

2. Characterizing Circular Agriculture Initiatives in the North of the Netherlands through a Small Wins Perspective

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Circular Agriculture (CA) is increasingly proposed by scientists and policymakers as a way to produce food while respecting planetary boundaries. By closing the loops of biomass and nutrients, CA aims to reduce resource consumption and emissions to the environment. Realizing a CA system requires in-depth changes in current practices, markets, organizations and institutions. This raises the question of how to govern a transition in this direction. In this paper, we apply a novel perspective on the governance of transitions: the small wins framework. This framework proposes to stimulate emerging initiatives, or 'small wins', to catalyze a transition to CA. Small wins can be defined as small but concrete, in-depth changes that contribute to CA. An accumulation of small wins leads to larger, systemic change. However, stimulating the development of small wins raises the question of how to identify them in the first place. In this paper we address this question by proposing an operationalization of the small wins concept in the context of the CA transition. As a result, we constructed a matrix that distinguishes three levels of in-depthness on one axis and five principles of circularity on the other axis. We applied this matrix to existing initiatives in the North of the Netherlands in order to test its functionality. We created a database of 174 CA initiatives using a document analysis. We then conducted semi-structured interviews with the initiators of 45 initiatives. The outcomes of this paper show how to place agricultural practices in the designed matrix and show the in-depthness and circularity focus of circular initiatives illustrated by practical examples.

