
Farmers and stakeholders view circular agriculture as a 'win-win' and 'common sense' strategy.

Dialogue with stakeholders is an important part of the CircAgric-GHG project. Project partner Bangor University have explored UK stakeholders' perceptions of circular farming practices through focus groups with 16 agricultural industry experts and policymakers, and 17 semi-structured interviews with farmers already engaged in circular practices.

Results highlights that stakeholders saw circular farming as a 'win-win' for farm, society and environment, and farmers saw circularity as 'common-sense' and aligned with existing knowledge. However, there's a need for interventions to enhance uptake, including targeted communication strategies and knowledge exchange to promote awareness and engagement across the sector. It is necessary to support collaboration at various scales, particularly in integrating crop and livestock systems. Intermediary organisations could play a vital role in facilitating partnerships and overcoming resistance stemming from socio-cultural norms and peer influence. Government support, including financial incentives, was seen as a critical factor in enabling the transition to circular practices, and could mitigate risks by providing economic stability.



PhD Researcher Ffion Evans made this graphical abstract to summarize the findings.

Opportunities and barriers to adopting circular practices in UK agriculture were explored, and key factors influencing farmers' decision-making towards adoption were revealed. Stakeholders shared a positive perception and clear understanding of the concept of circularity, but awareness of the term was lacking. Here are some examples of quotes from the participants;

"I didn't know what that [circular agriculture] was, but once you read it, it is like, 'oh yeah, I know all this stuff'. This is common-sense."

Targeted and trusted advisory support was desired by farmers, whilst they saw incentivisation through future government payment schemes as a key enabler.

“We need to push a little to say, ‘there’s money available if you’re willing to do this’. Just to start on the path, then people realise that it works.”

Regulation was perceived as a major barrier, such as limits on the quantity and timing of manure application, planning permission for renewable energy projects, and use of alternative feed ingredients (e.g., food waste streams).

“We used to go and ask local supermarkets everyday [for food waste to feed pigs], and they just said, ‘no we can’t’, not because they don’t want to, just because legally they couldn’t.”

Nevertheless, positive reframing of government policy to include circularity as a major net zero strategy, whilst raising awareness and communicating the benefits of circular practices, will likely enhance its adoption.

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First posted nov. 2023, updated 16.10.25.



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