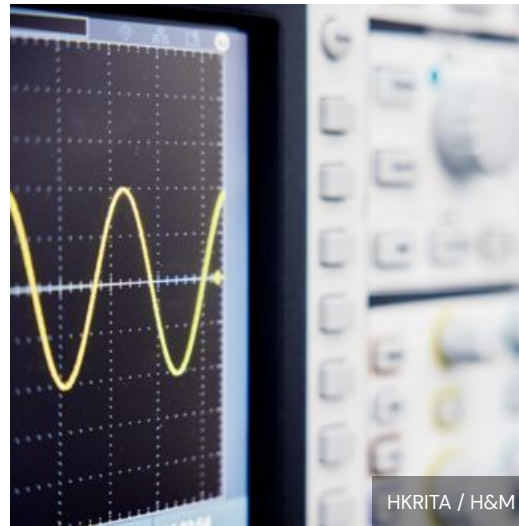
Need to know: the draft [EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive](#) calls for all packaging to be recyclable by January 2030 and deposit return schemes to be introduced for single-use plastic drink containers (up to 3l) by 2029. The [Plastic Packaging Tax](#) (UK) will tax each tonne of packaging made or imported using less than 30% recycled plastic.

WGSN confirmation: [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Food & Drink](#), [Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Interiors](#), [Sustainability & Innovation: Polyester](#)

Global sources of microplastics to the world's oceans



IUCN



Acousweep is a new plug-and-play tech using soundwaves to separate microplastics from wastewater. It was developed by the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) and supported by H&M



Family-run nonprofit Sungai Watch cleans up plastic in Indonesia's rivers so it doesn't reach the ocean, intercepting trash with buoyant barriers, collecting and sorting it for recycling. It is launching Sungai Design to upcycle the hardest-to-recycle plastics into durable products, including lounge chairs made from plastic bags



Australian eco-tech start-up Samsara Eco is helping Canada's Lululemon solve its plastic textile recycling. Its enzymes break down polymers in recycling, reverting them into chemical monomers to make virgin-grade fibre



Cabinet Health (US) is replacing its single-use plastic packaging for prescription medicines in refillable glass bottles. Its refills are delivered in medicine-safe pouches suited to home composting

- the Push to Circular, Intelligence: Tackling the Plastic Problem

Follow the trend: #CircularEconomy,
#ReduceReuseRecycle, #CloseTheCircle,
#SustainablePackaging, #PlasticFree

Empowering women will transform global regenerative food systems

Circular Principle 3: Regenerate nature

Strategy: push for gender equity in regenerative farming to improve community resilience, disaster mitigation, food and water security and worker health. Male-dominated industrial agriculture and food systems have contributed widely to land degradation and CO2 emissions while not solving global hunger.

Action

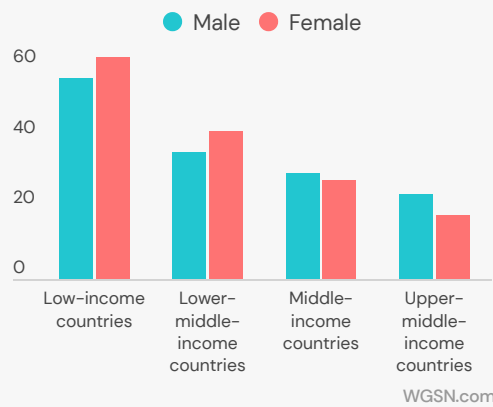
- Redress inequities by advocating for women's leadership and securing their land rights. Promote diversity, equity and inclusion through your products, policies and programmes

Need to know: [Oxfam](#) says women make up 43% of the labour force in developing countries. In South Asia, two-thirds of employed women are in agriculture; in eastern Africa, over half of farmers are women. The UN's [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) states that if women had the same access to resources as men, they could grow 20–30% more food on the same land, lifting 150 million people out of poverty and avoiding 2bn tonnes of CO2 generated between now and 2050.

WGSN confirmation: [Key Trend 2025: Climate Hero Ingredients](#), [Intelligence: Future Proofing Crops](#), [Sustainability & Innovation: Bast Fibres](#), [Key Trend 2024: Regeneratively Farmed Beauty](#)

Follow the trend: [#RegenerativeAg](#), [#ClimateHeroIngredients](#), [#LeverageTheLocal](#),

Estimated split of male:female workers in the agricultural sector



More women work in agriculture in low-middle-income countries, where there are inequalities in land ownership and earnings ([Our World in Data](#))



Face to Face Project

Cambodia's [Face-to-Face](#) led a two-year Victory Garden Campaign allowing 2,200 families to grow and provide nutritious food for themselves and the community, helping women avoid hard factory labour



Cafe femenino

[Café Femenino](#) supports social justice and empowerment for women coffee producers worldwide. A number of coffee firms, like Peet's, promote women farmers in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Peru, Rwanda and Sumatra



Lush

[Lush](#) (UK) works with Dipaliya, helping women producing shea-butter in Ghana. Over 90% of sales are reinvested in Dipaliya's Community Investment Fund



@oshadi_collective

[Oshadi Collective](#) is an Indian farming cooperative and regenerative agriculture practice that has an eco-clothing brand. Its new Mind, Body and Soil collection is made from regenerative cotton from Tamil Nadu

[#SustainableFibres](#), [#ClimateAdaptive](#)

“As natural supply chains struggle, investments in women’s regenerative farming cooperatives present a strong opportunity for brands. Crops farmed this way are better quality (studies show they are more phytonutrient-rich) and make a positive impact on the planet and society. The UN has acknowledged that giving women more income improves child nutrition, health and education”

Pia Fisher, Strategist, WGSN Beauty

Action points

1

Identify where carbon capture tech sits in your carbon reduction strategy

Focus on how you can support and empower your supply chains to use these technologies within their own facilities or partner with carbon technology experts to help you convert CO2 emissions into standard products, ingredients and materials

How can you work with innovators and supply chains using these technologies to reduce your CO2 emissions?

2

Look to innovations designed to lessen plastic's environmental impacts

Swap virgin plastic for recycled and biodegradable polymers, use refillable or reusable packaging and ensure plastic-made products are fit for onward recycling. Use AI technologies to help you track, identify, sort and recycle your plastic waste

What innovations, solutions and infrastructures can you adopt to reduce existing plastic impacts in your business?

3

Empower women to transform global regenerative food systems

Gender equity in regenerative farming can increase community resilience, disaster mitigation, food and water security and worker health. Connect with initiatives supporting women's leadership in agricultural supply chains

What policies, initiatives and products can your business invest in that supports women's equity and inclusion in agriculture?

Contributors

Europe

Pia Fisher, Strategist, Beauty

Millie Diamond, Strategist, Food & Drink

Helen Palmer, Head of Materials & Textiles

Matt Zara, Strategist, Consumer Tech

Katie Raath, Senior Strategist, Packaging

Quinlan Yeung, Data Apprentice

Americas, LATAM and South Africa

Angela Ringo, Senior Strategist, Interiors

Hanne Lima, Client Services Executive

Mariana Santiloni, Client Services Manager

Nicolle Moraes, New Business Executive

Maria Pascua, Senior Customer Service Specialist

Asia Pacific

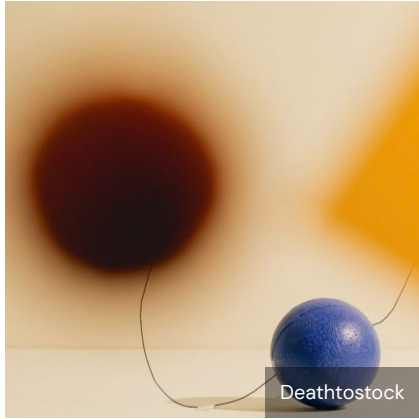
Natacia Lim, Consumer Researcher

Qian Sun, Localisation Editor

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 Statista, the International Union for Conservation & Nature and Our World in Data
- Data was collected in March 2024

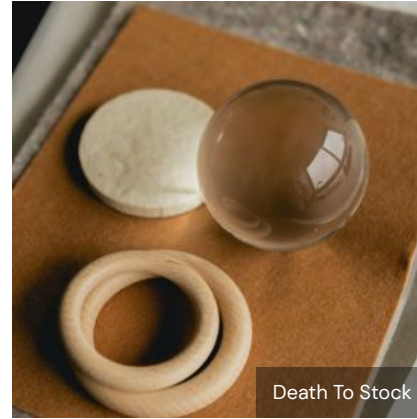
Related reports



Sustainability Forecast 2026



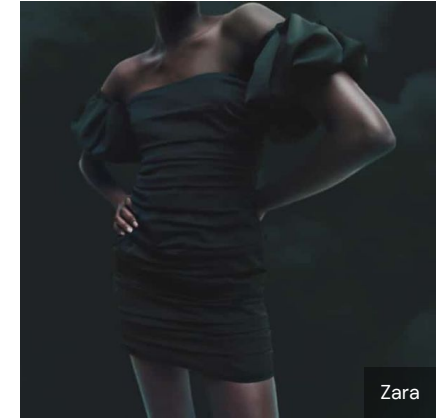
Key Trend 2025: Climate Hero Ingredients



Intelligence: Sustainability Legislation for Interiors



Key Ingredient 2025: Mediterranean Diet-Derived Ingredients



Sustainability & Innovation: Emission-to-Material