

Circular Economy in the Food Sector Project

Circular Innovation Incubator & Design Thinking Workshops

#GlobalGateway #TeamEurope

Co-Creating Solutions for a Sustainable Sri Lanka



Background

The CIRCULAR Economy in the Food Sector Programme (2024–2027) is driving Sri Lanka's shift toward a more sustainable and inclusive economy. Funded by the European Union under its Global Gateway Strategy and co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the programme aims to reduce food loss and waste and eliminate single-use plastics across the food sector through innovative, circular solutions.

Central to this project is the Circular Innovation Incubator, which brings together aspiring entrepreneurs, students, and early-stage businesses to co-develop innovative solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing the food system. The Circular Incubator programme will go hand-in-hand with a series of Design Thinking Workshops that guide participants through ideation, prototyping, and refinement of circular business concepts, co-creating practical, scalable solutions to the food sector's most pressing challenges.

Objectives CIRCULAR Incubator

- Co-develop market-ready circular innovations by bringing together aspiring entrepreneurs, students, and early-stage businesses to address critical challenges in food loss, food waste, and single-use plastic reduction
- Accelerate the growth of sustainable business models through tailored mentorship, business development support, and facilitated pathways to finance and investment
- Strengthen Sri Lanka's circular economy ecosystem by building a pipeline of high-potential enterprises and fostering cross-sector collaboration among innovators, industry experts, and policy stakeholders

Objectives CIRCULAR Design Thinking Workshops

- Empower youth, early-stage entrepreneurs, and innovators with cutting-edge problem-solving tools grounded in Design Thinking methodology
- Catalyze ideas addressing food loss, food waste, and single-use plastics (SUP) through circular economy approaches in production, distribution, and consumption
- Foster cross-disciplinary collaboration among students, entrepreneurs, sustainability advocates, and industry experts
- Prepare high-potential participants for entry into the Circular Innovation Incubator, offering business development support, mentorship, and pathways to funding

Design Thinking Workshop Programme Overview

A two-day, hands-on innovation sprint where selected participants will:

- Tackle real-world problem statements identified in collaboration with private sector partners
- Collaborate in multidisciplinary teams to ideate, prototype, and present viable solutions
- Receive expert mentorship in sustainability, circular business models, technology, and innovation design
- Pitch their solutions to a panel, with top teams invited to apply for the Circular Innovation Incubator

Design Thinking Workshop Structure

Duration: 2 days per location

Format:

- Day 1: Empathy Mapping | Problem Definition | Ideation Sprint
- Day 2: Rapid Prototyping | Business Model Canvas | Final Pitches

Methodologies:

- Human-centered design, lean innovation practices, circular business model innovation

Target Audience

- University students (fields: technology, business, agriculture, design, environmental sciences)
- Early-stage entrepreneurs and green start-ups
- Community innovators and sustainability advocates
- Young professionals passionate about driving circular economy solutions

Key Outcomes

- Innovative Solutions: Practical, circular concepts tackling FLW and SUP
- Capacity Building: Strengthened entrepreneurial and innovation skill sets
- Community Engagement: Cultivation of circular economy champions in Sri Lanka's regions
- Talent Pipeline: Identification of high-potential teams for the Circular Innovation Incubator Programme

Locations / Dates

Matara	15-16 July, 2025
Colombo	18-19 July, 2025
Kandy	24-25 July, 2025
Kilinochchi	31 July - 1 August, 2025

*Venues to be confirmed

About the CIRCULAR Project

The Design Thinking Workshops are delivered under the Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR) Programme.

Implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with funding from the European Union and co-funding by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Calls to Action

1. Register now for the Design Thinking Workshops — seats are limited!
2. Apply directly to the Circular Innovation Incubator for those ready to scale their ideas.

Registration for the Design Thinking Workshops
<https://vc4a.com/giz-sais-sri-lanka/design-thinking-workshops/>

Register for the Incubator programme directly
<https://vc4a.com/giz-sais-sri-lanka/incubator-programme/>