Footprints Africa Circular Economy Business Survey
Questionnaire analysis
February 2023

Introduction

At Footprints Africa we have built the most comprehensive map of circular economy initiatives in Africa so far, consisting of over 500 case studies. As part of this we wanted to learn in more depth about what the circle economy looked like in practice, about people's experiences and their aspirations. That kind of information is important when thinking about the circular transition in Africa. So, we circulated a series of surveys to the businesses that we mapped to capture this in more detail.

This document gives a synthesis of what we are seeing so far in terms of:

1. The attributes of circular initiatives, their gender makeup and interactions with the informal sector;
2. A general understanding of the barriers and enablers for these initiatives, and what they say they need to grow; and
3. The circularity concepts and strategies that initiatives are deploying in practice.

We include all of the initiatives set out below on Footprints Africa's library on Circle Economy's Knowledge Hub and on our geolocated map produced in collaboration with GRID-Arendal.

About the survey

The survey targeted circular economy initiatives across Africa. Most of the respondents that we contacted were uncovered as part of our keyboard research. A smaller number of initiatives provided unsolicited responses to the questions and these were then incorporated into the database.

The data presented here is drawn from two sources: a first questionnaire, launched in January 2020, and a revised questionnaire launched in September 2021. We revised the questionnaire in order to help respondents with terminology and add some areas of interest (for example on investor readiness and the informal sector). We also divided the later questionnaire into two stages: 'Basic' and 'Detailed' to increase the overall response rate.

At the time of writing, we have received:

- 60 responses to the first questionnaire;
- 222 complete responses to the Basic current questionnaire; and
- 51 complete responses to the Detailed current questionnaire.

Wherever the questions are comparable we have combined responses from the first and current questionnaires to give a fuller dataset. The format (N= #) indicates the number of respondents to each question.

Currently the survey is only in English which will explain the predominance of responses from Anglophone African countries.

Most of the respondents are from circular businesses - but not all. Respondents were asked to self-select their initiative type in the early stage of the questionnaires. For this reason we call them collectively 'circular initiatives'.

Question guide

Basic Information

Gender information

The informal sector

Enablers, challenges, and investor-readiness

Circularity applied in practice

Response breakdown

Basic information

Question 1. What is your main country of operation? (N = 281)[1]

The top three countries with the highest number of initiatives are Ghana (51), South Africa (49), and Kenya (47). Footprints Africa operates in Ghana, and the network-based approach to getting responses will account for a higher number of Ghana-based case studies at this stage of our work.


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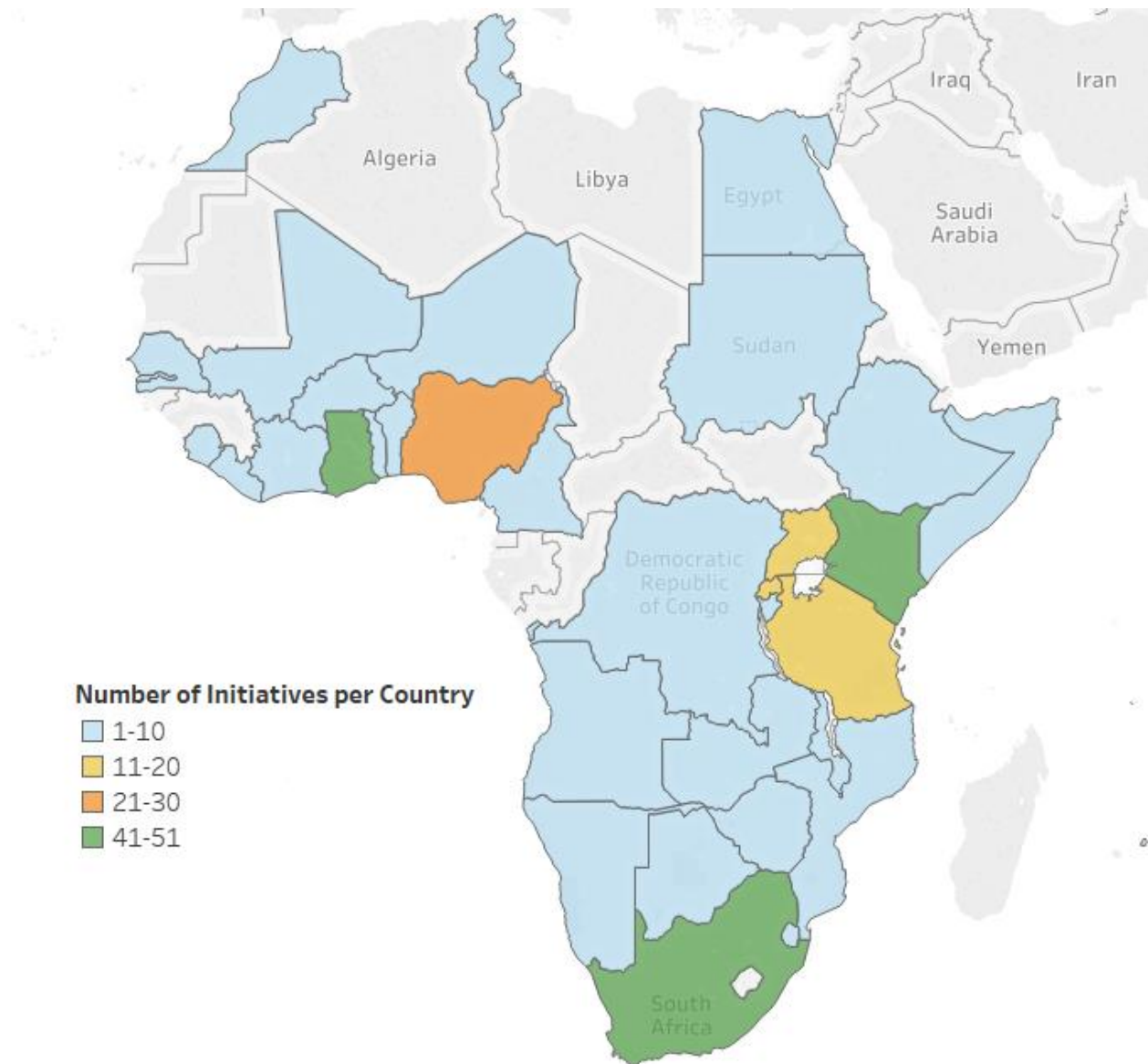
[1] N= refers to the number of respondents to each question that are captured graphically.

2. Type of initiative? (N = 281)

For-profits are the most common circular business type in Africa. At least 84% of businesses surveyed have a profit motive but it is interesting to note that 1 in 7 do not. When combined with the hybrid enterprises, 42% rely on seeking funding from other means to subsidise their activities. Further analysis to explore this is warranted.
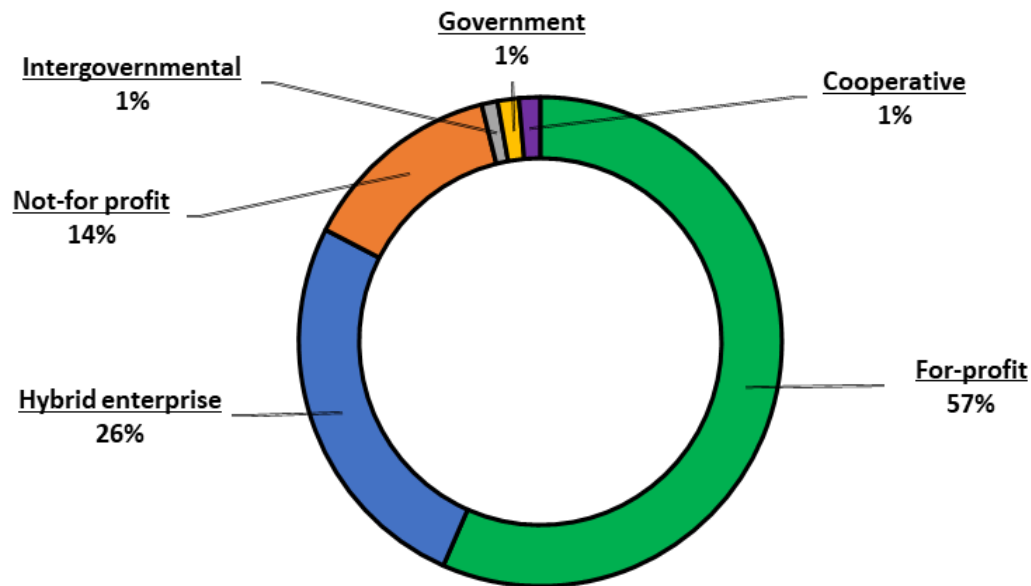
3. In which year was your initiative started? (N = 222)

The majority of initiatives are three to four years into their development, having started in 2019-20. This may be linked to higher web-presence of more recent initiatives.
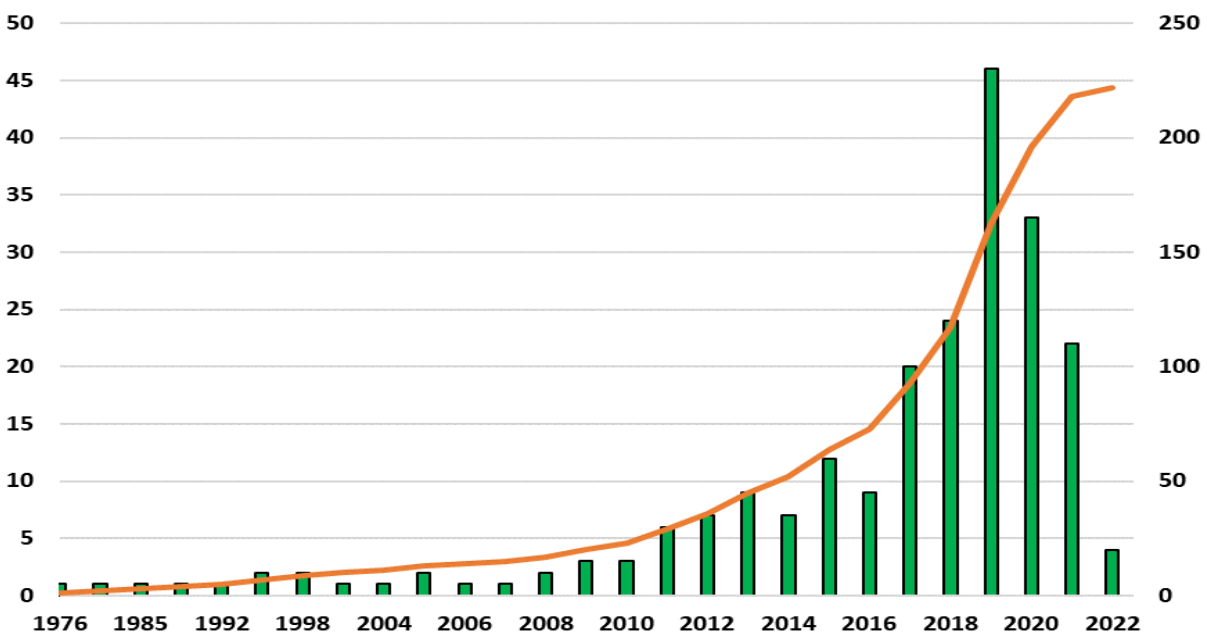
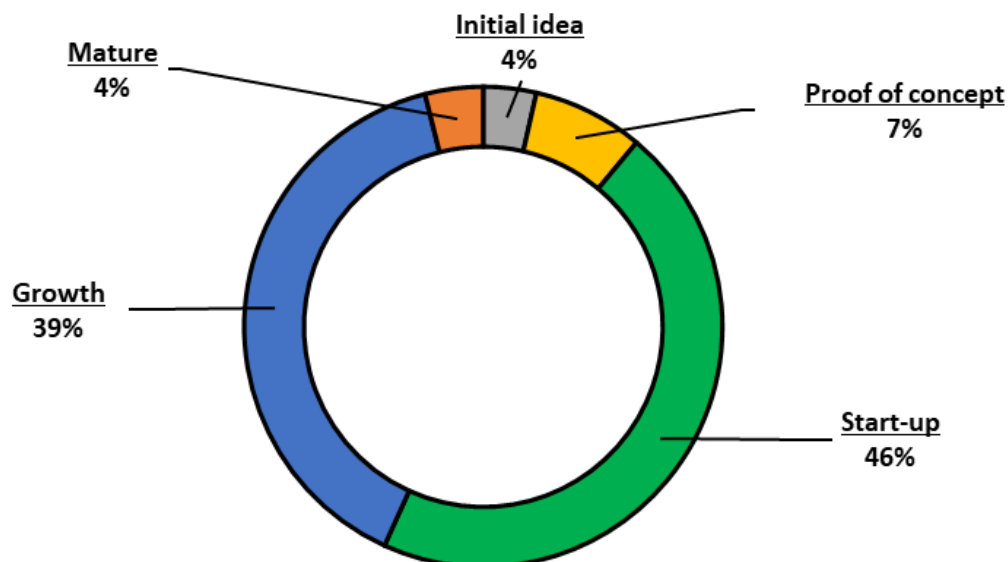### 4. What is the development stage of your initiative? (N = 281)

At the time of responding, most circular initiatives were in the initial stages of their development. Respondents self-selected the option that they believe applies to them.

5. What is your main industry of operation? (N = 282)

Agriculture and food (80, 28%) is the leading sector for circularity among respondents.

The classification of industry of operation that respondents were asked to use is drawn from Circle Economy's Knowledge Hub guidance which we have been using as a reference point for our database. Below we break these sectors down into sub-categories.
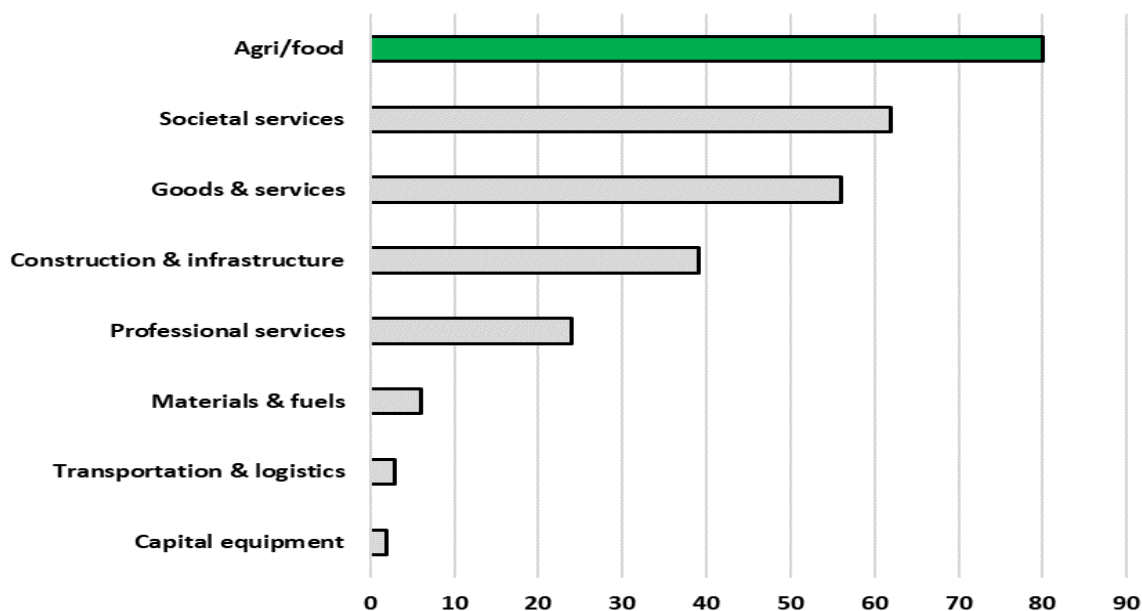
5a. Breakdown of industry of operation (N = 222)

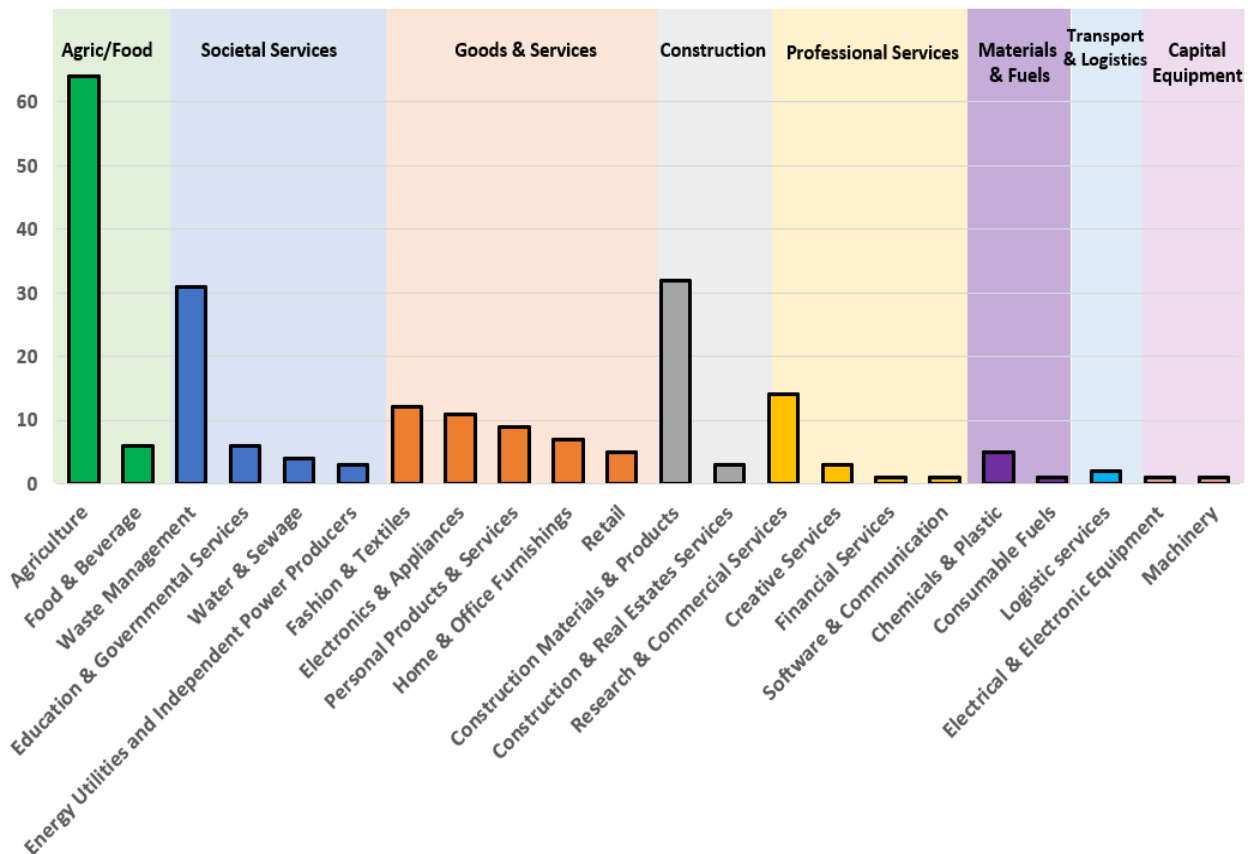The main industries of operations are broken down here into their various sub-categories, again following the Circle Economy classification.

6. Do you consider your main geographical focus to be (rural, peri-urban, urban)? (N = 278).

This is based on 56 responses from the first survey and 222 responses from the current survey. The majority of respondents' initiatives are clearly focused on urban areas.

Rural area 23%

Peri-urban area 30%

Urban area 47%
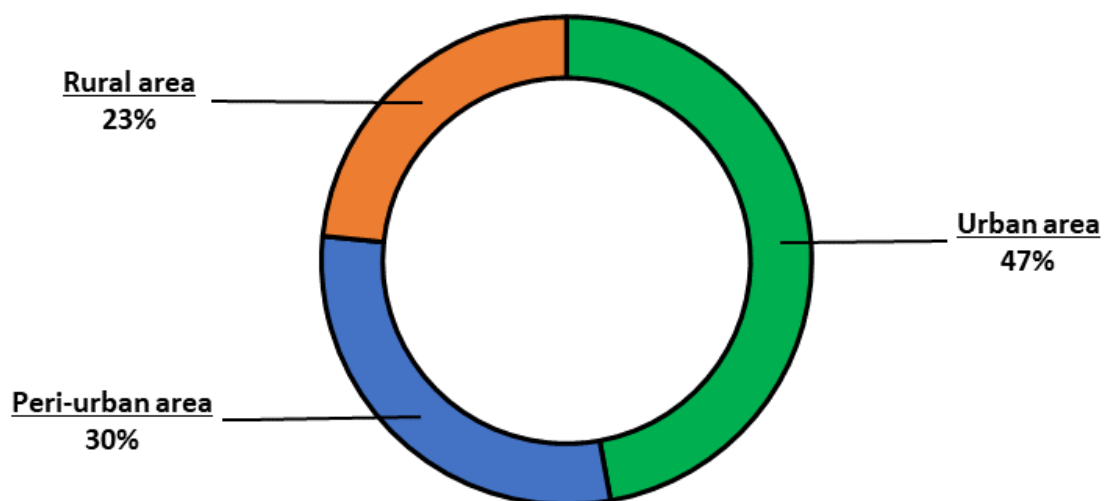
7. What circular strategy, or strategies, does your initiative apply? (N = 249)

This is based on 27 responses from the first survey and 222 responses from the current survey. We asked respondents to choose all the strategies that applied.

We used Circle Economy's Key Elements as a reference point to guide respondents.
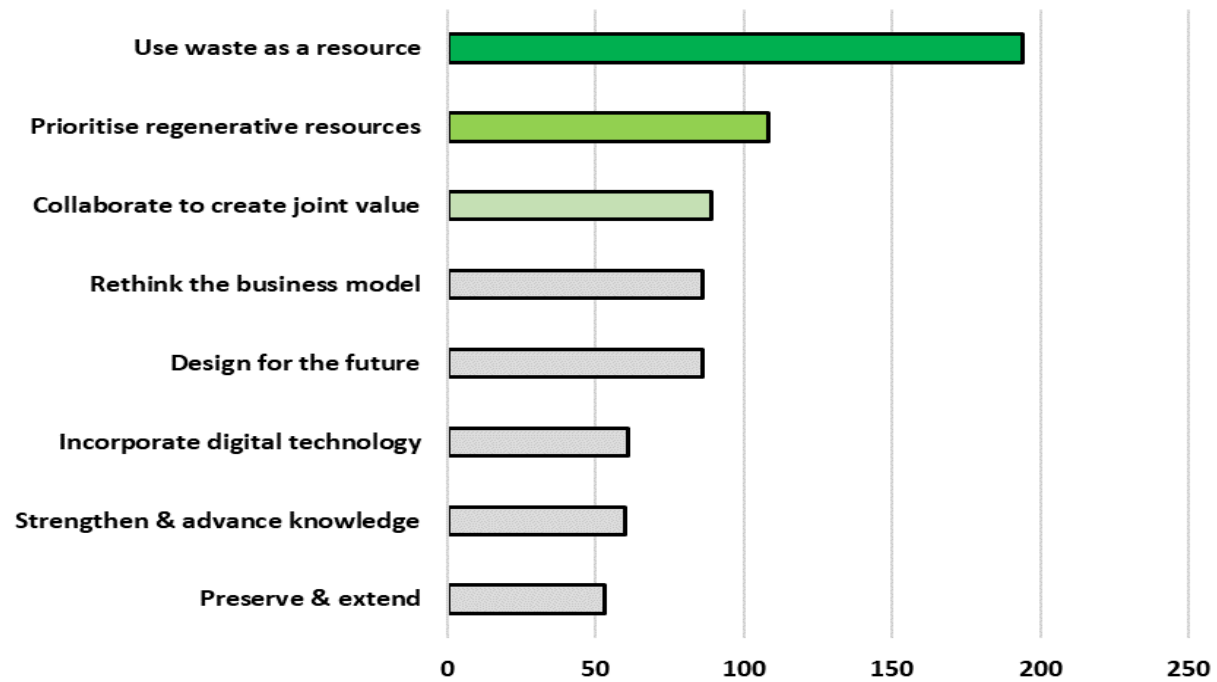
8. Which UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) does your initiative contribute towards? (N = 240)

Based on 18 responses from the first survey and 222 responses from the current survey. We asked initiatives to specify their top three SDGs.

In order of importance, most circular initiatives state they contribute to Goals 13 (Climate Action), 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) and 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities).
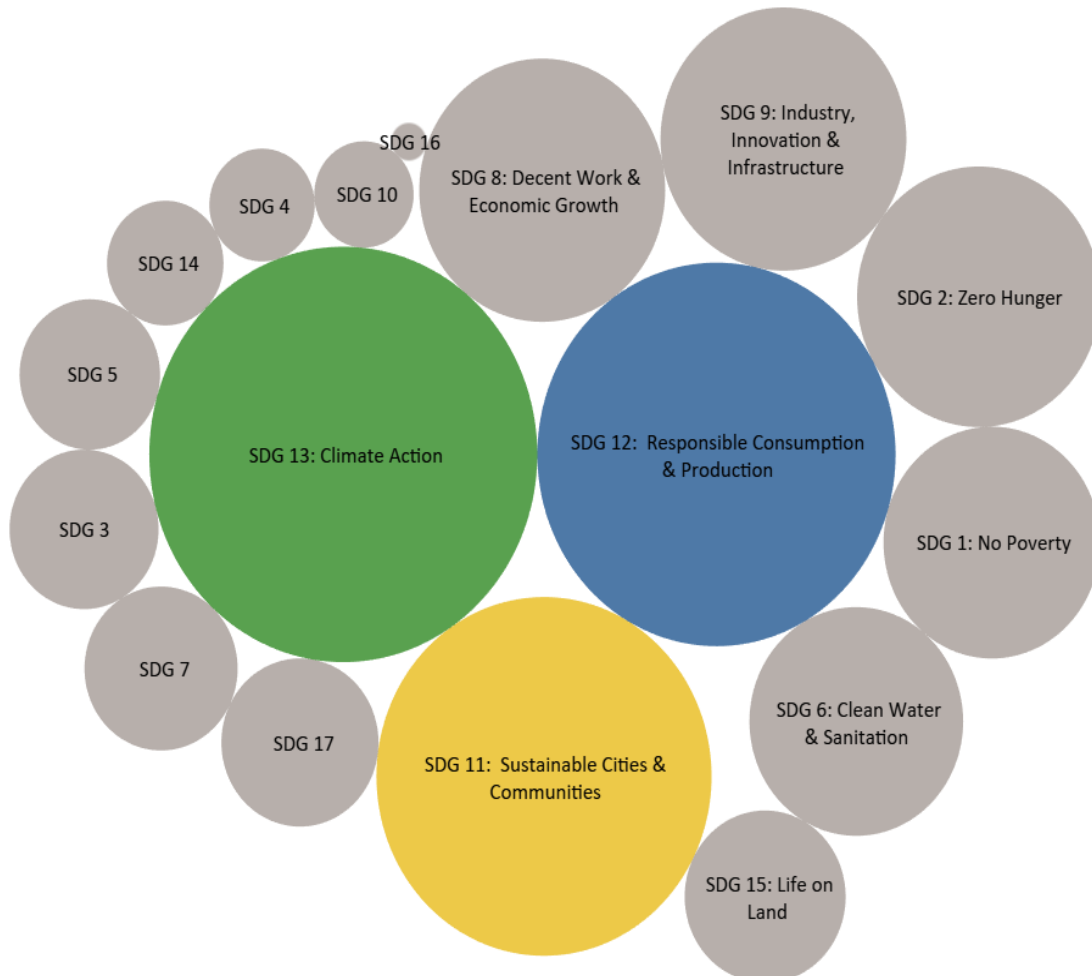
Gender Information

9. Is the higher management of your organisation predominantly: (Male, Female, or Additional gender category)? (N = 106)

This is based on 55 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. Males clearly make up the majority of higher management in circular initiatives among the respondents.
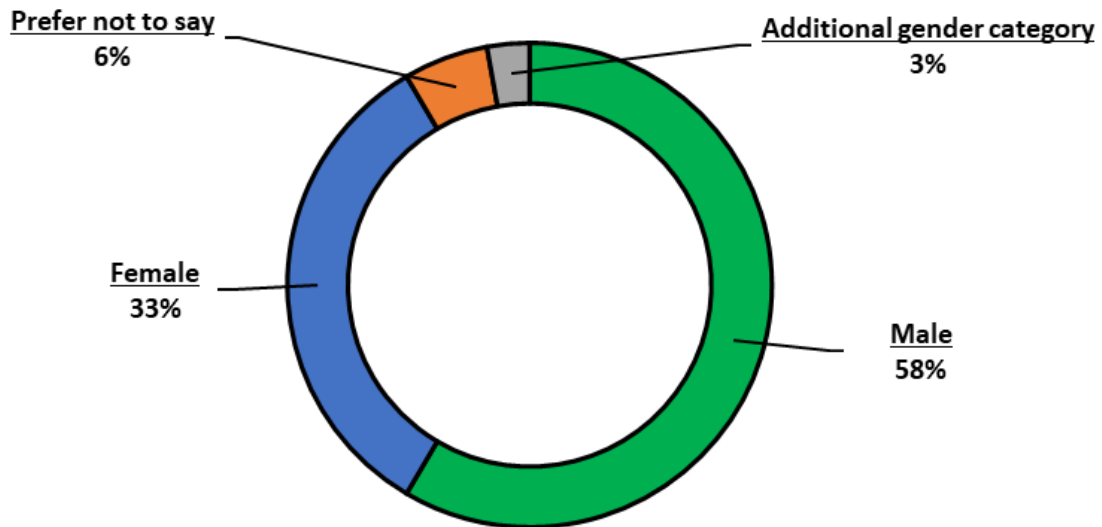
10. Number of permanent male, female or additional gender permanent staff? (N = 106)

This is based on 55 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey, males make up a slightly higher percentage of the total permanent workforce of circular initiatives interviewed.

| Category	Sum	Average	% of total workforce
Male	628	6.41	50.3
Female	606	6.31	48.5
Additional gender category	15	3	1.2
Total workforce	1249	6.28	100

The informal sector

11. How extensively do you work with the informal sector? (N = 51).

This is based on the 51 responses we received. Engagement with the informal sector is clearly integral to respondents' work, reflecting the realities of African economies.
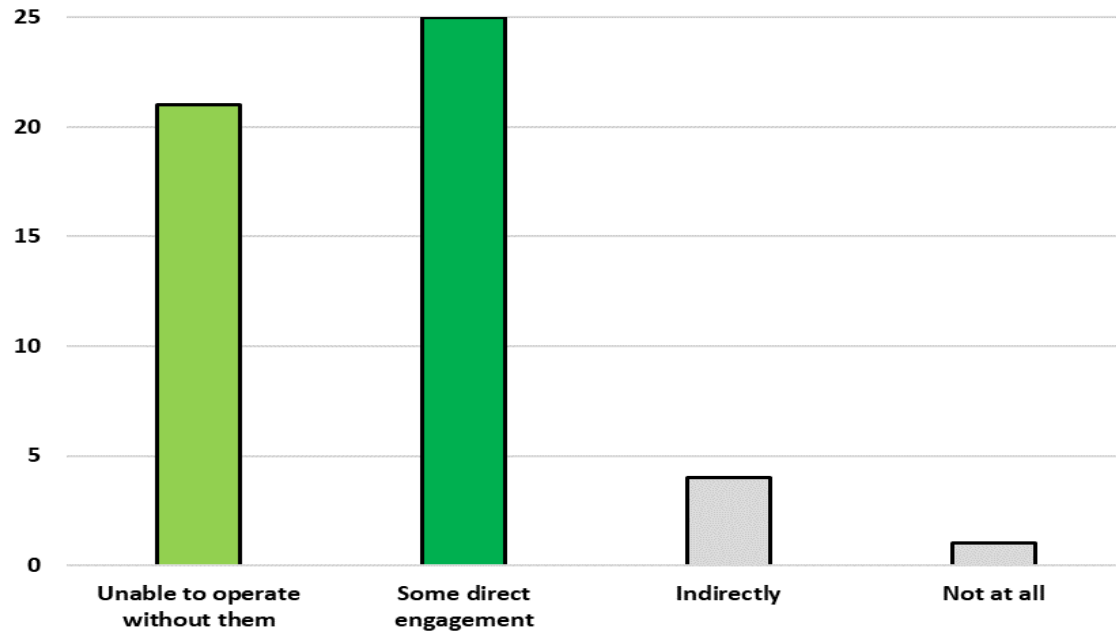
12. How important do you think your business is in providing opportunities, such as economic and social, to informal sector workers? (N = 51)

This is based on 51 responses, circular initiatives believe they have an important role in creating opportunities for informal workers. Answer option 'not important' was not selected by any respondent.
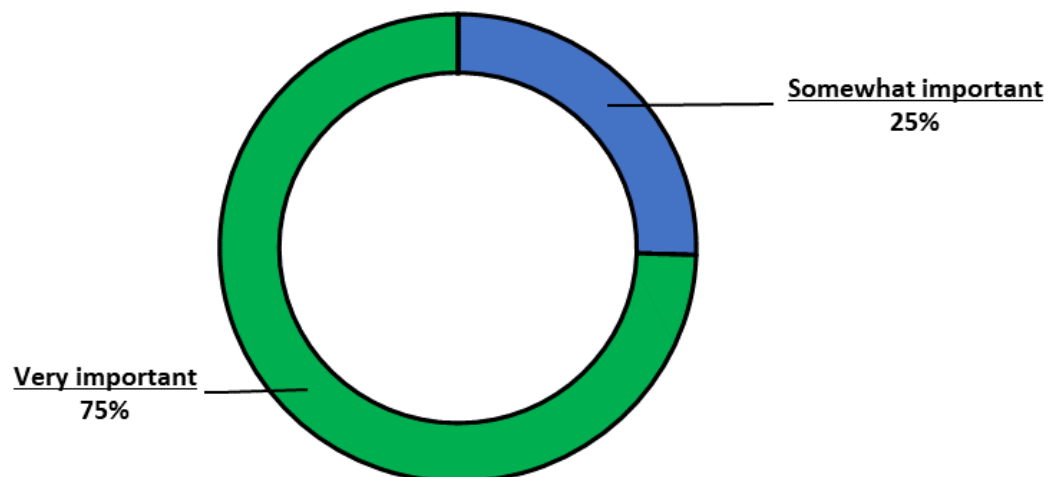
Enablers, challenges, and investor-readiness

13. Has your initiative benefitted from any of the following enablers? (N = 80)

These results are based on 29 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. This was a multiple choice question.

As can be seen, 'alternative financing' was selected as the most prevalent enabler.   Under 'others', two respondents specified the 2022 Looplab Incubator programme (in Nigeria) and the Amplify Fellowship 2021.
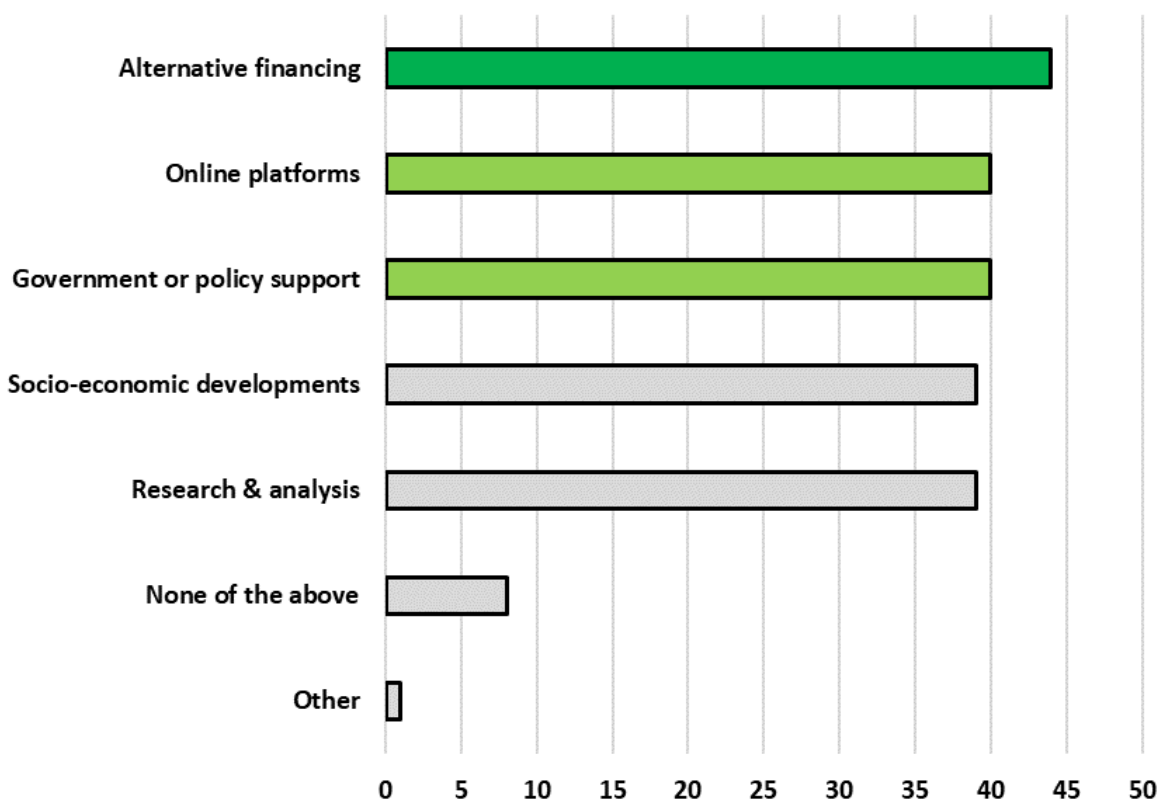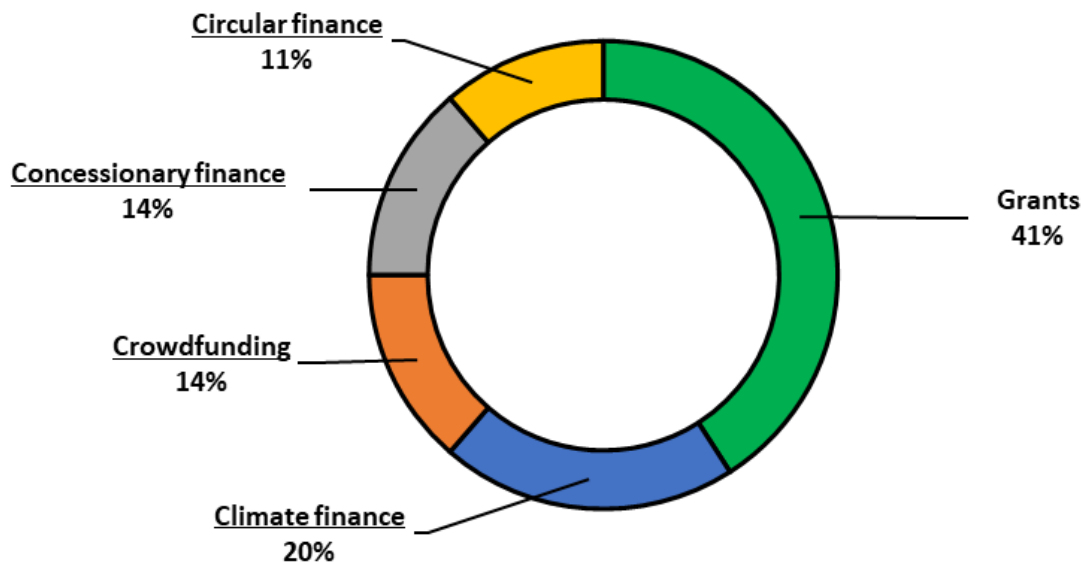
13a. Has your initiative benefitted from any of the following enablers? (N = 51)

These results show the breakdown of the enablers that respondents selected into their subcategories.

i) Alternative finance

Circular finance
11%

Concessionary finance
14%

Grants
41%

Crowdfunding
14%

Climate finance
20%

ii) Online platforms

Under the option 'others' the response selected was 'blockchain technology for tracking waste human hair'.

Others
2%

Matching supply & demand
24%

Data & knowledge sharing
38%

Community engagement
36%
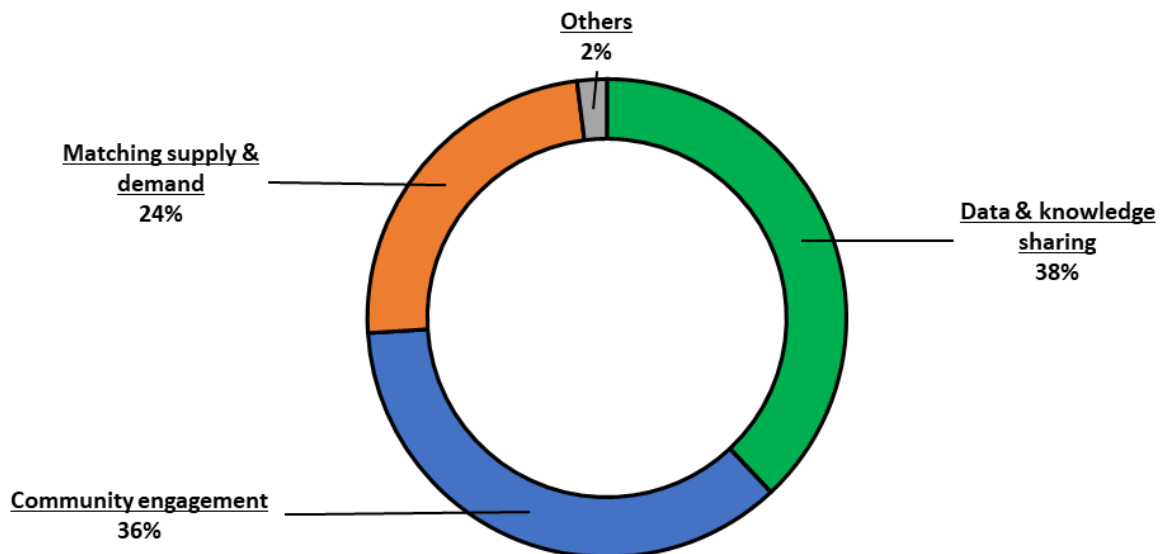
iii) Government or policy support

Under the option 'others' the result specified was 'grants'.

Others 7%

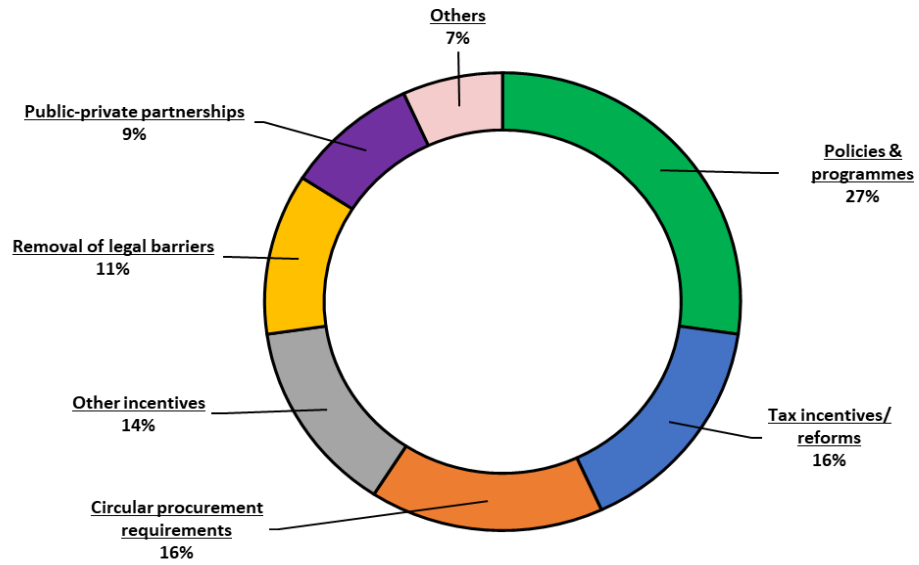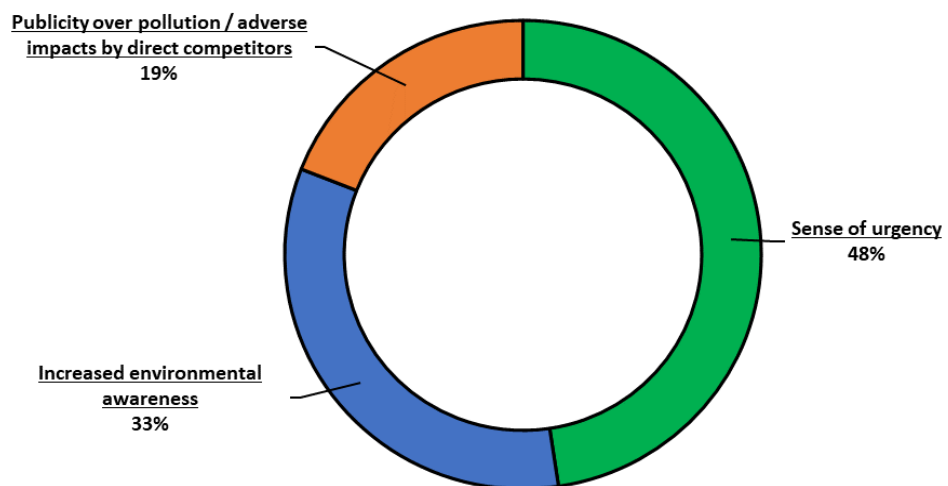**Public-private partnerships** 9%

Policies & programmes 27%

Removal of legal barriers 11%

Other incentives 14%

Tax incentives/ reforms 16%

Circular procurement requirements 16%

iv) Socio-economic developments

Publicity over pollution / adverse impacts by direct competitors 19%

Sense of urgency 48%

Increased environmental awareness 33%

v) Research & analysis

Under the option 'others' one respondent specified 'personal thesis work'.

Others
4%

Life cycle analysis
38%

Material flow/ metabolic analysis
58%
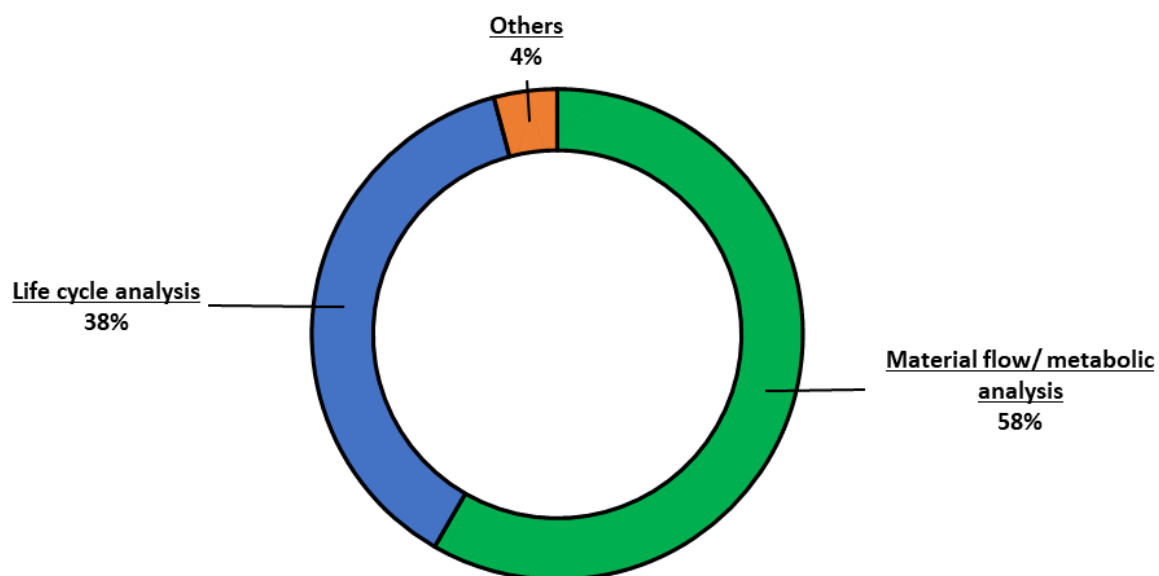
14. Has your initiative benefitted from the application of specific technical expertise or enabling technology? (N = 92)

This was based on 41 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. Respondents were allowed multiple answers.

Under the option 'others' one respondent put 'virtual meetings'.
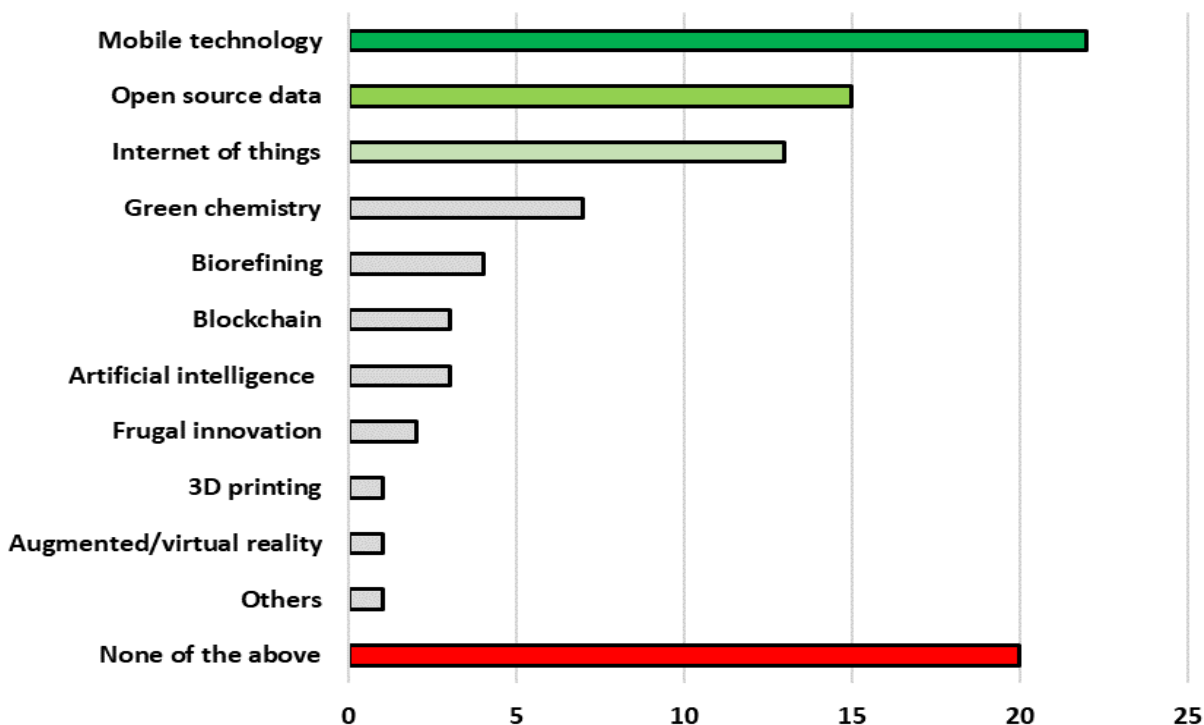
15. Collaboration is key to a resilient and thriving circular economy. Have you worked on new forms of collaboration with people and organisations outside of your typical supply chain? (N = 71)

This was based on 20 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple answers. The y axis shows the total number of options selected by respondents.

This demonstrates that among respondents collaboration is key in creating a strong circular economy.
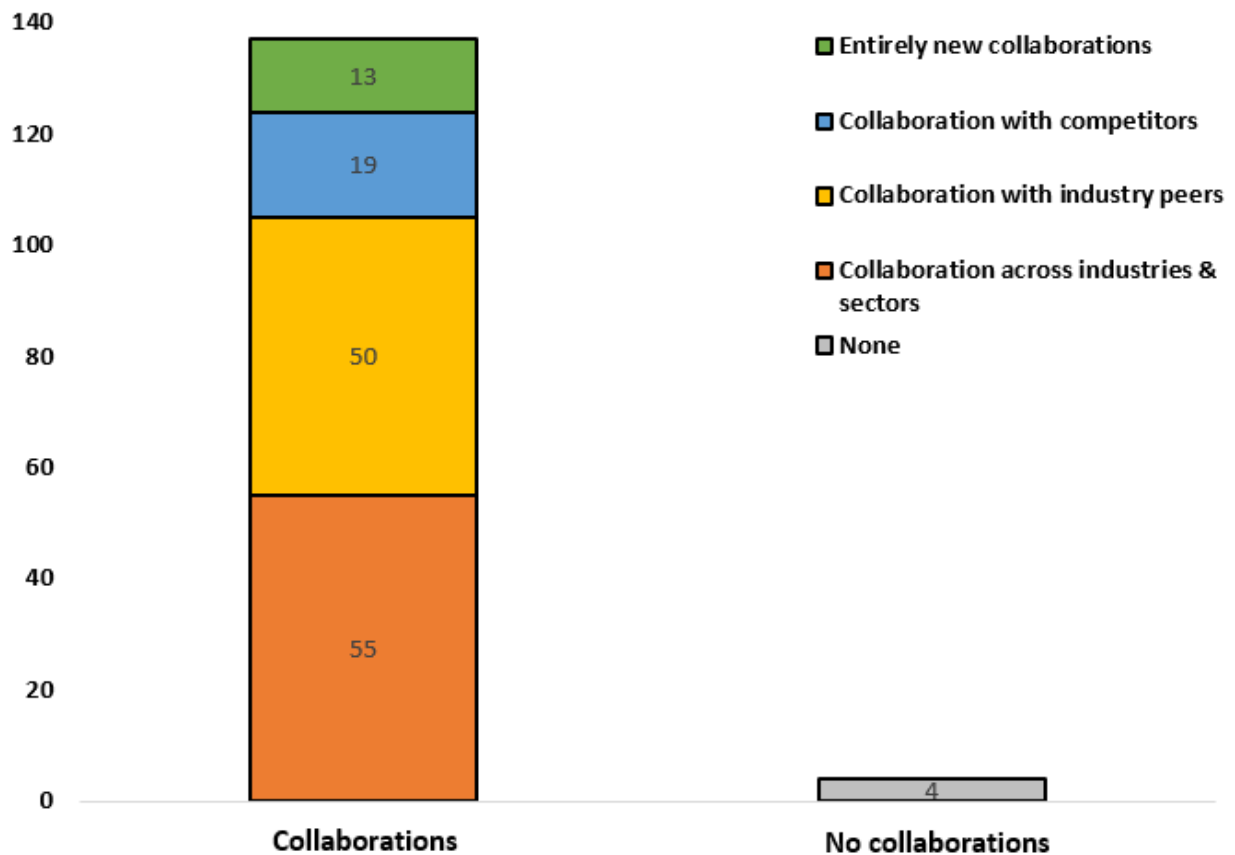
16. What are the main challenges you have faced, or are facing, in developing your initiative? (N = 60)

This is based on 9 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. Respondents were given the chance to choose their **three** top challenges.

As can be seen the top three challenges of circular initiatives are access to finance, the enabling environment and advanced machinery.

Under the options 'others' two respondents stated 'resistance to change from businesses' and 'lack of solutions to tackle certain waste streams'.
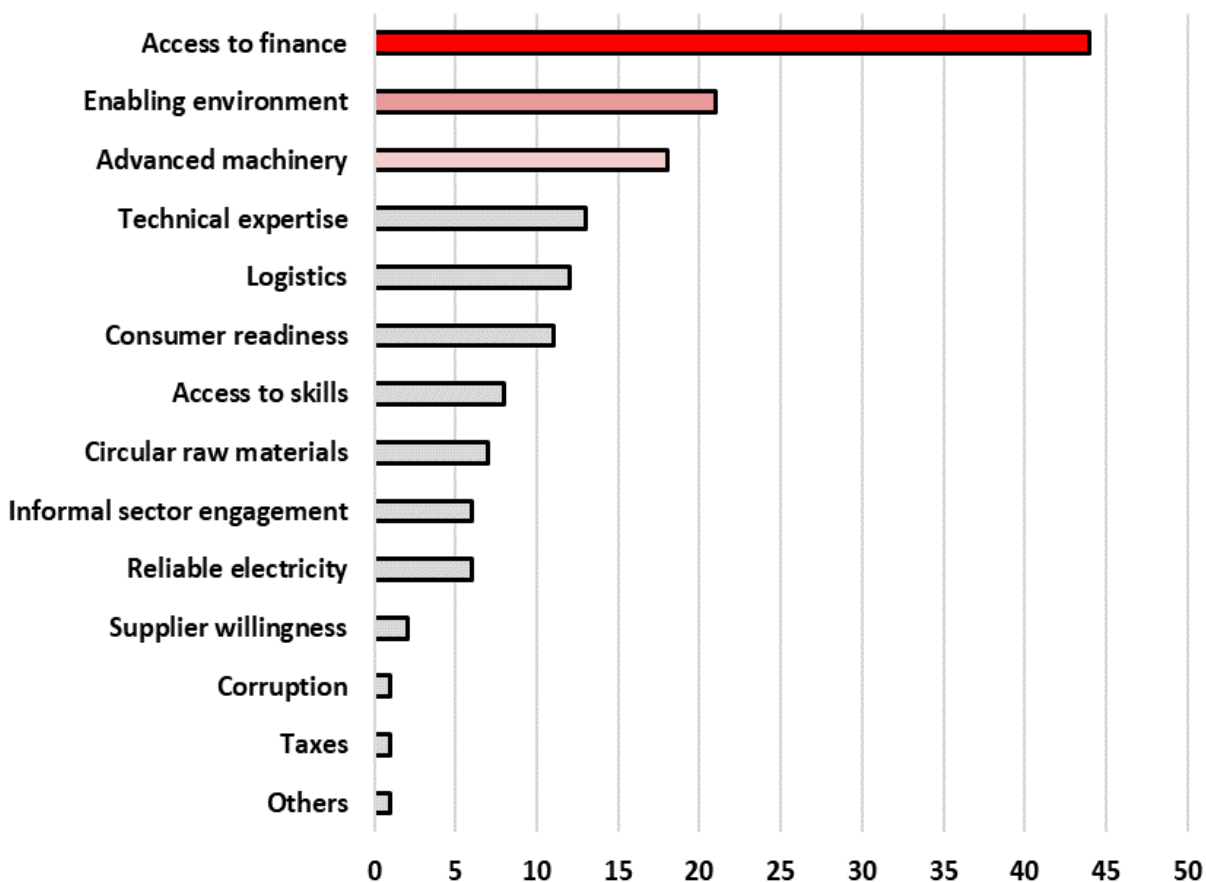
**17. Please specify what kind of support is most important for you? (N = 51)**

This is based on 51 responses from the current survey. Above other forms of support, circular initiatives require support with business accelerators, peer networking and connecting, expanding the value chain, and circular economy certification.

Under the answer option 'others' two initiatives specified 'fundraising and financial support to expand to other countries'.
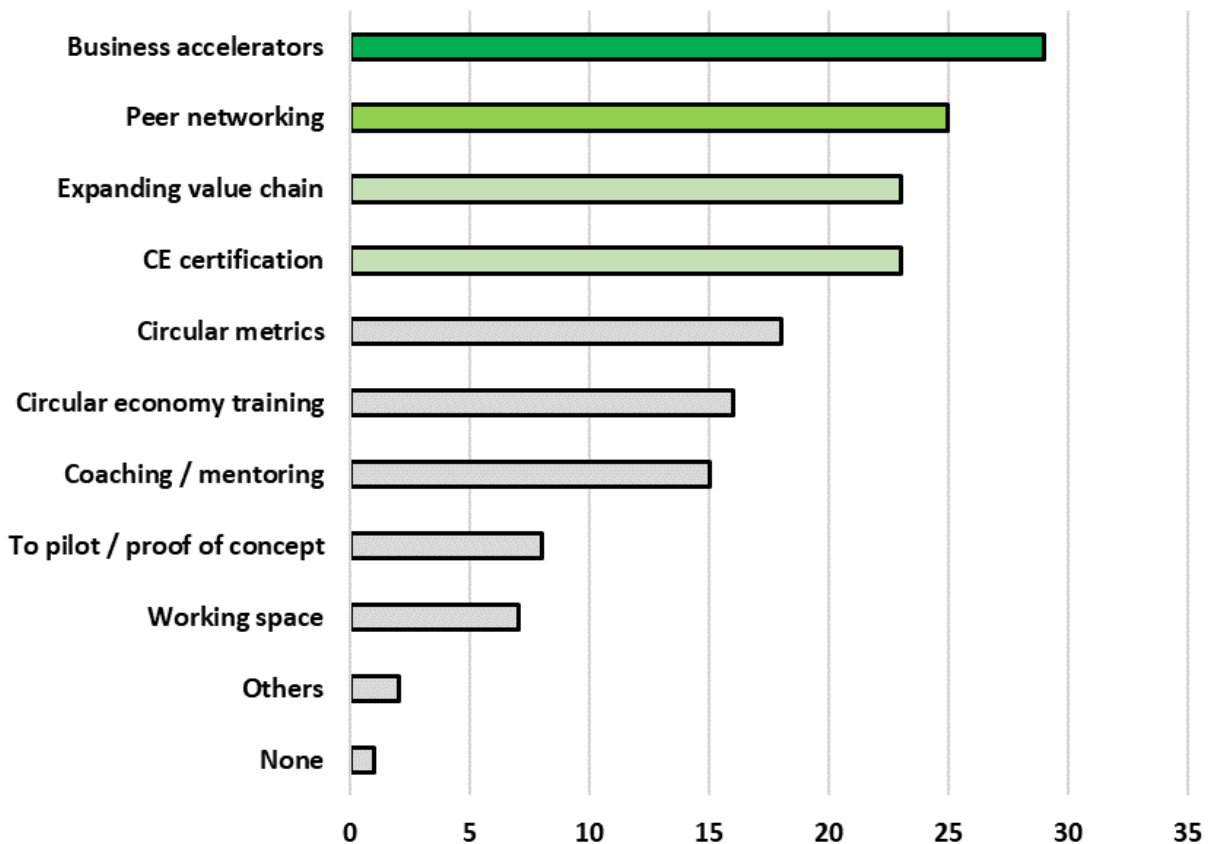
18. Do you have an investor-ready business plan? (N = 41)

This result is based on 41 responses from our ongoing survey. This question was introduced in March 2022, which explains the current lower response number.

No
10%

In progress
32%

Yes
58%
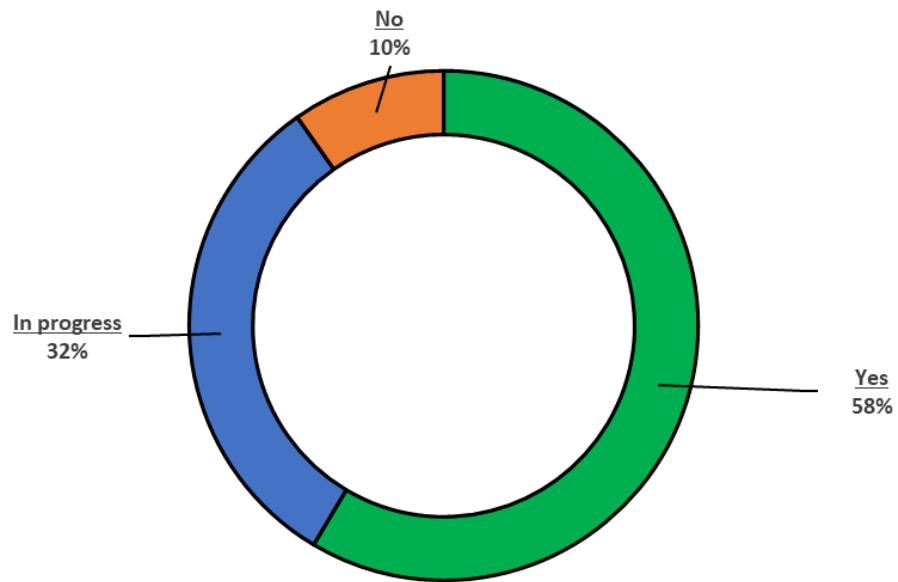
Circularity in practice

19. What sustainability and circularity concepts have you applied? (N = 63)

This is based on 12 results from our first survey and 51 results from our current survey. Respondents were given the chance to choose more than one option. The questionnaire includes a glossary of terms to help respondents.

Initiatives who chose 'others' specified 'zero waste', 'waste beneficiation' and 'waste recycling' as sustainability and circularity concepts that they have applied.
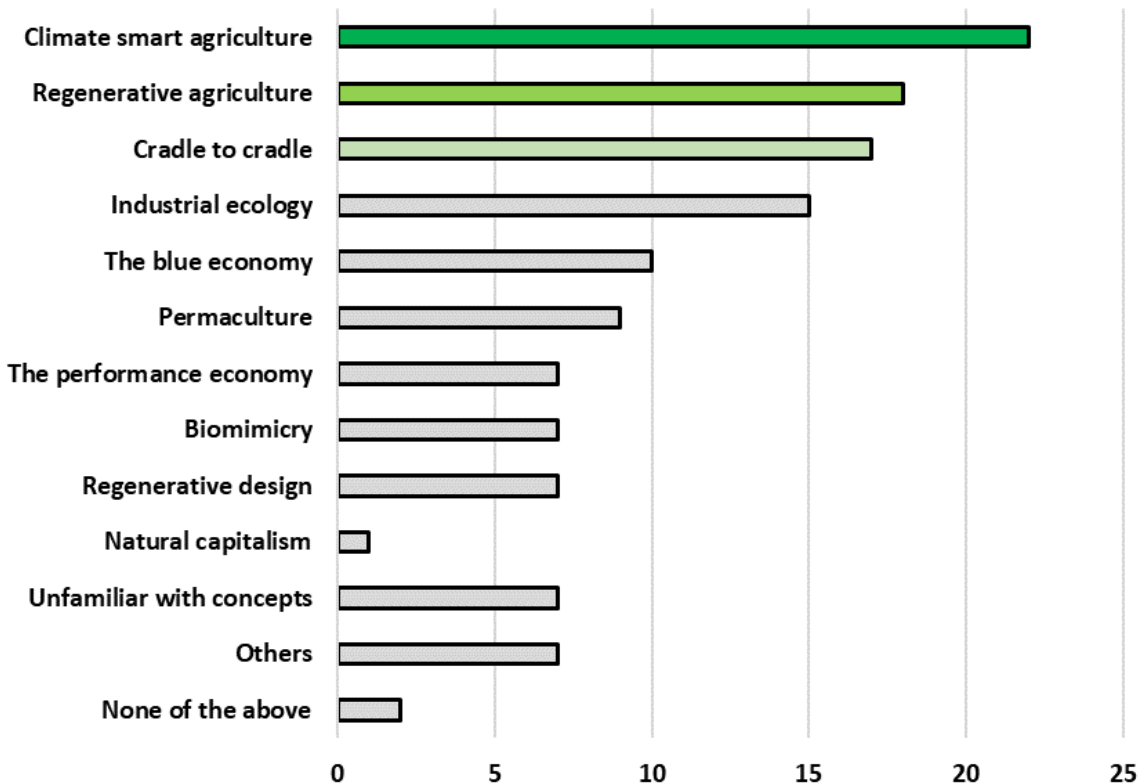
20. If applicable, how does your initiative promote the wider transition to a circular economy? (N = 64)

This is based on 13 results from our first survey and 51 results from our current survey. Respondents were given the chance to choose more than one option.

Under 'other', one respondent identified 'conducting social awareness events'.
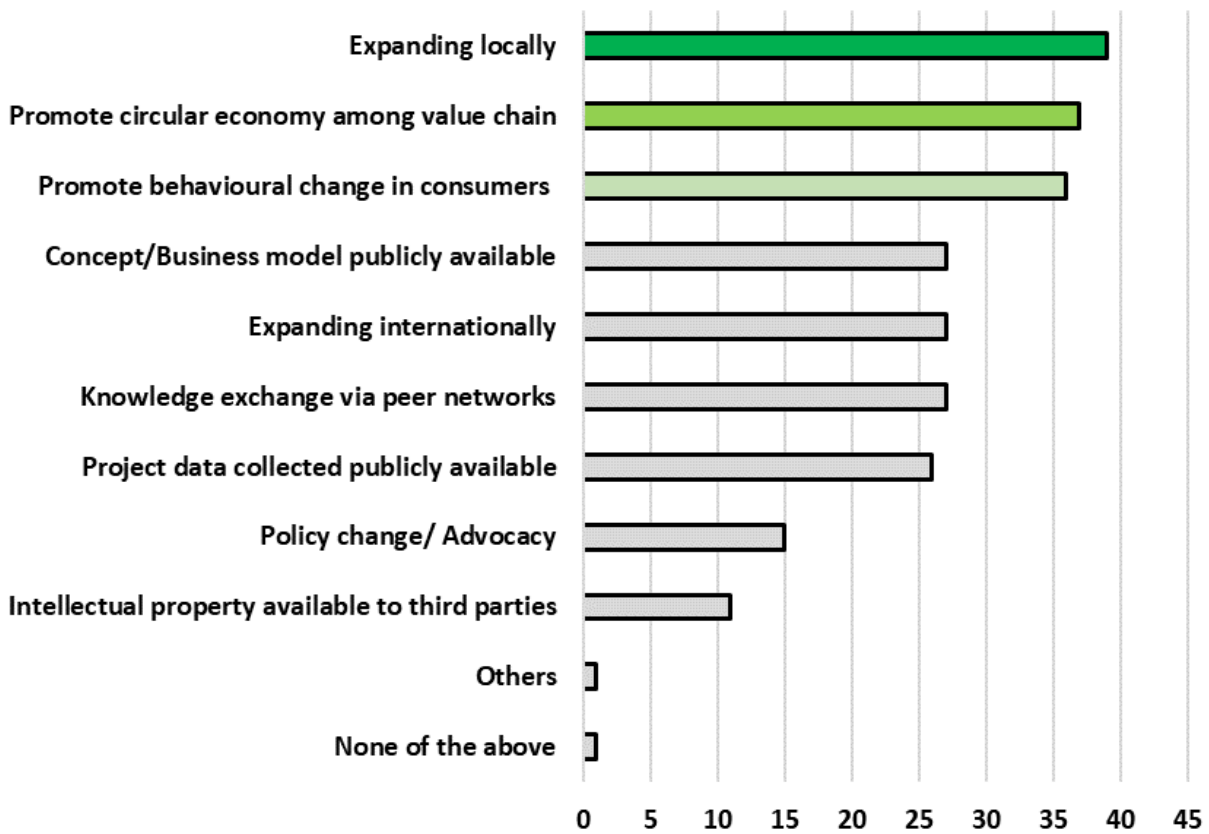
21. If you have used any circularity tools to develop your initiative so far, what have they been? (N = 63)

This is based on 12 responses from the first survey and 51 responses from the current survey. Respondents were given the chance to choose more than one option.

Most respondents have not used any circularity tool - at least formally - to develop their initiative. Under 'others', initiatives identified 'desktop research', organic certification, ISO 14000, TCO Certification, 'self accredited principles products', '5 star eco standard certification', and Forest Stewardship Council Certification.