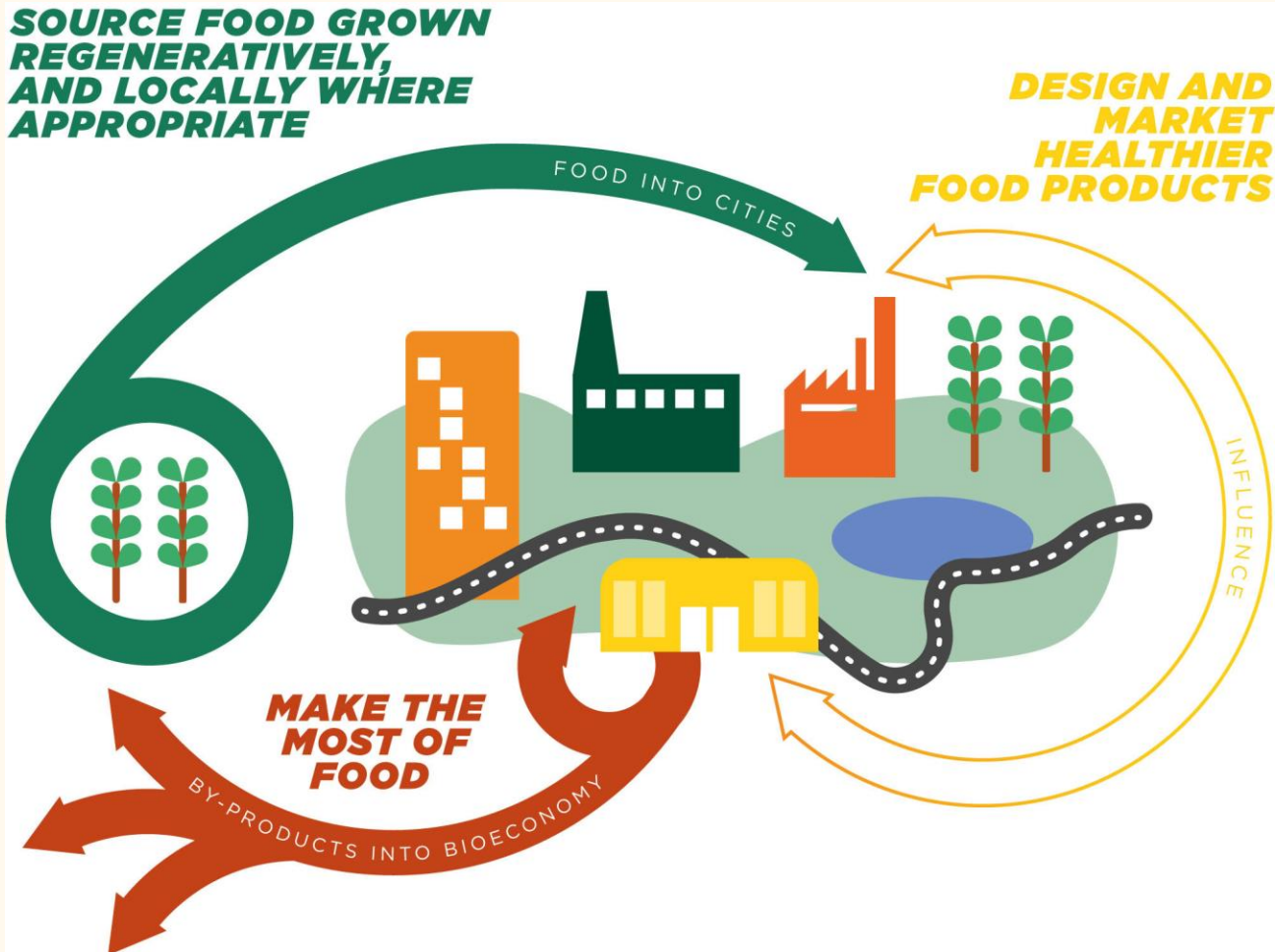


A CIRCULAR FOOD ECONOMY

Changing our food system



In this article, we would like to discuss the impact of the food industry on our planet and some ways to solve its problems, in view of reducing the food waste. The idea for completely changing the system, in order to make it more sustainable is a Circular food economy.

The idea of a circular food economy

A circular economy for food mimics natural systems of regeneration so that waste does not exist, but is instead feedstock for another cycle. These cycles regenerate living systems, such as soil, which provide renewable resources and support biodiversity.

It is based on these three goals.

1. Sourcing food grown regeneratively, and locally where appropriate
2. Making the most of food
3. Designing and marketing healthier food products

Sourcing food grown regeneratively

Regenerative food production supports natural systems, rebuilding and enhancing ecosystems while preserving air and water quality.

This is achieved by methods like shifting from synthetic to organic fertilisers, employing crop rotation, and using greater crop variation to promote biodiversity.

Local food production

As half of the world's population lives in cities, urban farming systems could support cities producing food locally and by this saving transport costs and emissions. But it can only provide a limited amount of nutrition required for human health. Cities can, however, source a large share of food from their surrounding areas, which could use the nutrients of the city's organic waste for fertilizing.

Making the most of food

In our current system food waste is a huge problem, and there are a lot of initiatives to reduce it. But instead of simply reducing avoidable food waste, why not design out the concept of 'waste' altogether?

In a circular economy, food is designed to cycle, so the by-products from one enterprise provides input for the next. Besides redistributing surplus edible food, the inedible by-products can be used for creating organic fertilisers, new biomaterials, medicine, and bioenergy.

Converting organic waste into a source of value begins with effective collection systems and pure waste streams. While all countries can benefit from improved collection systems, emerging economies are especially well-positioned due to their high shares of organic waste and early stages infrastructure.

Designing and marketing healthier food products

Food products must be designed through a system that provides healthy production as well as nutrition. Food designers have the power to ensure their food products are healthy to both people and natural systems and marketing activities can then be shaped to make these products attractive to people.

In a circular economy, food products derive from healthy production to provide healthy nutrition and the food we eat should originate from a rich diversity of sources.

Similarly, the packaging that preserves food can be made from materials that compost as safely and easily as the food it contains.

The Benefits

- Macroeconomic: annual benefits worth 2.25 trillion EUR globally
- Environmental: 15 million hectares of avoided land degradation and 450 trillion litres saved
- Health related: health costs associated with pesticides reduced by 460 billion, as well as reduced health problems caused by other types of pollution.
- Business: opportunities for new products and markets as well as usage of food-by-products

Conclusion

A circular economy needs a systemic change. This cannot be achieved only on the personal level but is a necessity for our future, in which humanity can survive and continue to prosper. But it is the task of everyone to work towards this change.

Source: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/explore/food-cities-the-circular-economy>

