



Circular Bioeconomy: Converting Biological Resources into Sustainable Cycles of Production and Consumption

Mariana Silva*

Department of Environmental Biotechnology, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

DESCRIPTION

Circular bioeconomy combines biological resources with circular production systems to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and create useful products from renewable materials. Traditional production systems often follow a linear pattern in which raw materials are extracted, processed into products, consumed and eventually discarded. A circular bioeconomy seeks to create repeated cycles in which biological materials are recovered, transformed, reused and returned to productive systems. This approach connects agriculture, forestry, food processing, biotechnology, energy production and waste management within an integrated economic framework.

Biological resources include crops, agricultural residues, forestry materials, food-processing by-products, livestock waste, algae, microorganisms and other renewable materials. Many of these resources contain carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, fibers, minerals and bioactive compounds that can serve as feedstocks for different industries. Instead of treating these materials only as waste, biological processing can convert them into chemicals, enzymes, animal feed, fertilizers, biomaterials, fuels and other valuable products. Agriculture represents an important source of materials for circular bioeconomy systems. Crop residues such as rice straw, wheat straw, corn stalks, sugarcane bagasse and fruit peels contain valuable organic components. These materials can undergo microbial or enzymatic processing to produce sugars, organic acids, biogas, biofuels and other compounds. Solid residues remaining after extraction can sometimes be converted into soil amendments or incorporated into other manufacturing processes. Such resource cycling can reduce the quantity of agricultural material sent to disposal facilities.

Food industries also generate substantial quantities of organic by-products. Fruit-processing facilities may produce peels, seeds and pulp, while dairy operations generate whey and other residual streams. These materials can contain proteins, sugars, lipids, minerals, antioxidants and other useful substances.

Fermentation, enzymatic conversion, extraction and separation technologies can transform these streams into food ingredients, microbial products, animal feed components and industrial materials. Microorganisms have an important role in circular bioeconomy systems because bacteria, yeasts, fungi and microalgae can convert organic substrates into useful compounds. Fermentation can transform agricultural residues and food-processing by-products into ethanol, lactic acid, succinic acid, enzymes, microbial biomass and other biochemical products. Anaerobic microorganisms can convert organic waste into biogas, which contains methane and can be used for energy generation after suitable treatment.

Biorefineries provide an integrated framework for processing biological feedstocks. Similar to petroleum refineries, biorefineries can separate and transform different components of renewable biomass into multiple products. A single feedstock may provide carbohydrates for fermentation, lignin-rich fractions for material production, proteins for feed applications and residual organic matter for energy generation. Using several fractions from the same resource can improve overall material utilization and reduce unnecessary disposal. Circular bioeconomy also has strong connections with renewable energy. Organic residues can be converted into biogas, bioethanol, biodiesel, hydrogen and other energy carriers. For example, oils recovered from selected biological waste streams can serve as feedstocks for biodiesel production. Agricultural residues can undergo biological or thermochemical processing to generate energy-rich products. Integrating energy generation with material recovery can improve the overall value obtained from biomass.

Bioplastics and biomaterials represent another important area. Microorganisms can produce polymers such as polyhydroxyalkanoates from renewable carbon sources. Plant fibers, cellulose, starch, chitosan and lignin can also be incorporated into biodegradable or bio-based materials. These materials can serve applications in packaging, agriculture, healthcare, construction and consumer products. Their

Correspondence to: Mariana Silva, Department of Environmental Biotechnology, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, E-mail: mariana.silva@usp.br

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environmental performance depends on feedstock selection, manufacturing conditions, product lifetime, recycling possibilities and end-of-life management. Nutrient recovery is an additional component of circular systems. Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other nutrients present in organic waste can be recovered and returned to agricultural production. Composting, anaerobic digestion, microbial processing and nutrient precipitation can produce materials suitable for soil applications. Recycling nutrients in this manner can reduce dependence on newly extracted mineral resources and improve the productive use of organic residues.

Water management is also relevant because many biological industries require substantial quantities of water. Treated wastewater can sometimes be reused for industrial processes,

irrigation, or other suitable applications after appropriate treatment. Biological treatment systems using microorganisms can reduce organic contaminants while allowing recovery of selected resources. Combining water reuse with material recovery can increase efficiency across industrial facilities. The implementation of circular bioeconomy systems requires suitable infrastructure, economic planning, technological integration and reliable supply chains. Biomass can vary in moisture, composition, seasonal availability and quality. Transportation can also influence economic and environmental performance because many biological residues have relatively low energy density. Local processing facilities can reduce transportation requirements and allow materials to be converted closer to their sources.