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Editorial: Green entrepreneurship and waste management: strategies and policies for future sustainable and circular economy

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Green entrepreneurship and waste management: strategies and policies
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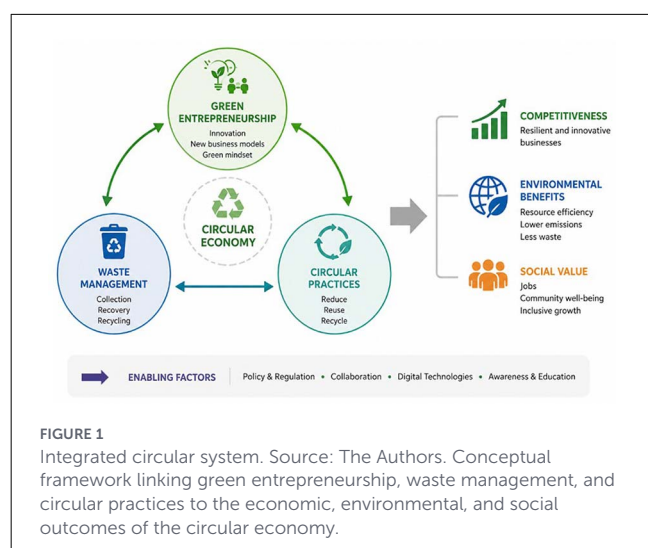
1 Introduction

Recent research and policy developments increasingly point to the need for systemic change in how economies produce, consume, and manage resources (Försterling et al., 2023; Losa, 2025). The circular economy and green entrepreneurship have attracted increasing scientific and policy attention in response to growing pressure from climate change, the scarcity of natural resources, and the need to strengthen the resilience of production systems (Mohanan and Rangaswamy, 2025). In the current geopolitical context, the circular economy is emerging as a strategic element for the transition toward sustainable development models and industrial competitiveness (Awad et al., 2025).

The transformation of waste into resources, expansion of secondary material markets, and adoption of circular business models are redefining the relationship between economic growth, innovation, and sustainability (Gheewala, 2024). However, numerous challenges remain. The transition to circular economic systems requires a rethinking of public policies, economic incentives, and business strategies, as the adoption of circular business models is shaped by multiple and interconnected regulatory, market, organizational, and knowledge-related factors (Assmann et al., 2023). These aspects are interlinked, as the circular economy requires mechanisms for the recovery and recirculation of resources, and entrepreneurial activity can transform these opportunities into viable business models, technologies, and markets. Figure 1 represents the above-mentioned aspects.

Despite a growing body of literature, critical gaps remain in our understanding of how green entrepreneurship, waste management practices, and circular economy principles interact in various institutional and territorial contexts.

By bringing these dimensions together, the articles provide a cross-sectoral perspective on the economic, behavioral, technological, and institutional mechanisms that enable or constrain the implementation of circular practices. Within this framework, this Research



Topic examines these mechanisms from empirical and multidisciplinary perspectives across different sectors and geographical contexts.

2 Overview of the Research Topic

The contributions of this Research Topic expand the rapidly growing body of literature on the circular economy and green entrepreneurship. They provide new evidence on the mechanisms through which circular practices emerge and become viable across different sectors and institutional contexts. Their contribution lies, in particular, in identifying barriers and behavioral factors specific to different stakeholders, examining sustainable business models in less-studied geographical contexts, and demonstrating how digital technologies and new forms of market participation can facilitate green innovation and circular supply chains. They then extend research on the circular economy to specific resource recovery challenges, highlighting the economic incentives, cooperative dynamics, and social conditions that determine whether technically feasible circular solutions are adopted.

Some articles focus on the role of stakeholders and social perceptions in determining the success of circular strategies in the food industry. In particular, [Oikonomou et al.](#) analyze the construction sector. This highlights that the uptake of the circular economy depends on addressing economic, regulatory, and cultural barriers perceived by stakeholders, such as implementation costs, limited consumer awareness, and weak public support. In parallel, [D'Adamo et al.](#) show that citizen participation is a central element of the green transition, emphasizing the importance of differentiated governance and communication strategies to foster social consensus, institutional trust, and active participation in urban regeneration and biomass valorization processes. In both cases, the need for the active involvement of citizens, businesses, and institutions is clear. Taken together, these two contributions suggest that the success of circular transitions is as much a governance and communication challenge as it is a technical challenge.

A second strand concerns the role of sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation in processes of economic and territorial transformation. [Dionizi and Dhora](#) highlight how sustainability-oriented business models can generate economic, social, and environmental value, strengthening local supply chains and promoting inclusive territorial development. Similarly, [Ihou and Mansingh](#) analyse agricultural entrepreneurship, demonstrating that an entrepreneurial mindset, risk-taking propensity, and economic motivations are key factors in fostering higher-value agricultural activities. Both contributions highlight the central role of human capital, skills, and local dynamics in facilitating sustainable transition pathways, particularly in rural and emerging contexts. Collectively, these studies reinforce the view that green entrepreneurship is not merely a market phenomenon but a vehicle for place-based development and social resilience.

Another theme in the Research Topic concerns the role of technological and digital innovation in enabling the circular economy. [Zhang et al.](#) highlight how cross-border e-commerce can stimulate green innovation in businesses by reducing financial constraints, driving digital transformation, and disseminating technological knowledge. Complementarily, [Sartzetaki et al.](#) explore the contribution of business intelligence technologies to the circular management of supply chains, highlighting how advanced analysis and monitoring tools can improve resource efficiency, facilitate reverse logistics, and support strategies for reintegrating materials into production processes. These contributions collectively point to digitalization as a critical enabler of circularity, both at the firm level and across supply chains.

The Research Topic also addresses specific application areas of sustainable waste management and resource recovery. [Jiang et al.](#) analyze the factors that encourage or hinder the recycling of expired medicines by pharmacies and the public, highlighting the roles of economic incentives, Research Topic costs, and cooperative dynamics. [Aso-Campos and Zolla](#) emphasize the potential of edible and medicinal fungi to transform organic waste into food resources and fertilizers, and highlight the link between the circular economy, food security, and sustainable development. Both papers demonstrate how waste recovery can generate environmental, economic, and social benefits, contributing to global sustainability goals. These papers underscore that circular resource flows require both behavioral change among citizens and institutions and enabling regulatory and economic frameworks.

3 Discussion and added value

One element emerging from the contributions concerns the growing importance of public policies in fostering ecological transitions. The uptake of circular practices depends on the availability of innovative technologies and institutional and regulatory frameworks that create conditions favorable to the development of new green markets ([Segarra-Blasco et al., 2024](#)). The papers also highlight how green entrepreneurship represents a key driver of innovation, particularly in waste recovery processes, eco-design, and the development of production models geared toward reducing environmental impacts. This is consistent with

the emerging literature on circular entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the role of entrepreneurial activity in identifying and exploiting new circular business opportunities (Suchek et al., 2022).

A cross-cutting finding is that neither technological solutions nor entrepreneurial initiatives alone are sufficient. Effective circular transitions require the simultaneous alignment of incentive structures, governance frameworks, and behavioral dispositions across multiple actors and scales. In this respect, circularity increasingly needs to be understood as an ecosystem-level challenge requiring coordination among multiple stakeholders rather than as a transformation occurring solely at the individual firm level (Kanda et al., 2021). This is also consistent with evidence showing that technological, market, institutional, and cultural barriers to circularity are strongly interdependent (Parvizomran and Elliot, 2024).

The contributions to this Research Topic highlight several unresolved questions. Indeed, knowledge gaps remain regarding the measurement of the economic impacts of circular practices, the effectiveness of public policies, the mechanisms for the diffusion and scale-up of sustainable and circular innovations, and the ability of firms to capture economic value from the green transition. Further research is needed to understand the territorial and sectoral differences in the diffusion of circular models and the role of individual and collective behaviors in facilitating or hindering change, especially considering business relationships. Future research would particularly benefit from longitudinal studies that track the economic and environmental outcomes of circular interventions over time, comparative analyses across regulatory regimes, and greater attention to equity dimensions, including the distributional effects of the green transition on vulnerable communities and less-developed regions. The integration of behavioral and institutional economics perspectives with technical and engineering approaches remains a largely underdeveloped frontier.

4 Concluding remarks

The transition to a circular economy requires interdisciplinary approaches in which public policies, entrepreneurial innovation, social participation, and digital technologies interact. There is no single pathway to sustainability. Effective strategies depend on local contexts and stakeholders' ability to cooperate, particularly in today's uncertain global environment. The contributions gathered in this Research Topic collectively advance our understanding of these dynamics and offer concrete insights for policymakers, business practitioners, and researchers. The evidence suggests the need for targeted public support mechanisms to reduce the cost

of circular transitions for firms, inclusive governance models that embed citizens in decision-making, and investment in digital infrastructure to enable resource tracking and reverse logistics. The findings and implications are relevant to a broad audience spanning sustainability science, environmental economics, management studies, and public policy, and we hope that this Research Topic will stimulate further work in this rapidly evolving field.

Author contributions

GD: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. LC: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. IK: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Conflict of interest

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