

# SinCE-AFC Stakeholder Consultation No.2 Report

Maura Toner & Michael Tunney  
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## **AUTHORS' NOTE**

This report reflects the SinCE-AFC Project Partners and their Stakeholders' views and opinions only. Interreg Europe, the programme authorities, is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

# ***INTRODUCTION***



During Semesters 2 and 3 of the SinCE-AFC project, Donegal County Council (PP6) conducted a preliminary survey of the Stakeholders of all Project Partners (PPs) to assess the level of awareness and knowledge of the theory and practice of the Circular Economy (CE) and CE policies/strategies.

The dissemination of the results revealed that such knowledge varied greatly, even within partner regions. There appeared to be a lack of strong meaningful policies and measures to support the CE within most partner regions. The report prepared by PP6 also revealed that whilst there is an understanding of the concept of CE, there was very limited knowledge or experiences of the practices involved in the CE. The lack of awareness and understanding within the partner regions pointed to the need for this fundamental challenge to be addressed at an early

stage and to be an essential part of the partners' Action Plans. It also concluded that the PPs and public agencies need to have a much better knowledge of the real market opportunities within the CE and of the commercial models that can be applied to the sector. The report surmised that there was significant opportunity for projects such as SinCE-AFC to identify and raise awareness through Good Practices in the CE and use these as a means of creating awareness, improving understandings and affecting future policies.

# ***OBJECTIVE***

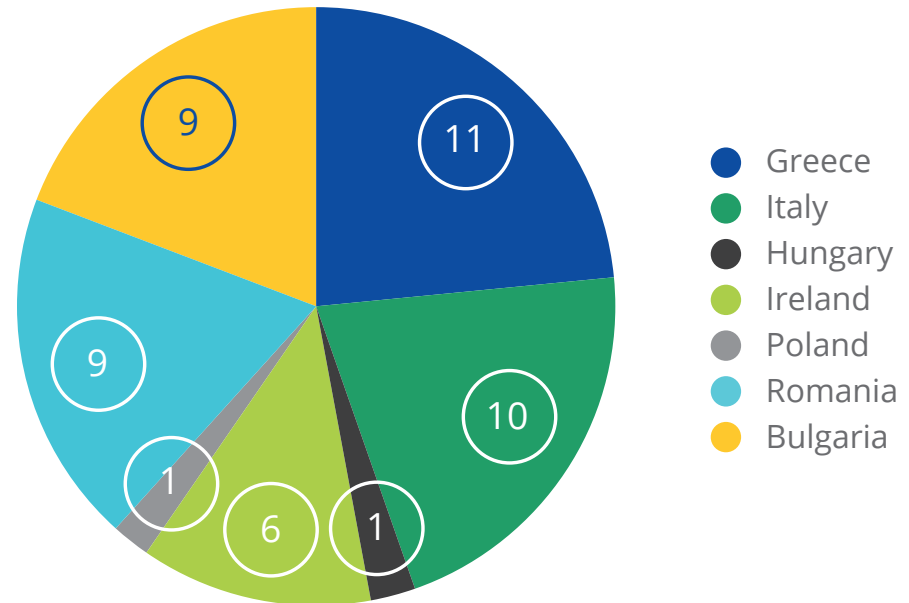


This (second) consultation process was designed to assess the views and needs of Stakeholders within the PP regions regarding the initial set-up, development and evaluation of the respective PPs' Action Plans. A questionnaire was developed by Donegal County Council (PP6) and was distributed to the SinCE-AFC partners in May 2021. A deadline of 30th June 2021 was set for receipt of replies.

Throughout the following months, up to and including September 2021, a total of **47 Stakeholders, from 7 regions**, submitted replies to the Questionnaire.

It should be noted that PP2 and PP4 collaborated with PP1 and PP3 respectively in the collation of replies from their regions.

## Replies from PP Regions



### The results of this process and assessment will:

1. Identify challenges that can be addressed in the respective Action Plans of the PPs,
2. Enable the PPs to finalise their Action Plans.

# ***SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS***

***IDENTITY (Q1 & Q2)***

***KNOWLEDGE REVIEW (Q3 - Q6)***

***ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT (Q7 - Q10)***

The 47 Respondents represent all 7 SinCE-AFC partner countries and are from diverse backgrounds in the public, not for profit and private sectors.

Feedback was received from representatives of Government bodies - Local Authorities, Development Agencies etc (11), Social Enterprises (3), Not for Profit organisations (9), Research & Educational Institutes (5), Businesses (19)







### **Q3.**

#### **How has the SinCE-AFC project improved your understanding and knowledge of the Circular Economy (CE)?**

There were 45 out of a possible 47 (96%) replies to this question. One Stakeholder from each of PP3&4 and PP8 did not reply to it. Overall, the responses were positive and it is clear the SinCE-AFC project has expanded knowledge in the area of the CE. It is also evident that the Good Practices researched and presented by the PPs were essential to expanding the Stakeholders knowledge

of the CE, with 36% of the Respondents specifically mentioning how important these were to their learning. Explaining CE principals, exploring the policies and networking at the interregional learning events as well as online were also cited as how the Stakeholders expanded their knowledge. Only one Stakeholder referred to the SinCE-AFC E-Book.



### Q4.

#### What lessons have you learned from the project?

There was a 94% response rate to this question, with no answer being given by 2 of PP3&4 and 1 of PP7s' Stakeholders.

The overall theme of the replies is that the Stakeholders know that the CE, whilst a relatively new concept, is of vital importance to the agri-food sector. Stakeholders are aware that there are a range of opportunities available.

The following lessons were specifically mentioned:

- The valorisation of waste streams,
- The need to conserve resources,
- The need to reduce Green House Gases,
- The need for knowledge and awareness about the CE and its benefits,
- The need for better cooperation between local and regional authorities,
- Eco-design,
- The importance of investor capital.

Again, a proportion of the replies referred to the Good Practices represented as the source of their learning.



## **Q5.**

**Please identify where you gained this knowledge e.g. through Good Practices presented, discussions at Local Stakeholders Group (LSG) meetings, attending the Project Study visits or other (please specify)**

Only two Stakeholders did not provide an answer to this question.

The vast majority (81%) of the Stakeholders referred to the Good Practices and/or the LSG meetings as their source of the learning. Two referred to the Import Workshops, 1 to their Action Plan development meeting, 1 to meeting with Consultants and 3 referred to Study Visits.

While COVID significantly disrupted the project and every effort was used via online platforms to deliver the project as best as possible, the importance of practical Good Practices and the opportunity to discuss the topics within the Circular Economy at local level would suggest that the project could have had greater impact if there had been more face-to-face meetings among the SinCE-AFC Project Partners.



## Q6.

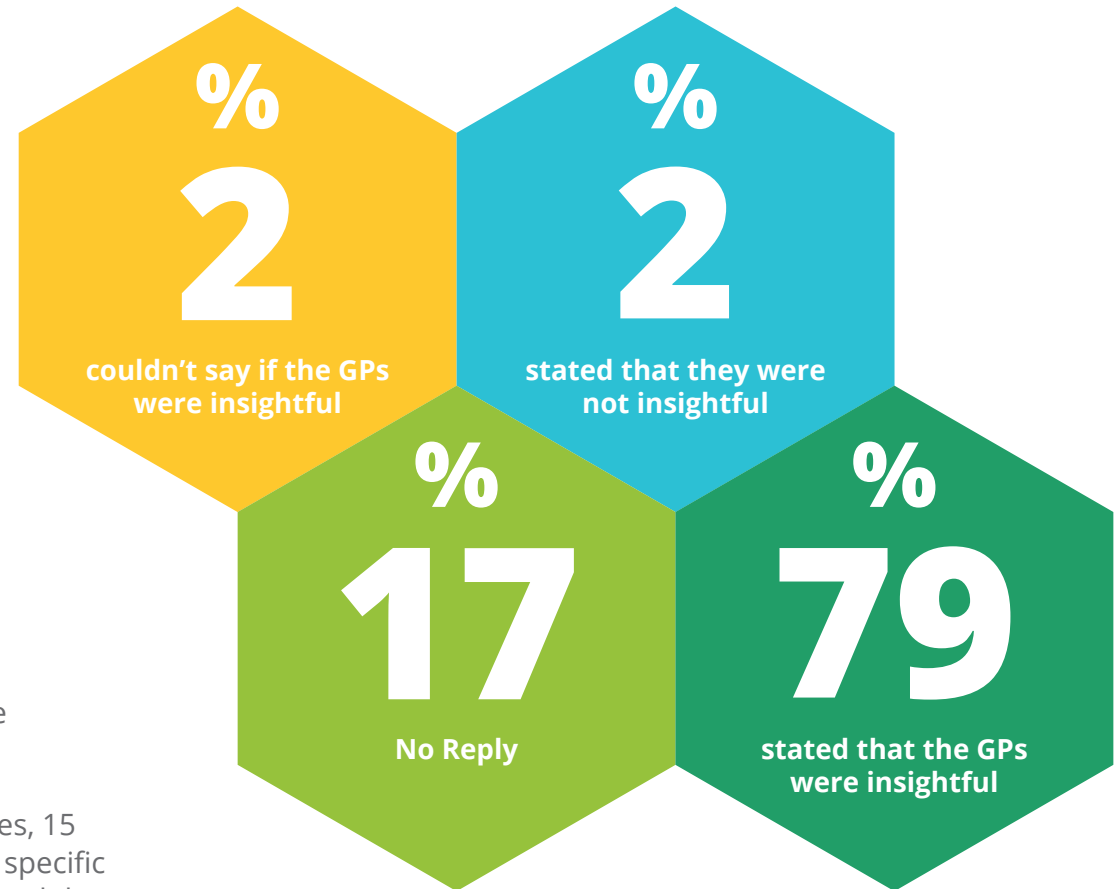
**Did you find any of the Good Practices particularly insightful? If so, please specify which practice(s). Do you believe that this practice can be replicated in your region?**

Again there was a varied response to this question.

One reply (2%) stated that they couldn't say if the GPs were insightful, 1 (2%) stated that they were not insightful, 8 Stakeholders (17%) did not give a reply, whilst the remaining 37 (79%) stated that the GPs were

insightful. This figure is in line with the response to the previous question.

Within the positive replies, 15 Stakeholders named 24 specific GPs. It should be reiterated that other GPs were referred to in other parts of this report - *please refer to the next page.*



**Good Practices  
specifically named  
as insightful...**

<b>Good Practice</b>	<b>No. of References</b>
Olive Clima	1
Kafsimo	1
Social Plate	1
ICESP/Italian Circular Economy Platform	3
Staramaki	2
Koukoutsi Eco Material	1
Tsakiris Family	3
SECVENT	2
ECO Partner	2
Zero Waste Dinner	1
Symbio Beer	1
Biogas at Baciú Farm	1
Foodsí App	1
Hungarian Dairy	2
SLAMka	2

# ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT (Q7 - Q10)<sup>1</sup>

## Q7.

Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.



<sup>1</sup> Author's note – It's imperative to state that some of the Stakeholders did not rank their answers in the format requested for questions 7, 8 and 10. Rather they gave the same ranking under multiple headings. This made it difficult to disseminate the information provided and give an overall, accurate picture of what was asked.

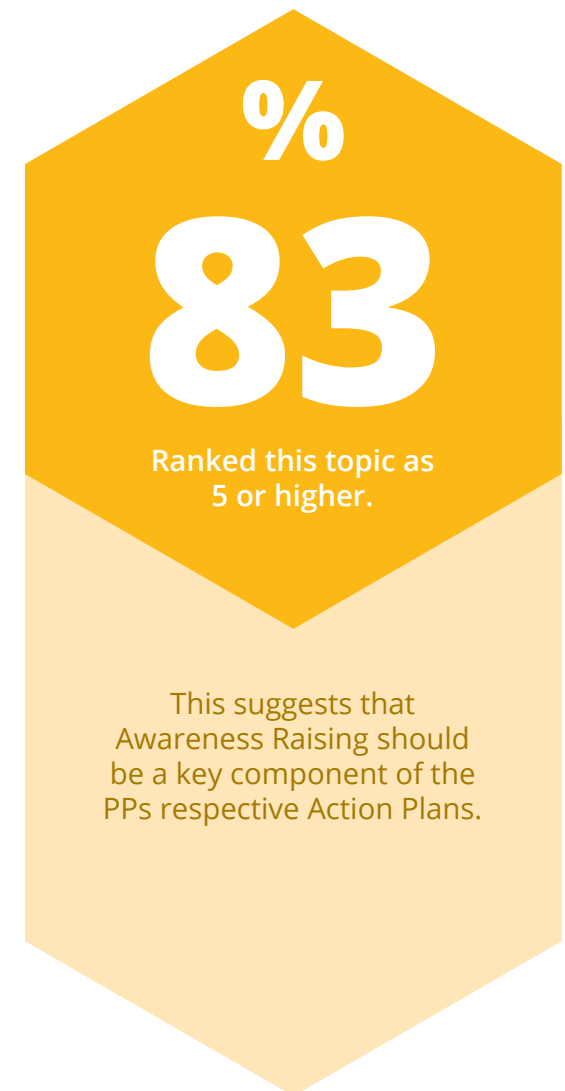
### Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- **Awareness Raising**
- Marketing
- Stakeholder Commitment
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- Strategic Alliances
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

All 47 Respondents replied to this topic. Remarkably, 39 or 83% of them scored Awareness Raising as 5 or higher with nineteen of them giving this topic the highest ranking of 8 (this included 6 out of 9 of PP8's Stakeholders). This clearly suggests that Awareness Raising should be a key component of the PPs respective Action Plans.

Three Stakeholders, all from PP6, ranked Awareness Raising as their least important key component whilst only two other Stakeholders ranked it at no. 2.





### Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- Awareness Raising
- ▶ Marketing**
- Stakeholder Commitment
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- Strategic Alliances
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

There were 46 replies to this topic with PP7's only Stakeholder electing to leave it blank.

A total of 30 Stakeholders ranked Marketing as 5 or higher, representing 65% of those surveyed. Of these, six Respondents gave it their highest ranking. None of the Respondents gave the lowest ranking, with just 3 ranking it at 2. This suggested that Marketing should be viewed as an important topic when considering the formulation of the Action Plans.



### Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- Awareness Raising
- Marketing
- **Stakeholder Commitment**
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- Strategic Alliances
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

Again there was one no ranking for this topic, equating to 46 replies.

Overall, 34 Respondent's ranked Stakeholder Commitment at 5 or higher, which equates to 78% of them considering it a key topic. Only one Respondent ranked it at 1, whilst two ranked it at 2. The SinCE-AFC Stakeholders clearly see the need for full engagement from Stakeholders to the success of their Action Plans and this should be a key element of all Action Plans.



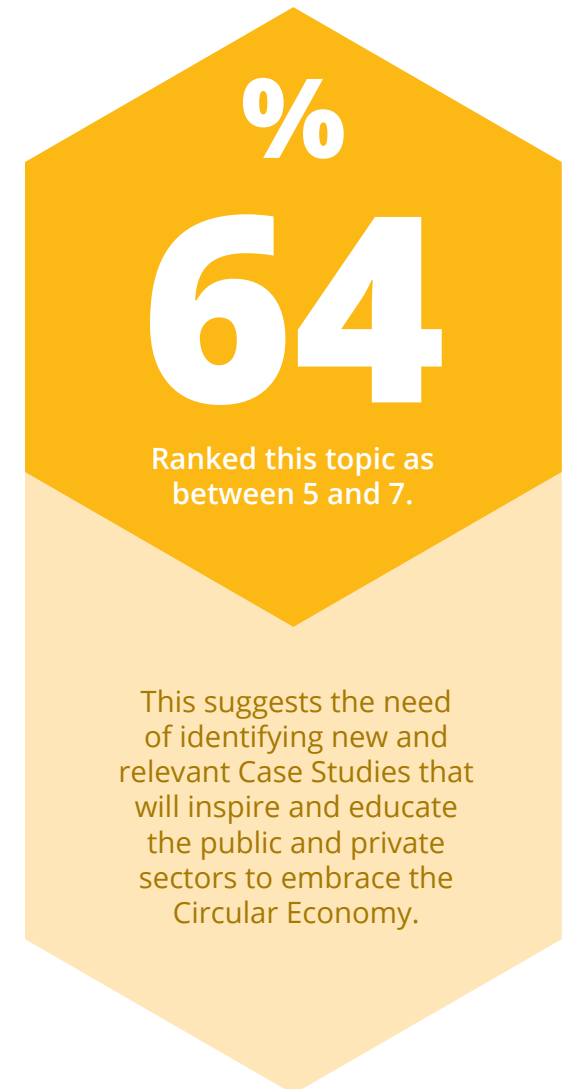
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**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- Awareness Raising
- Marketing
- Stakeholder Commitment
- **Case Studies/Good Practices**
- Strategic Alliances
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

All 47 Stakeholders ranked this topic however (rather surprisingly given the replies in earlier parts of the report) none of them gave it the highest ranking of 8.

Thirty (64%) of the Respondents ranked Case Studies between 5 and 7. None of the Respondents ranked it at 1 but six (13%) ranked it at 2 which reiterate the point that Good Practices/Case Studies are an integral CE learning tool. This also raises the on-going challenge of identifying new and relevant Case Studies that will inspire and educate both the public and private sectors to embrace the Circular Economy.



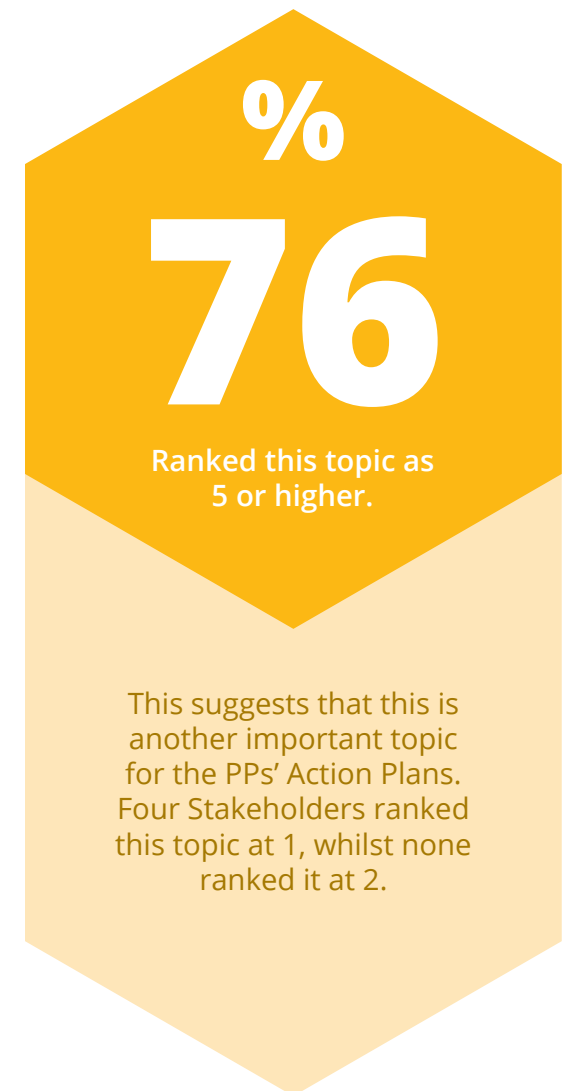
### Q7.

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- Awareness Raising
- Marketing
- Stakeholder Commitment
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- **Strategic Alliances**
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

Once again, PP7's only Stakeholder did not rank this topic.

In total, 37 (76%) ranked this topic at 5 or higher, with seven of them ranking Strategic Alliances at 8. This suggests that this is another important topic for the PPs' Action Plans. Four Stakeholders ranked this topic at 1, whilst none ranked it at 2.



### Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- Awareness Raising
- Marketing
- Stakeholder Commitment
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- Strategic Alliances
- **Dedicated Funding**
- Measurable Outputs
- Other

PP7's only Stakeholder did not rank this topic therefore once again the calculations are based on 46 replies.

This topic ranked very highly with 38 (83%) of replies ranking it at 5 or higher. Fourteen Stakeholders representing all other PPs, with the exception of PP5s only Stakeholder awarded Dedicated Funding with the highest score 8. None of the Stakeholders ranked it at 1, whilst only three ranked it at 2 and four ranked it at 3.

The challenge within this topic, as an action in the Action Plans, is how it can/will it be delivered on as it generally will require either national or regional decision making.



### Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

- Awareness Raising
- Marketing
- Stakeholder Commitment
- Case Studies/Good Practices
- Strategic Alliances
- Dedicated Funding
- Measurable Outputs**
- Other

A total of 45/47 Stakeholders ranked this topic with PP7's only Stakeholder and one of PP6's Stakeholders leaving this box blank.

Measurable outputs was awarded a score higher than 5 by 36 (80%) of Respondents. Eleven of them ranked it at 8 with six of these coming from PP1&2 so our Greek Stakeholders clearly see this as a very important issue in their Action Plans. None of the Respondents ranked it at 1, whilst 7 ranked it as 2 and two ranked it as 3.



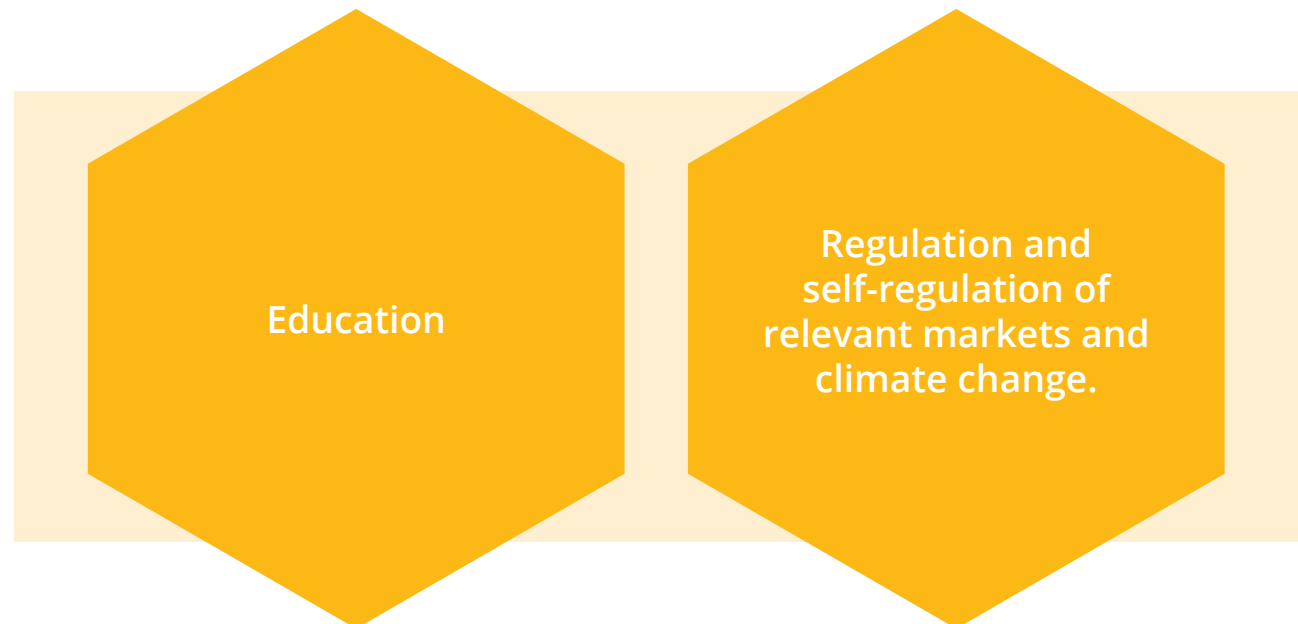
## Q7.

**Rank the following topics from 1 (least) to 8 (most important) as key components of the Action Plan.**

Awareness Raising  
Marketing  
Stakeholder Commitment  
Case Studies/Good Practices  
Strategic Alliances  
Dedicated Funding  
Measurable Outputs

➤ **Other**

The following were cited as other key components of Action Plans:



### **Q8.**

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes?**

**Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely). <sup>2</sup>**

- **Policy improvement at national level**
- **Policy improvement at regional/local level**
- **Enhance business opportunity within the CE**
- **Enhanced awareness of CE at local level**
- **Increase in projects in the CE**

<sup>2</sup> Two Stakeholders, one each from PP3&4 and PP6 did not rank question 8, so the calculations are based on a cohort of 45 Respondents.

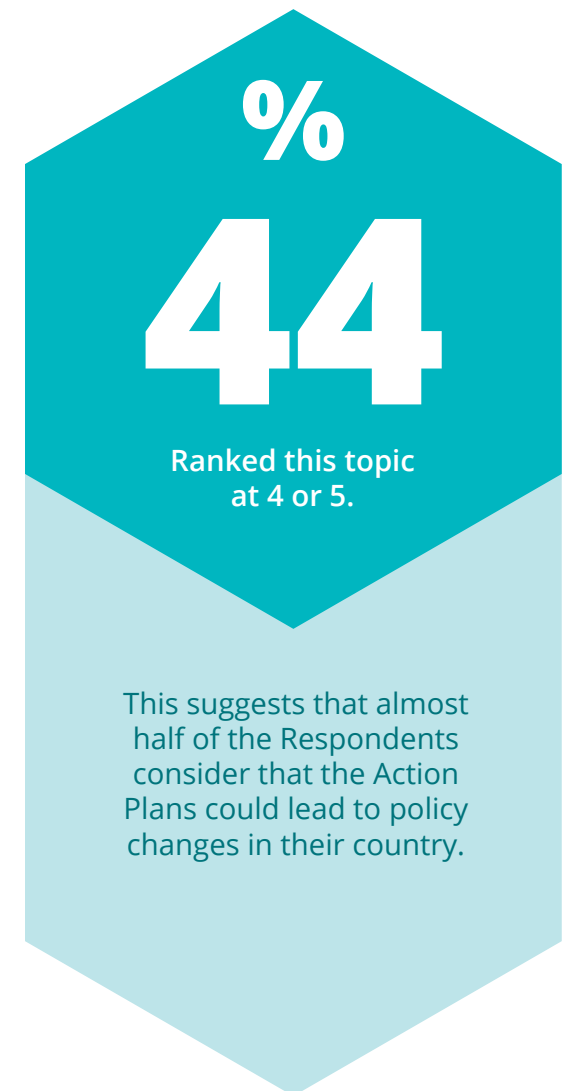


### Q8.

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes? Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely).**

- **Policy improvement at national level**
- Policy improvement at regional/local level
- Enhance business opportunity within the CE
- Enhanced awareness of CE at local level
- Increase in projects in the CE

Overall, 20 (44%) Stakeholders ranked this topic at 4 or 5 with seven of them giving it their highest ranking. This suggests that almost half of the Respondents consider that the Action Plans could lead to policy changes in their country. Eleven (24%) Stakeholders ranked this topic at 1.



### Q8.

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes? Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely).**

Policy improvement at national level

- **Policy improvement at regional/local level**
- Enhance business opportunity within the CE
- Enhanced awareness of CE at local level
- Increase in projects in the CE

The Stakeholders strongly believe that their Action Plans will lead to policy changes at regional/local level as 33 (73%) of them ranked this topic at 4 or 5 with seventeen of those giving it the highest ranking. None of them ranked it at one, reflecting its importance across the regions.



### Q8.

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes? Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely).**

Policy improvement at national level  
Policy improvement at regional/local level

- **Enhance business opportunity within the CE**
- Enhanced awareness of CE at local level
- Increase in projects in the CE

The SinCE-AFC Stakeholders appear confident that their Action Plans could lead to enhanced business opportunity within the CE as 26 (58%) ranked it either 4 or 5. Out of this cohort, fifteen Stakeholders ranked this topic at 5. None of the Stakeholders ranked this topic at 1.

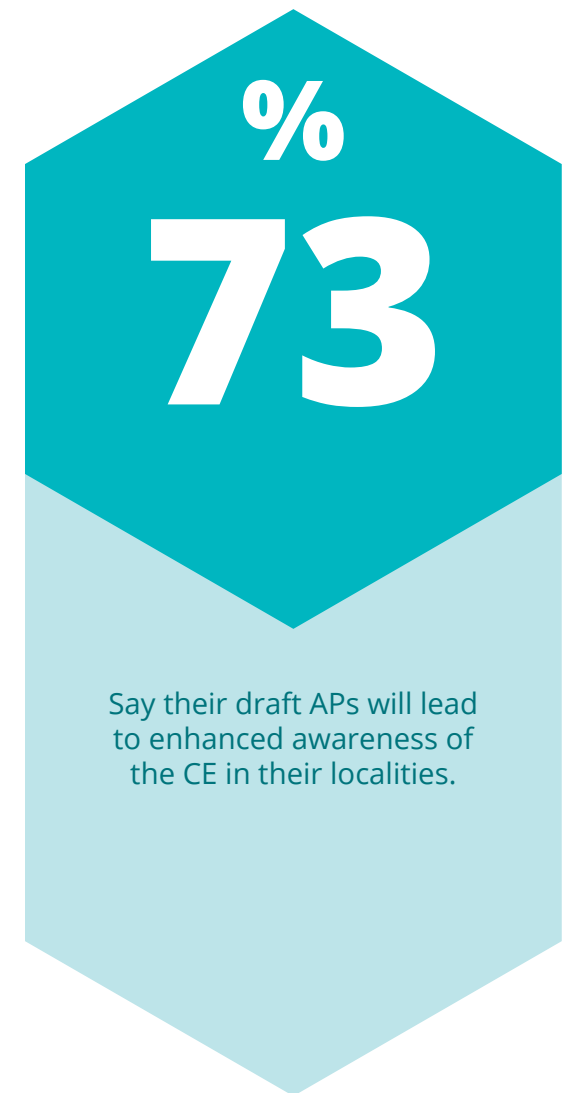


### Q8.

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes? Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely).**

- Policy improvement at national level
- Policy improvement at regional/local level
- Enhance business opportunity within the CE
- **Enhanced awareness of CE at local level**
- Increase in projects in the CE

A strong ranking for this topic with 33 (73%) of Stakeholders being of the opinion that their draft Action Plans will lead to enhanced awareness of the CE in their localities. Nineteen of them gave it the top score of 5, suggesting that this will be another key outcome of the Action Plans. Only 3 (7%) of the Respondents ranked this topic at 1 - again highlighting its importance to those engaging in the agri-food sector.



### Q8.

**Will the actions in your draft Action Plan lead to policy changes? Please rank 1 (least likely), to 5 (most likely).**

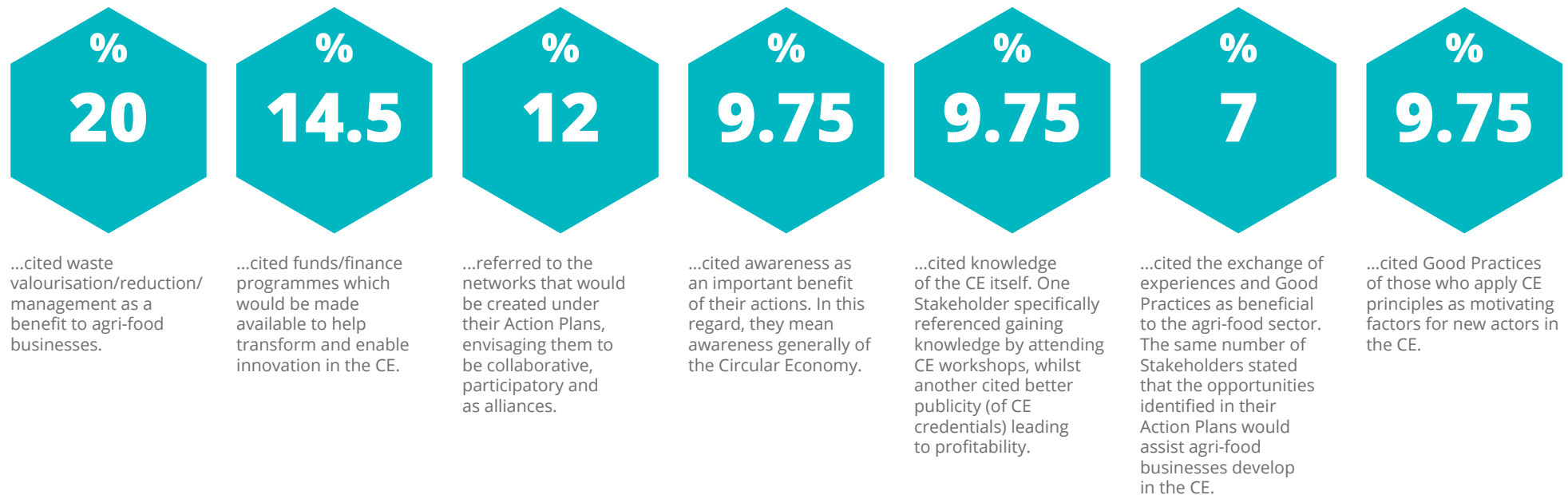
- Policy improvement at national level
- Policy improvement at regional/local level
- Enhance business opportunity within the CE
- Enhanced awareness of CE at local level
- Increase in projects in the CE

Twenty two (45%) of Stakeholders ranked this question at 4 or 5 suggesting that they are ambitious that their Action Plans will lead increased CE projects, whilst twelve ranked it at 4 equating to 49% which suggests that this is also an important issue for them. Nine (20%) it at 1 suggesting that they do not believe that there will be additional CE projects.



## Q9. (Answer Overview)

Please outline, how in your opinion, businesses in the agri-food sector will benefit from the actions in the draft Action Plan.



### Q9. (Answer Detailed)

**Please outline, how in your opinion, businesses in the agri-food sector will benefit from the actions in the draft Action Plan.**

**There was an 87% response rate to this question with only 6 Respondents electing not to answer it (1 Stakeholder each from PP1&2, PP6 and PP8 with 3 from PP3&4).**

Of the 41 Stakeholders who did reply, the overwhelming majority of the replies were positive, with a high number of Respondents detailing more than one benefit. Nearly 20% cited waste valorisation/reduction/management as a benefit to agri-food businesses. Other benefits cited by 14.5% of the Stakeholders were funds/finance programmes

which would be made available to help transform and enable innovation in the CE.

Just over 12% referred to the networks that would be created under their Action Plans, envisaging them to be collaborative, participatory and as alliances. Awareness was cited by 9.75% as an important benefit of their actions. In this regard, they mean awareness generally of the CE, the impact of excessive wastes on the environment, climate change as well as the positive impact of implementation of CE principles on a business's bottom line. Knowledge was referenced by 9.75% of the Stakeholders i.e. knowledge of the CE itself. One Stakeholder specifically referenced

gaining knowledge by attending CE workshops, whilst another cited better publicity (of CE credentials) leading to profitability.

A further 7% of Respondents referenced the exchange of experiences and Good Practices as beneficial to the agri-food sector. The same number of Stakeholders stated that the opportunities identified in their Action Plans would assist agri-food businesses develop in the CE.

A total of 9.75% of the replies referenced Good Practices of those who apply CE principles as motivating factors for new actors in the CE.

One Stakeholder specifically cited the elimination of obstacles such as bureaucracy, complicated

guidelines, long evaluation and selection processes, as a benefit of their actions.

It was suggested by another Stakeholder that the symbiosis of the agri-food chain will create new products and services. Others cited improved products generally arising from better environmental awareness and improved/developed actions in the CE.

Only one Respondent referenced regional policy being influenced towards CE applications and another suggested that the objectives of the Action Plan should be correlated with monitoring indicators of the CE.

### **Q10.**

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).<sup>3</sup>**

- **Lack of Stakeholder engagement**
- **Lack of business engagement**
- **Identification of business opportunity**
- **Inability to affect policy change**
- **Inability to effect funding streams**
- **Other**

<sup>3</sup> Author's note - One Stakeholder from each of PP3&4 and PP5 did not rank any of these topics so the answers and percentages are based on a cohort of 45 Respondents.



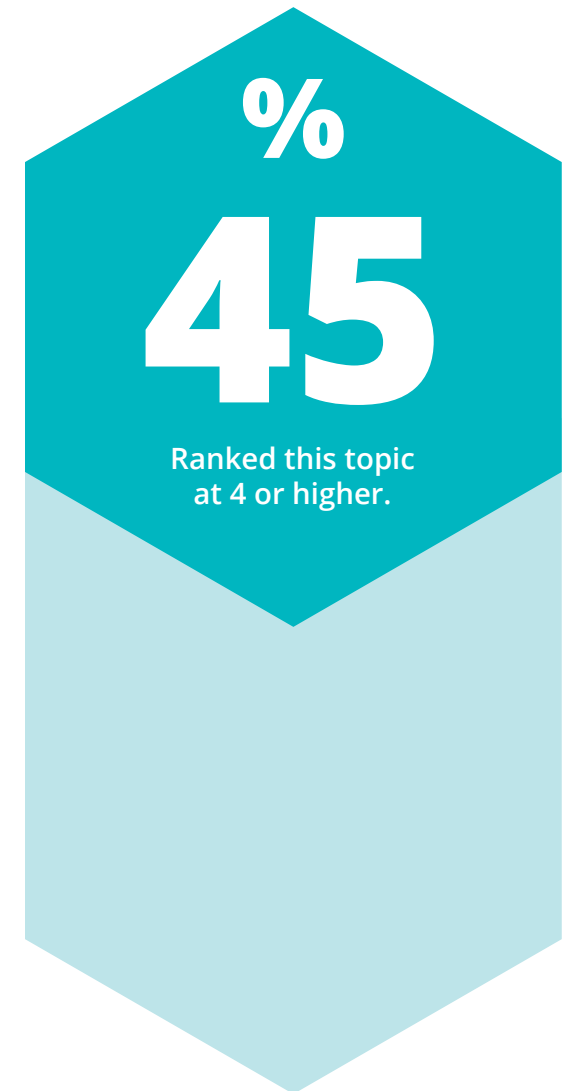
### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

➤ **Lack of Stakeholder engagement**

- Lack of business engagement
- Identification of business opportunity
- Inability to affect policy change
- Inability to effect funding streams
- Other

A cohort of 22 (45%) of the Respondents ranked lack of Stakeholder engagement at 4 or higher. Only three (7%) ranked this topic at 1.



## ➤ ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT (Q7 - Q10)

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### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

- Lack of Stakeholder engagement
- **Lack of business engagement**
- Identification of business opportunity
- Inability to affect policy change
- Inability to effect funding streams
- Other

Of those surveyed, 23 (51%) ranked the lack of business engagement with only five ranking at 4 or higher. Again only 3 (7%) gave this topic the lowest ranking of 1.



### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

Lack of Stakeholder engagement

Lack of business engagement

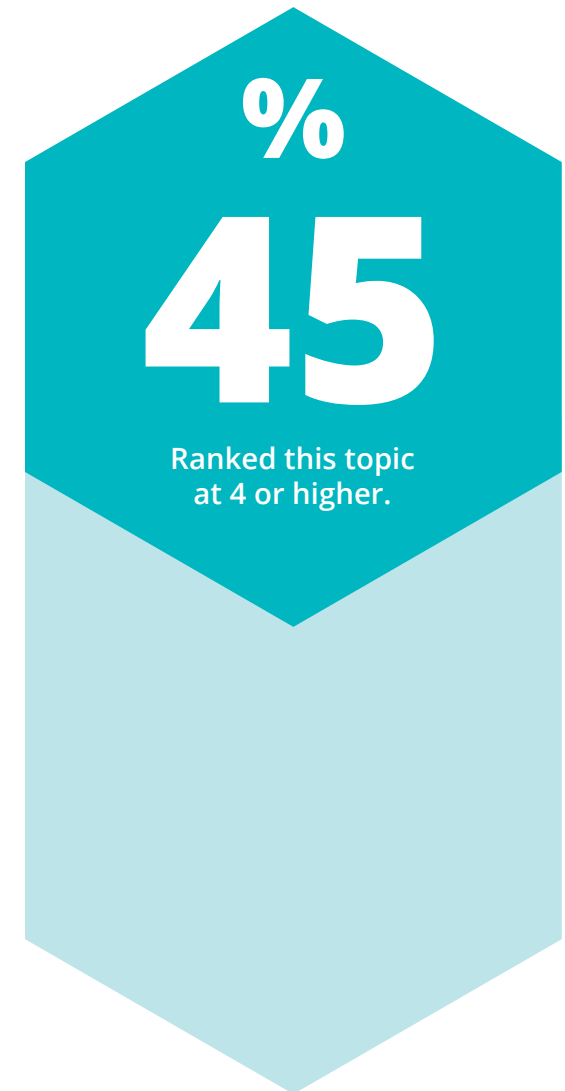
➤ **Identification of business opportunity**

Inability to affect policy change

Inability to effect funding streams

Other

Based on the following results, the Stakeholders appear to be concerned about identification of business opportunities in the CE as 26 (45%) of those surveyed ranked this at 4 or higher. Only one Respondent (from PP7) ranked this topic at 1, suggesting their view that this was the least likely scenario.



## ➤ ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT (Q7 - Q10)

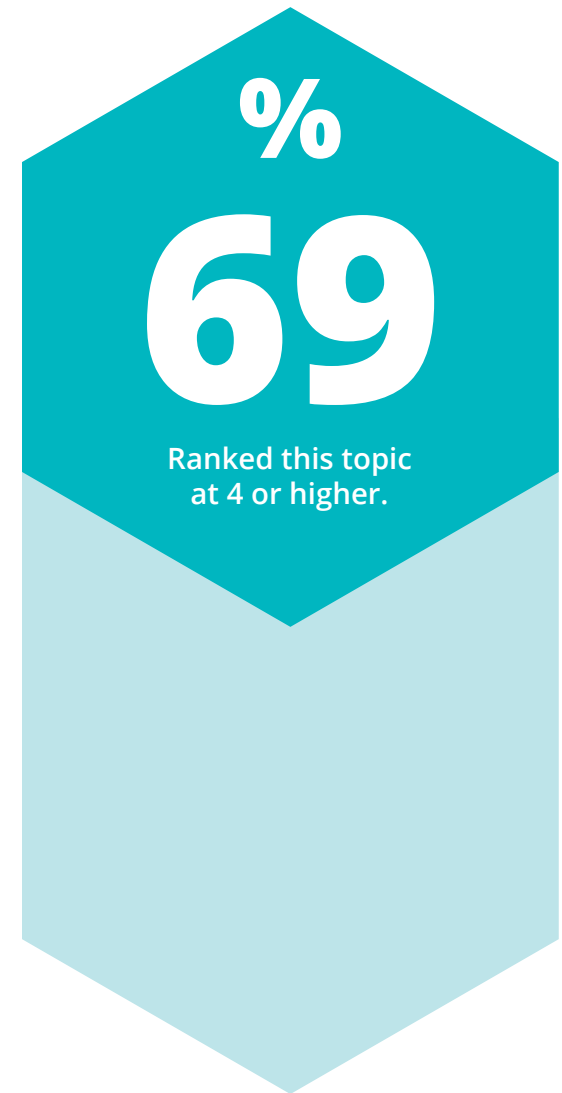
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### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

- Lack of Stakeholder engagement
- Lack of business engagement
- Identification of business opportunity
- **Inability to affect policy change**
- Inability to effect funding streams
- Other

This is another area of concern for our Stakeholders with 31 (69%) of them scoring this topic at 4 or higher, therefore deeming it likely to most likely that their Action Plans will be unable to affect policy change. Two (4%) of the Respondents considered this the least likely outcome.

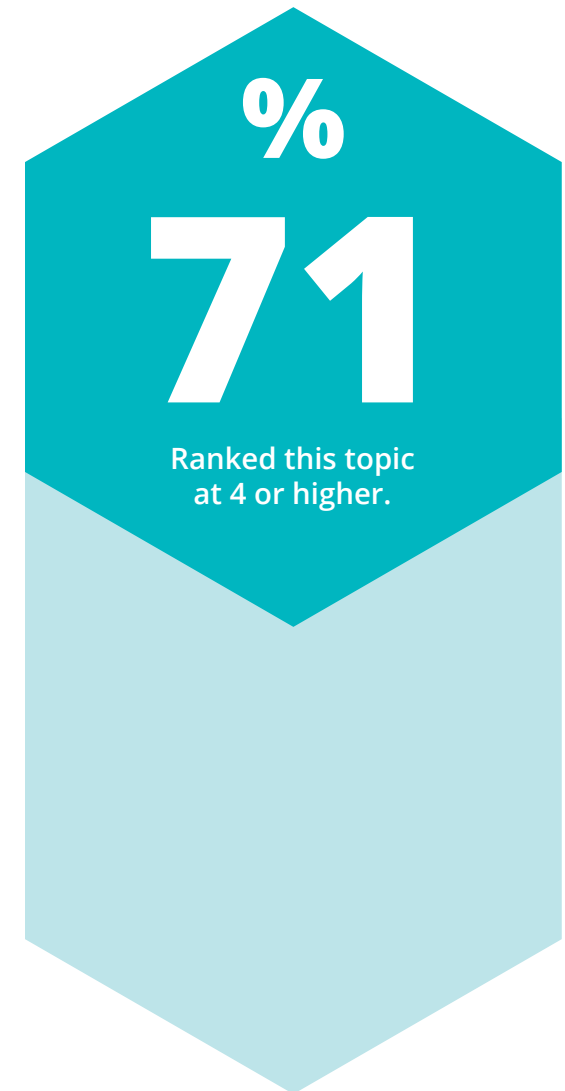


### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

- Lack of Stakeholder engagement
- Lack of business engagement
- Identification of business opportunity
- Inability to affect policy change
- **Inability to effect funding streams**
- Other

Probably unsurprisingly, finance appears to be of most concern to SinCE-AFC Stakeholders with 32 (71%) ranking 4 or above i.e. likely to most likely that their Action Plans will be unable to affect funding streams. Only two (4%) of Stakeholders thought that this was the least likely scenario.



### Q10.

**What difficulties do you anticipate in the set-up, development and initial implementation of your Action Plans? Please rank 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).**

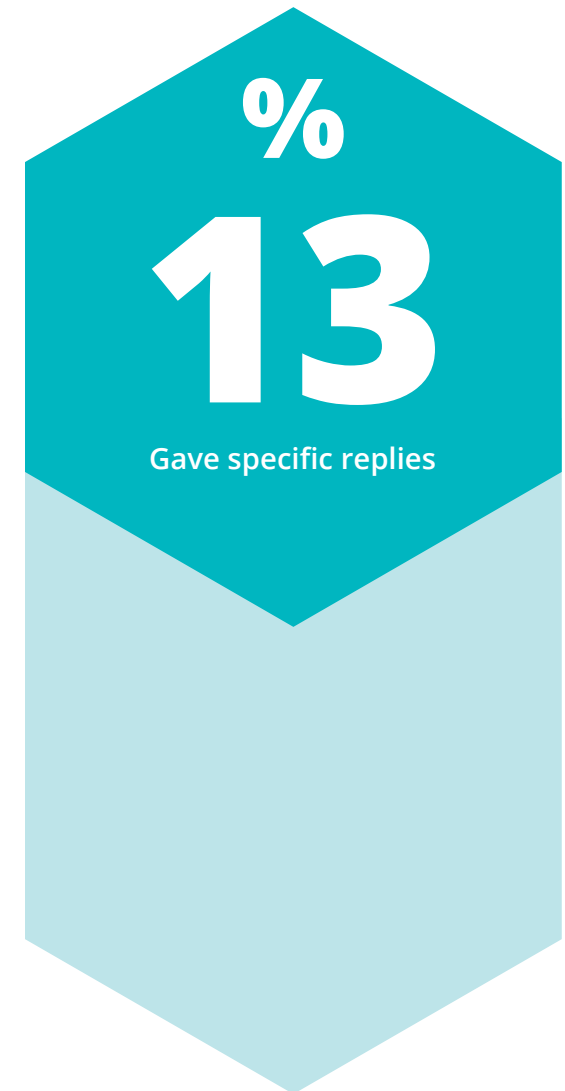
Lack of Stakeholder engagement  
Lack of business engagement  
Identification of business opportunity  
Inability to affect policy change  
Inability to effect funding streams

➤ **Other**

Six (13%) of Stakeholders gave specific replies under this heading, including three from PP1&2 who cited recently enacted legal and institutional frameworks, the inaction of the local economy, emerged by the dominant established business system and the lack of common languages.

One of PP3&4s' Stakeholders' stated that domestic companies are not used to collaborating therefore consider that this might be a barrier for them.

A Stakeholder from PP6 felt that some of the topics under these headings were on a par.



# ***SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS***



## SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The level of knowledge about the CE and CE policies/strategies has improved among Stakeholders as the SinCE-AFC project has progressed. When we initially surveyed the Stakeholders during Semester 3, 40-45% of the Respondents were unaware of the concept and policies relating to the CE.

It is clear that the main source of learning for the Stakeholders is the sharing of Case Studies/Good Practices which have been researched and shared by the PPs from the 7 partner regions during the LSG meetings, Project Meetings and at online Import Workshops. The SinCE-AFC project has been a useful tool to raise awareness of the Good Practices in the CE and improve Stakeholder understanding of the concept.

**In relation to the preparation of Action Plans the survey identifies very clearly the key areas which the partners should include in their plans:**

- A** Awareness raising and marketing of the Circular Economy

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- B** The development of strong local Stakeholder engagement and the need for strategic alliances

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- C** The identification and use of Case Studies and Good Practices as a key tool to educate and inspire

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- D** The development of a dedicated funding measure/stream to support the Circular Economy at local/regional level





## SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The partners in general have a positive perception of the potential of their actions plans to effect change, in particular at regional and local level:

- A** Over 70% believe they can affect change in policies at local or regional level with only 50% seeing a potential change at national level

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- B** The majority believe that the Action Plans will have the potential to enhance awareness of the Circular Economy at local level

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- C** The majority believe that the Action Plans will have the potential to enhance business opportunities at local level

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- D** Almost 50% of the partner regions believe that the Action Plans will lead to an increase in the number of CE projects at local level

In relation to the perceived challenges envisaged by the partner regions in implementing their Action Plans, the challenges mirror the areas of opportunity and can be summarised as:

- A** Gaining Stakeholder and business engagement – this would point to the need to make the CE Action Plan relevant and practical at both local and regional level

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- B** The identification of business opportunities – this reflects the belief among partner regions that the active engagement of businesses is essential to the further development of the CE sector but that businesses may need to be “lead”

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- C** A lack of confidence/belief that the partners and their Action Plans will be able to effect significant policy change other than at local level i.e. what is required is strong national policies and measures to support the CE sector

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- D** The difficulty of identifying or developing a dedicated funding stream to support the sector in their regions

# ***FINAL CONCLUSION***



## **FINAL CONCLUSION**

SinCE-AFC has an important role to play in developing and implementing policies, surrounding CE principals, and involving SMEs of the Agri-food chain. Clearly there is a large body of work to be done to raise awareness about the CE concept and its benefits to all. This project will, through its Good Practice identification and shared learning, seek to promote much needed innovation, derive knowledge and develop collaboration.

There was broad agreement among the partner regions as to the key areas/themes that should be included in their respective Action Plans and there was an overall

positive perspective of the potential of the Action Plans to effect change – particularly at local level. However the partner regions have concerns as to their ability to affect

significant policy and funding changes relating to the CE, as this in the main, is the remit of regional and national governments.

***THANK YOU***