



# SOE 12: Circular Economy

**Move to a less wasteful and circular economy where the priority is waste prevention, reuse, repair and recycling.**

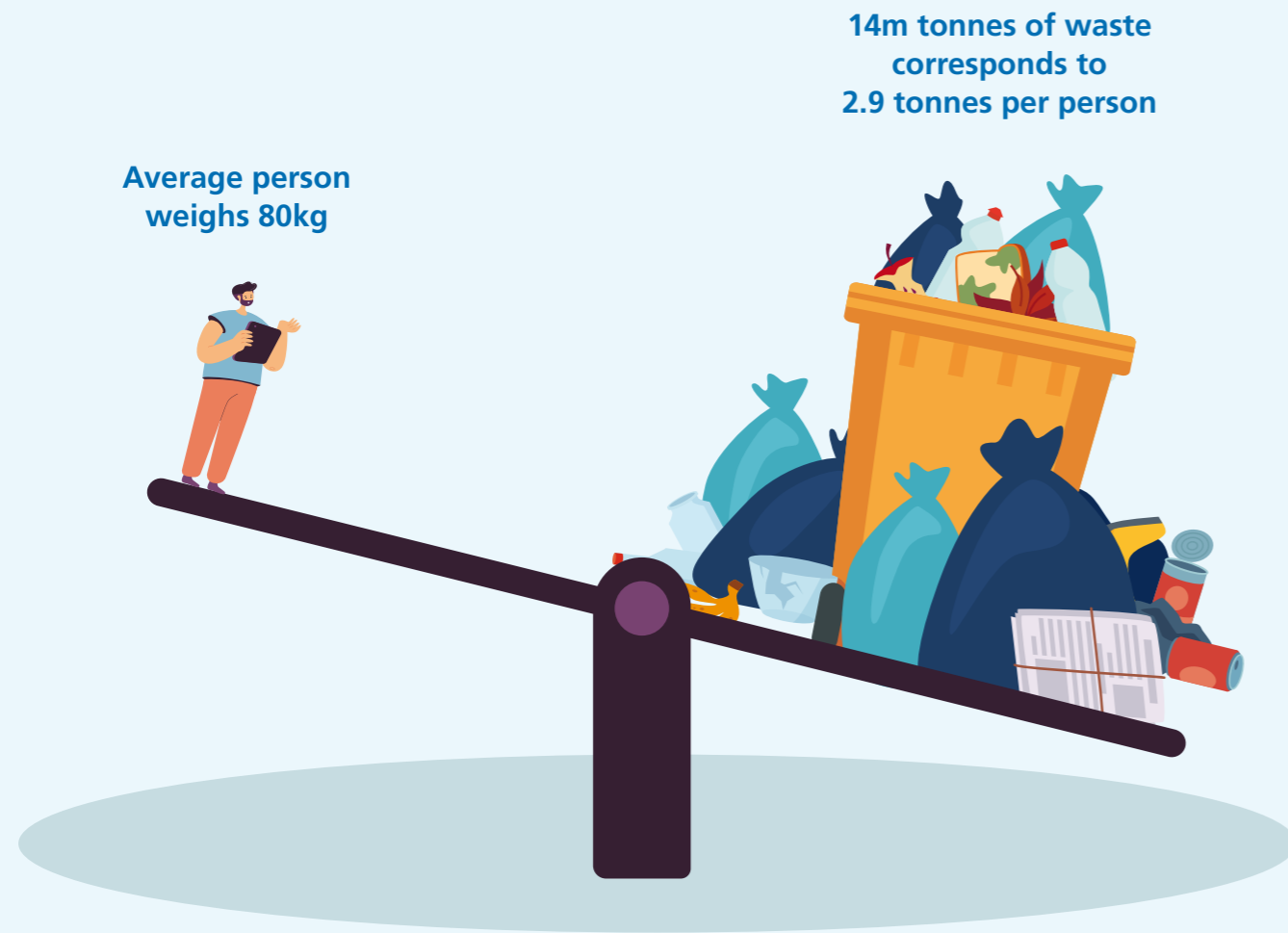
*ACTIONS – WHAT IS NEEDED?*

Changing our behaviours on resource consumption, waste management and recycling are actions that everybody, from business to individuals, can take to protect the environment.



# Ireland's Waste

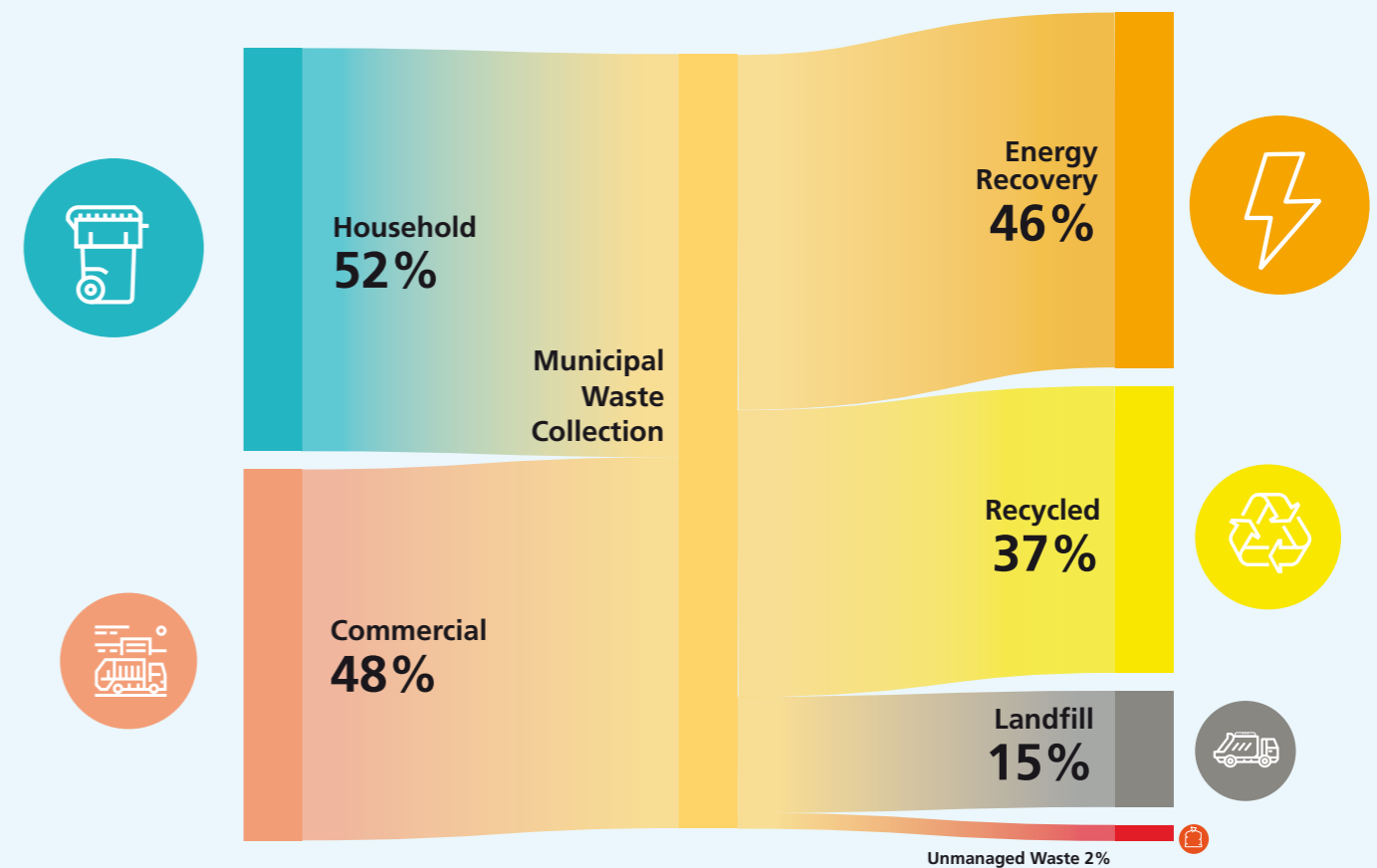
It is estimated that almost 14 million tonnes of waste were generated in Ireland in 2018 across all economic sectors and households, corresponding to 2.9 tonnes per person.



## What happens to Ireland's municipal waste?

Municipal waste comes from households and commercial premises. In 2019, the majority of Ireland's municipal waste was sent for energy recovery rather than recycling. Under the waste hierarchy, prevention, reuse, reduction and recycling are all preferred over energy recovery.

Disposal to landfill has fallen sharply in Ireland; a welcome development since this is the least desirable option in the waste management hierarchy. 15% of Ireland's municipal waste was landfilled in 2019, down from 58% in 2010 and over 80% in 2001. The increase in the landfill levy has been a key policy driver in bringing about this dramatic shift, coupled with increased incineration capacity in the State.

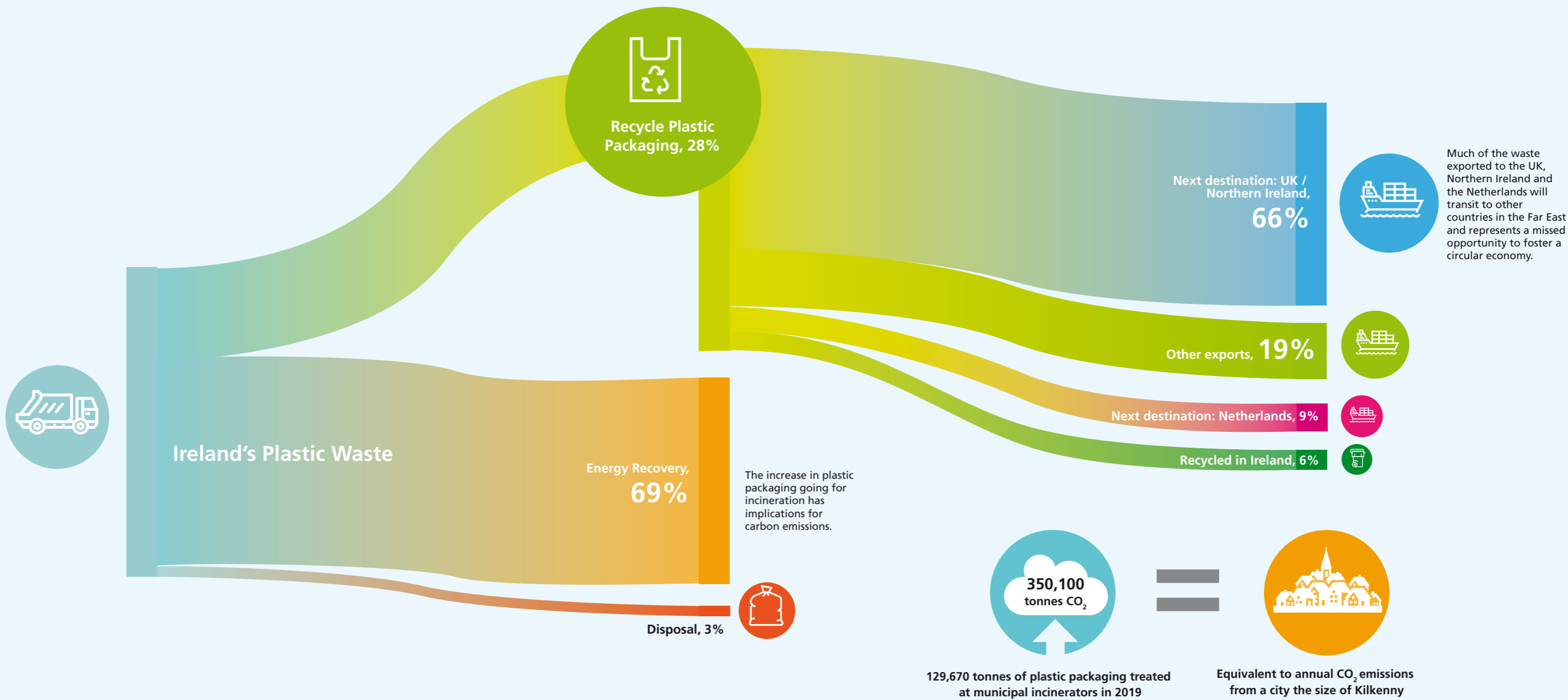


# Plastic packaging waste – a priority waste stream

Ireland generated over 319,000 tonnes of plastic packaging waste in 2019. To set this in context, it is almost the same weight as the Empire State Building (which is approximately 331,000 tonnes).

In 2019 only 28% of Ireland's plastic packaging was recycled (89,000 tonnes). Under the EU Packaging Directive, Ireland is required to achieve a recycling rate of 50% for plastic packaging waste by 2025. Ireland's plastic packaging recycling rates have decreased each year since 2016: this is a trend that is going in the wrong direction.

In 2019, 69% of our plastic packaging waste (221,000 tonnes) was incinerated.

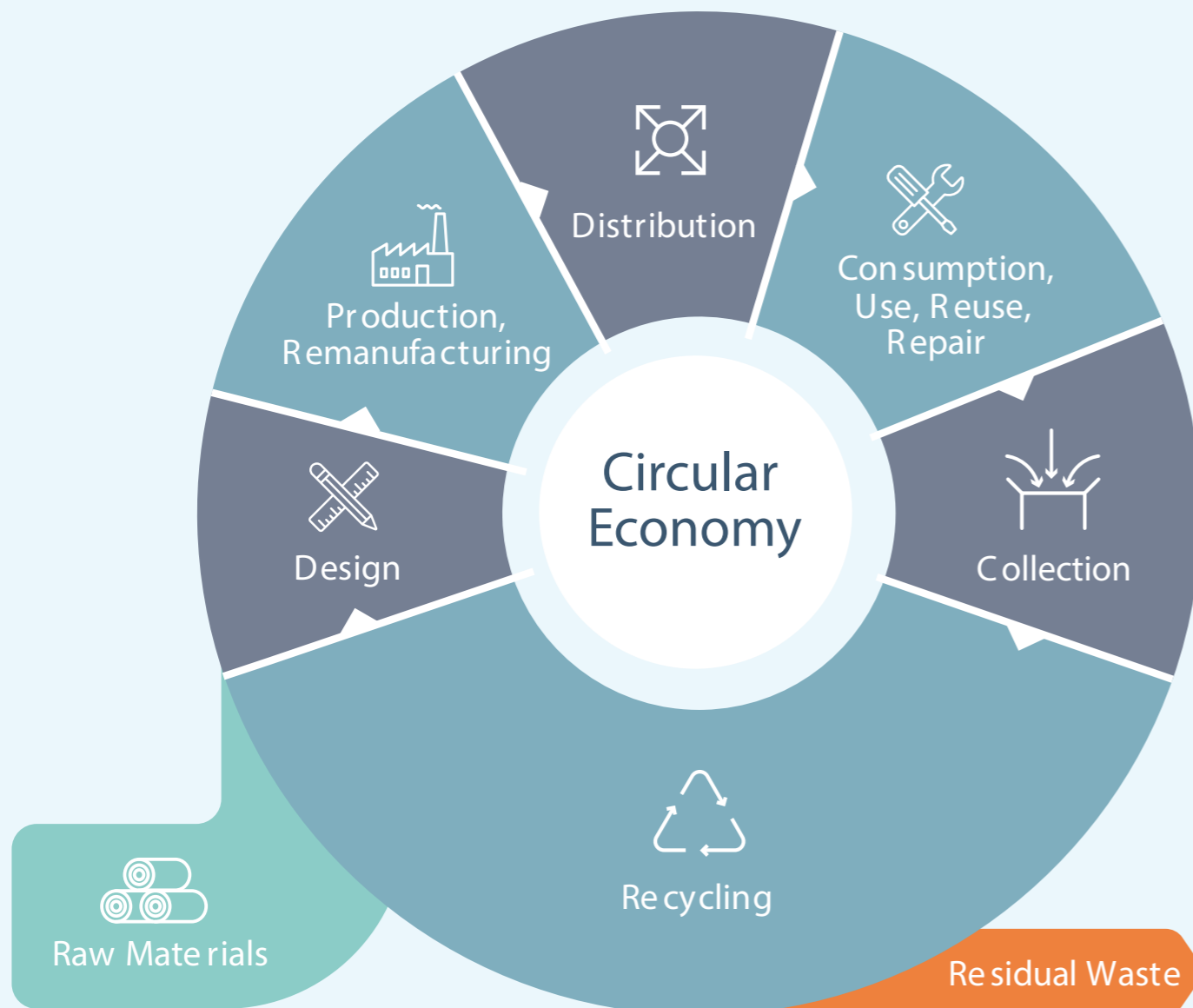


EPA 2021 <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/waste/national-waste-statistics/Packaging-Waste-Ireland-2019.pdf>  
 EPA 2021 . Packaging Waste in Ireland in 2019. <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/waste/national-waste-statistics/Packaging-Waste-Ireland-2019.pdf>

## Moving to a less wasteful and circular economy

Ireland needs to do more to prevent waste at all stages of a product's life cycle. We need to incentivise reuse and repair. We need to increase recycling rates. If waste cannot be recycled, we need to find ways to extract as many resources from non-recyclable waste as possible.

Implementing the policy initiatives outlined in the Waste Action Plan for the Circular Economy and the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy will be central to delivering the systemic changes needed.



## Key Actions to prevent waste



### Consumers

As consumers, we can play our part by thinking about our consumption habits and considering the impact of the products we buy.

Consuming less, and buying long-lasting goods helps to eliminate waste. Repairing broken goods, or opting for reuse by hiring or borrowing items, are options that are increasingly supported in local and online communities. When disposing of something, always check [www.mywaste.ie](http://www.mywaste.ie) to check if it can be recycled and where to bring it for recycling.

## Key Actions for Government & Industry

 <p><b>PREVENT WASTE</b> Strengthen measures to prevent and reduce waste.</p>	 <p><b>CIRCULARITY ROADMAPS</b> Develop circularity roadmaps for key economic sectors supported by clear policy, legislation and targets</p>	 <p><b>SUPPORT THE INCREASED USE OF RECYCLED MATERIALS</b> in products including the possible introduction of a levy on virgin plastic.</p>
 <p><b>INCENTIVISE RECYCLING OVER INCINERATION WITH ENERGY RECOVERY</b> in line with the waste hierarchy and circular economy.</p>	 <p><b>IMPROVE SEPARATE COLLECTION</b> of recyclables including roll out of a deposit-return scheme and expand Ireland's recycling list</p>	 <p><b>IMPLEMENT BANS and RESTRICTIONS</b> on single-use plastic items.</p>