

Closing the Loop - Policy Solutions for Achieving SDG 12: Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

The topic of ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production’ is a cross-cutting, multidisciplinary issue. In order to streamline and discuss its importance and impacts with respect to Pakistan, Water, Clean Energy, and Circularity hold significance.

Pakistan is facing a serious water crisis. The country is rapidly moving from being classified as water ‘stressed’ to water ‘scarce’. According to the Water Resources Institute 2021 report, Pakistan ranks 14 among 17 Highly Water-Risk (HWR) countries. Given the criticality of our water sources as an agri-based economy, inefficient consumption patterns of the country’s industries, and little to no replenishment infrastructure deployment, water will become a serious concern for the economy and people in the next 2-3 years.

According to the World Bank, ‘expanding renewable energy can make electricity cheaper, achieve greater energy security, reduce carbon emissions, and help Pakistan save up to USD 5 billion over the next 20 years.’ Solar and wind energy is an abundant resource in Pakistan, which is useful for the generation of clean electricity. Electricity generation by the use of solar and wind power contributes to no Greenhouse Gas effects or carbon emissions, leaving the environment unharmed. A roadblock to tapping into solar/ wind and increasing adoption is the lack of regulations around offsite power purchasing agreements. Currently, the private sector is limited to installing solar on-site, unable to maximise and source complete electricity requirements from on-site renewable deployment.

Pakistan generates approximately 50 million tonnes of solid waste a year, which has been increasing by more than 2.4% annually. More than 30% of this waste is comprised of food waste while plastics account to 10% equivalent to approximately 4-5 million tonnes. As per research, 15% of total plastic waste corresponds to PET bottle waste (amounting to approximately 0.5 million tonnes). The recycled PET bottle is the final step in creating a circular economy on plastics (from an operations perspective) as waste plastic is brought back into the supply chain, hence reducing new virgin PET usage significantly.

Closing the loop is a monumental task. However, with the right priorities, partnerships, and policies, the needle can be moved forward. Keeping in view this context, the panel aims to address the following key questions and generate a dialogue for developing policy solutions for promoting and developing a sustainable economy model in Pakistan, especially for foods and beverages industry:

- How can the value of water be quantified in production industries to ensure sustainability?
- Many Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have committed to RE100. Why is taking this long for at least all MNCs to achieve it in Pakistan?
- What are the major challenges that the foods and beverage packaging industry in Pakistan should tackle to achieve circularity?

- How and in what ways can the Government of Pakistan support the corporate/ private sector for the transition towards a circular economy – Water, Renewable Energy and Plastics?
- What is required when it comes to consumer awareness and response for driving a circular economy or stimulating a pull in the market?
- Does the current policy landscape promote innovation and investments in circular economy business models?
- How will the transition to a circular economy benefit Pakistan’s economy and contribute towards the country’s GHG reduction targets?
- How will public/private financing contribute to investments in the Circular Economy?

Reference

World Bank 2020, ‘Expanding Renewable Energy in Pakistan’s Electricity Mix’ 10 November, <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/11/09/a-renewable-energy-future-for-pakistans-power-system>>.

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