

# KB - Governance tools in practice: WP3 - Instruments to change behaviour

Paper title: "The recycling lock-in at work; the adoption of biobased packages thwarted"



# Introduction

- In plastic sector current use of plastic packaging is non-sustainable. The solution is to adopt biobased plastic in the current recycling schemes for packaging plastics.
- This implies that food-grade recycled plastics can be produced from biobased plastics after use, which refers to “circular bioeconomy”.
- For transition to take off, behavioural change is a key requirement, but often it does not occur by itself
- Market based instrument (MBIs) that incentivize behaviour, supporting circular economy play a key role
- However, the effectiveness of MBIs can be influenced by the Corporate Power (CP)



# Introduction

- CP refers to the influence & control that large corporations have over various aspects of society & the economy and their the ability to shape & impact government policies, market behavior & society.
- When corporate objectives clash, they can create conflicts of interest that hinder the shift toward sustainability
- These conflicts may discourage or delay the adoption of sustainable practices, leading to lock-ins where the corporation remains trapped in less sustainable practices
- CP can also stimulate the transition by driving innovations, implementing a sustainable sourcing policy by creating a market for sustainably produced products



# Objective WP3

- Exploring the dimensions of corporate power, potential conflict of interests of powerful actors, its relation to lock-ins, and its combined impact on a sustainable transition, namely the adoption of biobased plastics in the plastic food packaging system.
- Investigating the most promising interventions and incentives, such as Market-Based Instruments (MBIs), to foster circular behaviour among food system companies during the transition.

# Theory- CP

## ■ Dimensions of Corporate Power

- **Instrumental**-Focuses on the direct influence exerted by various actors over formal political decisions. It occurs when Actor A can persuade Actor B to take actions they would not have taken otherwise, by employing tactics such as political financing, lobbying, cultivating relationships, but does not exercise of power in the form of agenda-setting
- **Structural**-the ability to shape the political agenda and is employed by powerful actors who exploit social, political, and economic structures and institutional practices. It refers to rule-setting power, wherein specific actors possess the capacity to create rules due to underlying economic and institutional structures.
- **Discursive**-By employing persuasive narratives, described as methods of shaping perceptions and understanding the global landscape, specific entities can influence what is accepted as conventional wisdom and gain societal acceptance

# Theory- Barriers & lock-ins

- While **barriers** include any obstacles to change, **lock-ins** refer to situations where existing choices or investments make it challenging to transition to alternatives & result from deep entrenchment in the status quo
- Lock-ins with focus on:
  - Design-for-recycling guidelines (DFCG)
    - Recycling company defined DFCG to assist packaging producers to render their packages well-recyclable. Biobased plastics are classified as DFCG as the existing recycling industry does currently not target these plastics and this industry establishes these guidelines themselves
  - Eco-modulation
    - The Dutch EPR organisation “eco-modulates” its tariffs for plastic packages. FMCG industries pay a reduced rate for packages that are considered well-recyclable. The checks are based on current fossil based plastic & innovative, sustainable packaging materials are disfavored
  - Purchase specifications
    - FMCG industries either purchase their packages from packaging producers or produce themselves. With the start of eco-modulate more FMCG industries started to embrace these recycling checks.

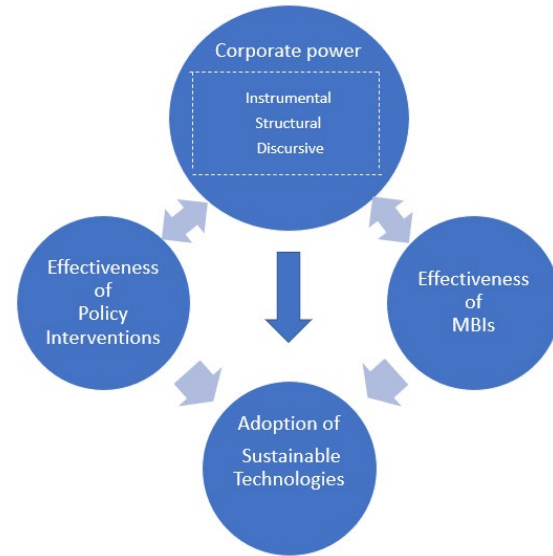
# Theory-MBIs

- MBIs- refer to a range of alternatives to traditional regulations that aim to induce behavioral change by utilizing economic incentives rather than strict rules. They can be defined as policy tools that promote behavioral change through market signals, providing economic incentives instead of relying solely on traditional regulations
- Eco-modulation as a MBI, designed to induce the recycling of plastic packaging, by providing financial incentives to businesses to create more recyclable packaging. However, it creates lock-in for biobased packaging as there are no incentives for EPR and/or plastic producing companies to switch to biobased recycling.



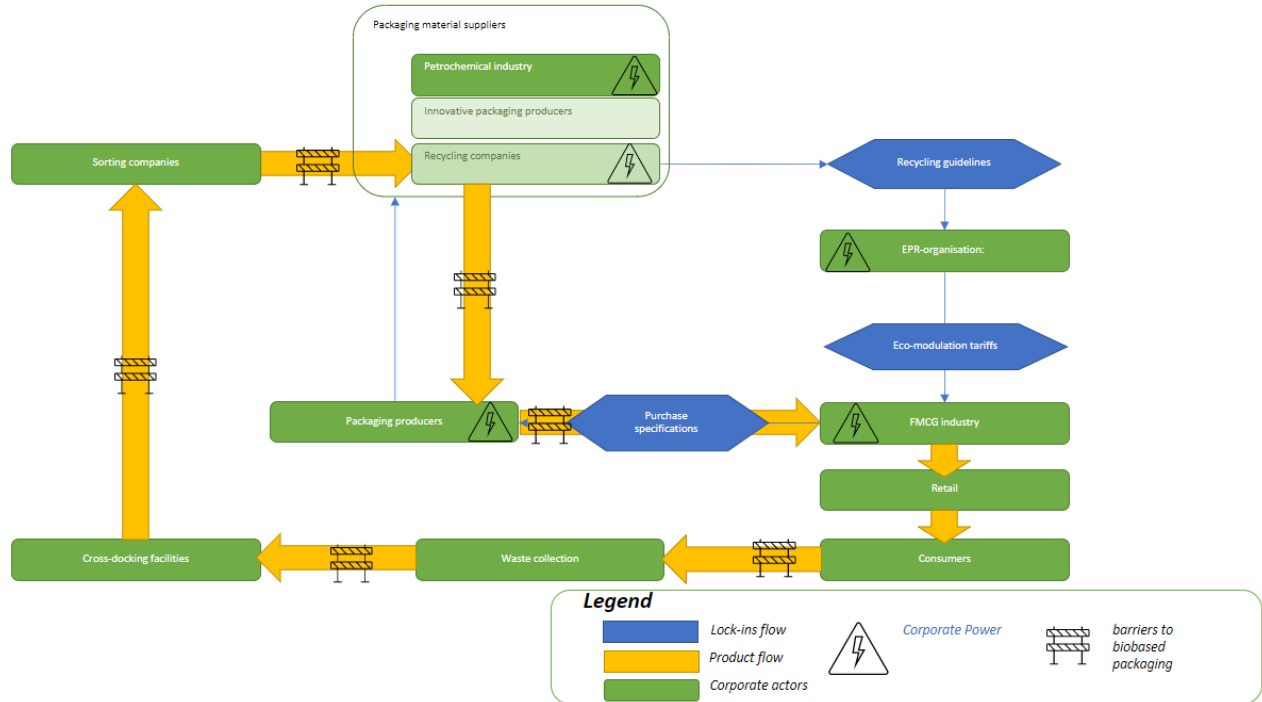
# Theoretical framework

- CP influences the adoption of sustainable technologies, the effectiveness of MBIs, & the design & implementation of policy interventions
- A reciprocal relationship, where the MBIs & policy interventions can also impact CP and adoption of sustainable technology






# Schematic presentation of the biobased recycling lock-ins and CP interplay among corporate actors



# Approach

- Task 1. Literature review: May 2023
- Task 2. Developing a theoretical framework (with WP2): May/June 2023
- Task 3. Selection of a case study: End of May/start of June
- Task 4. Development of the interview questionnaire: in progress (to finalized end of September)
  - List of interviewees- 19 stakeholders identified (e.g. afvalfonds, FNLI, Government, Friesland Campina)- 10-15 interviews
- Task 5. Data collection & analysis (October-December, final paper 2024)

Thank you for  
your attention!



To explore  
the potential  
of nature to  
improve the  
quality of life