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Circular Economy at BASF

Footage material

Circular economy means decoupling growth from resource consumption. BASF is driving circular economy by making the most of the limited resources of our planet: We keep them in use for as long as possible, minimize waste and create value with renewable resources.

We contribute to close and extend the loops by developing and implementing circular solutions for the materials we source, further optimizing our operations and offering resource-efficient products and services which support our customers' circularity journeys.

The aim is to realize a more Circular Economy by increasingly use recycled and renewable feedstocks, shaping new material cycles and creating new business models.

(01) Circular Economy – The transformation from linear to circular value creation

(12-09-2020 / 3'32 / MIX / Report)



The aim of the circular economy is to use fewer resources by efficient processes, waste prevention, re-use, repair, remanufacture and recycling. It focuses primarily on material cycles and relies on energy from renewable sources.

Design for durability ensures that technical products last as long as required, are easily maintained and have high second-hand value. Design for disassembly means that the products and their components can be repaired, remanufactured and recovered as raw material for another manufacturing process.

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(02) Battery recycling – Building a sustainable battery materials value chain

(12-09-2020 / 2'25 / MIX / Report)



The development of new European lithium-ion battery recycling capabilities will make it possible to respond to the strong growth of this market in the coming years and to the issue of securing Europe's supply of raw materials required for its energy transition.

Moreover, the virtuous recycling process meets the essential challenges of sustainable performance through its savings on raw materials.

(03) Battery recycling closes the loop in electromobility

(12-03-2020 / 7'51 / ATMO / Footage)



More and more electric cars are registered worldwide every year. At the same time, the raw materials for the batteries are limited and their mining is associated with negative environmental impact.

BASF researchers at the Ludwigshafen site are therefore developing a new chemical process to recycle the lithium contained in the battery in high purity. This will also avoid waste and reduce the CO2 footprint compared to state-of-the-art recycling processes.

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(04) Dr. Martin Bruder Müller
BASF Chairman of the Board and CTO
(11-25-2020 / 0'37 / Direct Sound / Statement)



“The circular economy is a central future topic in society and politics. At BASF we are currently driving forward more than twenty projects for the circular economy. And we are doing this with a great deal of ambition and creativity because this paradigm shift also effects practically all our customer industries. We will support our customers with tailor made innovations to continuously improve their sustainability profile and that of their products all the way to CO2 neutrality.”

(05) Dr. Alice Glättli
BASF Strategy & Innovation Performance Chemicals
(11-25-2020 / 0'28 / Direct Sound / Statement)



“To realize a consistent circular economy requires new approaches in design, production, and the use of materials. The contribution of chemistry is key here and with that BASF’s innovation power.”

“I aim creating new growth opportunities for BASF and following new paths to personally contribute to a future of circular economy.”

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(06) Dr. Christian Lach
BASF Project ChemCycling
(11-25-2020 / 2'30 / Direct Sound / Statement)



“Circular economy is a key business model for the future. I am convinced that in BASF our expertise will enable us to participate in this and create value sustainably going forward for future generations.”

“I believe it is three things driving BASF’s success in implementing the circular economy. And that is our breadth of expertise, it is the partnerships we built, and it is the environment we are in. BASF has an incredible breadth of expertise. And I think, that is what we need to implement circular economy. Because you have to be excellent in the technology you do, you have to understand the regulatory environment, you have to build a framework that enables you to implement the circular economy and you also have to work with your customers, and you have to communicate to the general public. On the second point we have the partnerships with many innovative young companies. And the combination of enthusiasm and creativity with expertise and experience that is what brings us faster makes things happen. And last but not least, I think we are standing at a crossroad. If you look at the governments, if you look at the public with the European green deal and “Fridays for future” we have an understanding that we have to change our postwar economic model. And in BASF I see the excitement to build something that will create a sustainable future for our children.”

“The era of the linear economy is ending because we simply cannot afford anymore. To maintain our modern standard of living, we need modern materials, we need energy, but we have to find new ways to generate those.”

“For so long as I can remember, I have been working to reduce the environmental food print of my lifestyle. I am a chemist, and I am proud and happy to say, that today I’m doing the exact same thing on my job.”

“Working on the ChemCycling project is the first time in my life as a chemist that my children think what I am doing is really cool. And then, if I go to a supermarket and buy something that is packed in a chemcycled material and bring that home what else can you ask for.”

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(07) Dr. Kerstin Schierle-Arndt
BASF Research Inorganic Materials and Synthesis
(11-25-2020 / 1'40 / Direct Sound / Statement)



“Sustainable and climate friendly mobility is one of the key challenges of today. I am proud to contribute to solutions with my research. This is highly motivating. I am part of a great and passionate team of businesspeople, engineers and researchers working together towards this goal. This really fun.”

“Sustainability is high on BASF’s agenda for years. With our strong expertise in chemistry and process development we are well positioned to develop innovative and sustainable processes. As a cathode materials producer we know well the requirements for raw materials, and we can design our recycling processes accordingly. In addition, we can build on a strong network of collaboration partners. Together with them we will close the loop for battery materials. This is good for the environment and economically attractive.”

“With the advent of electro mobility, we are experiencing one of the greatest technical and social revolutions ever. The number of electric vehicles on our roads is increasing dramatically.”

“We are addressing unmet needs in the battery recycling industry such as high efficiency lithium extraction. We believe our focus on development of new and more sustainable production processes will provide a unique advantage in the recycling value chain. E-mobility will be rendered significantly more sustainable.”

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(08) Talke Schaffranek (only german)

BASF Circular Economy

(11-25-2020 / 2'35 / Direct Sound / Statement)



„Wir sehen, dass gesamtwirtschaftlich zirkuläre Modelle deutlich stärker als lineare Modelle wachsen. Unsere Kunden, zum Beispiel Automobilfirmen, setzen sich klare Ziele für den Einsatz von Recyclat. Hier können wir mit chemischem Recycling diese Ziele erfüllen helfen uns gleichzeitig hochwertige Produkte liefern, die zum Beispiel Sicherheitsanforderungen erfüllen. Kreislaufwirtschaft ist das Zukunftsmodell.“

„Es gibt drei Treiber für „Circular Economy“. Erstens: Kunden wollen Produkte aus nachwachsenden Rohstoffen und mehr und mehr auch aus Recyclat. Zweitens: Es gibt technologische Lösungen. Und Drittens: Auch der Gesetzgeber fordert dies mehr und mehr ein, zum Beispiel durch Quoten oder Abgaben für nicht recycelte Produkte.“

„Es gibt keine Alternative. Wenn wir Ressourcen sparen wollen, müssen wir das heutige System umkrempeln. Das heißt: Weniger verbrauchen und gleichzeitig mehr wiederverwenden und recyceln. Dafür brauchen wir Innovationen wie Batterierecycling oder auch Matratzenrecycling.“

„Bei vielen Themen stehen wir eben noch am Anfang – technologisch, aber auch im Bezug auf die Vermarktung, zum Beispiel bei Claims, bei Logistik und mit Partnern. Mir persönlich liegt es sehr am Herzen Ideen zu testen und so langsam Kompetenzen aufzubauen. Wir brauchen sie.“

„Um diesen Systemwandel weg von Produzieren, Kaufen, Wegwerfen auch wirklich zu schaffen, brauchen wir ein neues Bewusstsein. Aber auch – ganz praktisch gesehen – mehr Transparenz über Stoffströme, Recycling-Lösungen und Netzwerkfähigkeiten.“

„Um Kreisläufe zu schließen, gehen wir in Zukunft noch mehr Partnerschaften mit anderen Unternehmen ein. Wir müssen uns mit dem Recycling von Produkten beschäftigen, um an neuen zirkulären Wertschöpfungsketten teilzuhaben.“

Wir müssen zu Wachstumsmodellen übergehen, die nicht auf endliche Ressourcen setzen, sondern Abfall in Rohstoffe verwandeln. „Circular Economy“ ist unsere Chance neue Geschäftsmodelle weiter zu entwickeln, die unser Wachstum vom Ressourcenverbrauch entkoppeln. Mit dem „Circular Economy Program“ setzen wir uns hier quantifizierbare Ziele. Bis 2025 wollen wir 250.000 Tonnen recycelte Rohstoffe in der Produktion einsetzen. Wir

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verdoppeln den Umsatz mit zirkulären Produkten bis 2030 und wir setzen auf ein Programm, das gezielt zirkuläre Geschäftsmodelle weiterentwickelt.“

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