

# POLICY PLAN *2024–2027* SYSTEMS CHANGE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET



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# POLICY PLAN 2024 – 2027

*In this policy plan, we present you with our ambitious goals and strategic plans for the years 2024-2027.*

We are committed to work towards positive change and realise our vision of a more sustainable and equitable future.

Our team is determined to achieve these goals. We work together with passion, expertise, perseverance and a strong sense of idealism.

We would like to express gratitude to our funders and other partners with whom we work closely. Their continued support and trust is invaluable for our mission and work. By joining forces, we can turn our shared vision into tangible results for a better world.

## OUR MISSION

Fair Resource Foundation is committed to ending the unsustainable exploitation and polluting consumption of resources. We want to create a thriving society that stays within planetary boundaries and supports broader well-being.

We are committed to strong and sound environmental policies that eliminate pollution and make sustainable production and consumption the norm. By sound environmental policies we mean laws and regulations that are transparent, democratic and not only serving the interests of the most powerful.





# A NEW APPROACH TO RESOURCES

*The sustainable and fair use of resources is the raison d'être of the Fair Resource Foundation.*

Resources are necessary to meet basic needs such as housing, work, food and health. They also play a crucial role in our well-being. By facilitating social interaction, technological progress, cultural exchange and personal development, they contribute to a prosperous life.

But resources are also a source of conflict and inequality. Countries and companies try to secure control and access to resources, often at the expense of nature and mankind. The Earth is being exploited as never before, partly because of an economy that always wants more growth and a society in which exploitation and pollution go unpunished.

## **Overshoot**

According to the International Resource Panel, the average person in the EU consumes 14 tonnes of resources per year, whereas a consumption of 5.5 to 8 tonnes is sustainable (IRP. Global Resources Outlook. 2023). As the world's population grows

and prosperity increases, so does the use of resources and the pressure on the environment. Demand for certain resources, such as minerals and metals, is expected to increase significantly with the transition to a renewable and increasingly digital society. The International Energy Agency predicts that global demand for essential resources will quadruple by 2040 (WRF. Conference Report. 2023).

This puts an unsustainable pressure on our ecosystems. Developing countries are hit the hardest, but the effects are being felt worldwide. The global ecological limits indicating when irreversible damage can occur are already being regularly exceeded. Global warming is accelerating, while the loss of biodiversity is threatening the stability of entire ecosystems. At the same time, our air, soil and water are increasingly polluted by chemical substances that affect both nature and our health.



# ABOUT US

Fair Resource Foundation is an environmental organisation with roots in the Netherlands that works on sustainable transition in the Netherlands, Belgium and at the European level. Environmental policy is a combination of international, national and local agreements and regulations. In our vision, it is important to grasp the interdependence and drive change at the various levels.



We are driven by the conviction that we can change systems of production and consumption so that they support well-being without destroying the earth, our health and our humanity.

Therefore, we are honest about the environmental crises, the underlying causes, and the radicality of change needed. Courageously, we question and criticise the status quo, with inventiveness and empathy we join our stakeholders in search of the solutions.

It can be challenging not to get discouraged by opportunistic politics, the slowness of change and the ethically flawed actions of the business world that too often puts profit before anything else. But we believe in the power of new ideas, optimism and cooperation. For a better world, you have to dare to dream and dare to start actions. With this plan, we challenge ourselves to make more impact.

Until early 2024, Fair Resource Foundation was known as Recycling Network Benelux. The name change is part of a broader change of direction for the organisation.



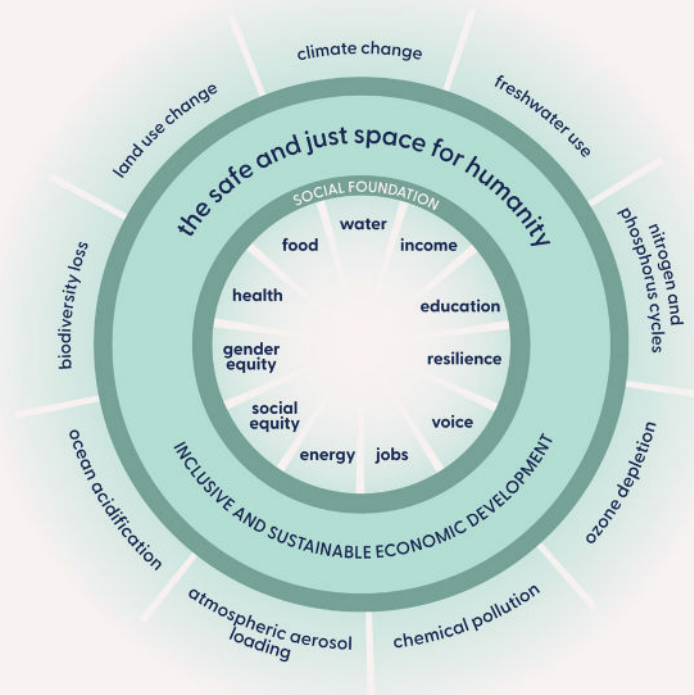
# OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE

*We envision a future in which all people, including future generations, can live in dignity and well-being without crossing planetary boundaries.*

According to the **principle of sufficiency**, raw materials are available to everyone, regardless of where you live or where you come from. By sufficiency, we mean striving for a level of consumption and use of resources that meets the needs of societies, without overuse or waste. It is about recognizing and managing what is necessary for a good life, rather than unlimited pursuit of more consumption and production at the expense of others. This is the ideal image to which we would like to contribute with our work.

## Sustainable production and consumption is the norm

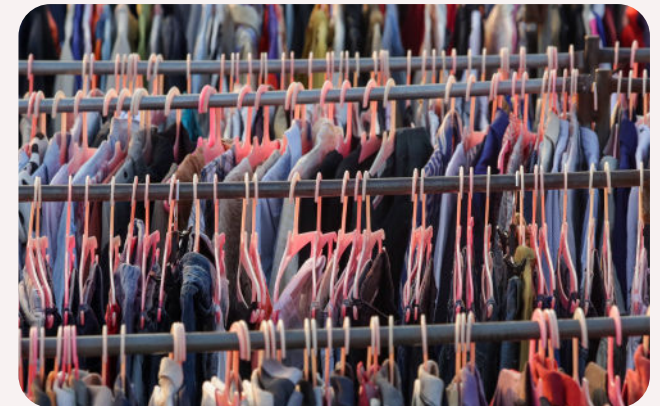
In our vision of the future, producers can no longer deflect negative effects on society. The responsibility of the producer spans the entire lifecycle of the products. All resources are sustainably sourced, without exploitation or harm to local ecosystems. Parties benefiting economically from the production and distribution of goods have the responsibility to do so sustainably, with regards to both people and the environment.



**Kate Raworth's Doughnut is a visual representation of an economy that remains within planetary boundaries while simultaneously meeting essential human needs for a good life.**

There's a vibrant local economy that retains the value of products, reducing the need for importing raw materials. Products are designed to last long, they are repairable and recyclable. There's been a mind shift in the relationship between people and the stuff they buy. Products are cared for more and are deemed more valuable.

What would this look like then? Fast fashion, with major fashion brands presenting new collections every two weeks made of polluting materials, is replaced by beautiful, sustainable clothing that lasts long and is easily repairable. The overflowing trash bin is a thing of the past because disposable packaging is largely replaced by reusable solutions. Electrical appliances last longer and are systematically repaired and updated. Car ownership has gone down since cars are used less and shared more.







## A clean and healthy living environment

The amount of waste has been greatly reduced. The waste that does arise is not harmful and can be reused in new products without quality loss. Secondary resources have become more valuable than virgin resources, leading to a decrease in extraction. There are fewer garbage trucks driving through residential areas, and there are fewer incinerators: simply put, they are no longer necessary. From the port of Rotterdam, which is currently a 'waste round-about', no waste is sent to distant countries anymore.

Factories in the Netherlands or Belgium no longer pollute the environment with toxic substances. Producers and business leaders are held accountable for the pollution they create, thereby preventing pollution of the environment with chemical substances and plastics, among other things.



## Economy is focused on the well-being of the entire society

In our vision of the future, the economy is focused on **maximising well-being**, rather than GDP. The current 'growth for the sake of growth' is unsustainable. What can grow infinitely, however, is care for one another, personal development, or meaningful relationships. In our vision of the future, there is also more trust between businesses, citizens, and politics. Legislation is enacted transparently, with consideration for citizens and societal interests. Citizens have a strong awareness of sustainability and are only offered products and services made with respect for human and environmental well-being. Companies no longer lobby against strong environmental legislation but support it instead. Production and distribution are done in a way that benefits the population and workers, rather than primarily benefiting the shareholders of large companies.

# THEMES

We divide our operation into three themes to demonstrate how we want to contribute with the Fair Resource Foundation to a just future within planetary boundaries. We focus on:

- Resources
- Waste and Pollution
- Fair environmental policy



With the **Resources** theme, we emphasise the importance of reducing resource consumption and its associated impact. We

focus on strong policies that include prevention, lifespan extension, reuse and repair of products. For plastics, we aim not only to reduce usage but also to phase out the use of fossil fuels for their production.

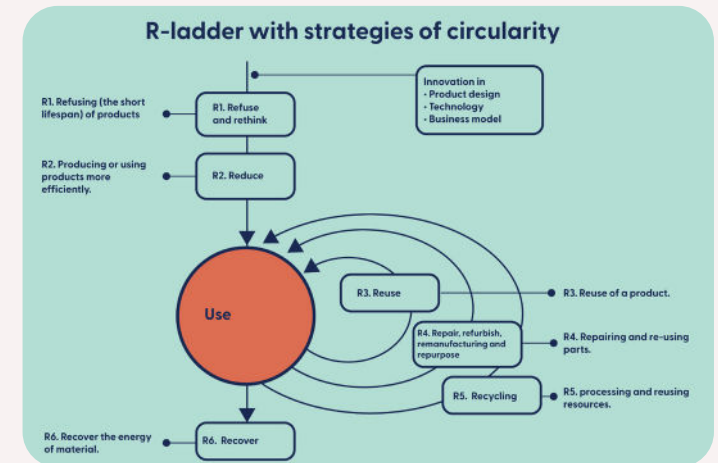


Within the **Waste and Pollution** theme, we work on waste prevention, promote high-quality recycling, and aim to prevent

environmental pollution. These two themes can also be explained using the R-ladder, which indicates which sustainability strategies should have priority for company and government policy. The themes are clearly interconnected. For example, efforts to reduce disposable packaging under the Resources theme will impact waste reduction.



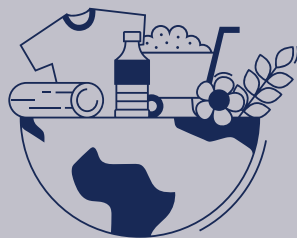
Finally, we work on **Fair environmental policy** because sustainability can only be achieved if decision-making itself changes. Environmental policy should be based on democratic values rather than private interests. Under this theme, we focus on initiatives that improve transparency in governance and limit the lobbying power of large corporations, which have increasingly influenced decision-making to the detriment of citizen and environmental interests.



The R-ladder has 6 steps representing different circularity strategies. Strategies higher on the ladder save more resources.

Our focus on fair environmental policy also inspires our work on resources, waste and pollution. For example, making producers responsible for litter of disposable packaging or plastic cigarette butts in the environment is part of fair environmental policy: the polluter must pay. It also means that sustainable products must be accessible for everyone in society and not just the people who can afford it. We want to pay attention to the impact on people both within and outside Europe. So, Europeans also have to take responsibility for the waste they produce and not shift it to countries in Africa, Asia or South-America.





## RESOURCES

### Goals

Production and consumption adhere to the principle of sufficiency within the planet's capacity and support a good existence.

- 1) Legislation is focussed on the reduction of resource consumption and the complete phase-out of plastics based on fossil fuels
- 2) Achieve sustainability in major product categories, including lifespan extension and product repair, with an emphasis on prevention and reuse
- 3) Reduce resource consumption with the aim of promoting, rather than diminishing, well-being

### Focus

- 1) Enforce objectives at the national and European levels that significantly reduce resource consumption across broad and specific sectors and product categories. The use of fossil fuels for plastics should be completely phased out by 2040
- 2) We're focussing on strong regulations for packaging, textiles, and electrical appliances
- 3) Develop systems that counter overproduction and overconsumption while making sustainable products and services accessible



## WASTE AND POLLUTION

### Goals

Minimise waste production. Any waste generated does not end up in the environment or nature and is reused as a high-quality raw material.

- 1) Reduce waste, increase high-quality recycling, and ensure that recycled materials are reused as high-quality as possible
- 2) Ensure a clean and safe living environment without pollution from waste

### Focus

- 1) Focus on key mechanisms to close the loop, such as:
  - enforcing recycled content objectives;
  - investing in the best collection systems, such as deposit systems;
  - addressing the use of cheap virgin materials;
  - preventing waste export outside the EU.
- 2) Address companies and products that pollute the environment, such as cigarette butts or the discharge and production of PFAS. Counter overconsumption while making sustainable products and services accessible.



## FAIR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

### Goals

Environmental policy is based on democratic values rather than private interests.

- 1) Environmental policy is transparently developed and takes into account a broad group of stakeholders.
- 2) Policy holds polluters accountable for their environmental impact and prevents them from shifting the burden onto society;
- 3) The influence of dominant capital-intensive companies on environmental policy is limited.

### Focus

- 1) Improve producer responsibility with a focus on transparency, better governance, and a stronger emphasis on sustainability;
- 2) Develop and support initiatives with other stakeholders to make policy more transparent, democratic, and objective, as well as to limit the influence of large companies.

# HOW DO WE MAKE AN IMPACT?

## **We act with urgency**

Planetary boundaries are hard limits, non-negotiable. Therefore, we urge politicians, officials, representatives of companies and other stakeholders to join us in making a 'mindshift'. We need to make agreements, as soon as possible, that change our approach to resources, waste, and pollution in such a way that it contributes to combating climate change, restoring biodiversity and eliminating pollution.

## **We show leadership in public debate**

Sustainability and the fair transition towards it cannot happen without an open exchange of ideas. Lack of open dialogue perpetuates the status quo and serves the interests of powerful, unsustainable players who exert their influence behind closed doors. Therefore, Fair Resource Foundation fuels public debate. We do this with new ideas, determination, always based on facts, and with an open mind.

## **We focus on government policy**

Fair Resource Foundation advocates for strong regulations because this is the only way to ensure that society as a whole changes, and that this happens in a righteous way. Advisors such as the Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) and many



entrepreneurs increasingly emphasize the importance of legislation. The time for voluntarism is over. Good regulation is enforceable and feasible, assigns responsibilities to the right parties, and is ultimately ambitious and fair.

## **We collaborate when possible**

Fair Resource Foundation seeks partnerships with politicians, governments, municipalities, businesses and civil society organisations. We work in coalitions to accelerate sustainable transitions and provide the right focus. We have strong partnerships with other environmental organisations. Internationally, we are part of environmental coalitions like Zero Waste Europe and Break Free From Plastic. In the Netherlands and Belgium, we collaborate with NGOs such as Nature & Environment, Plastic Soup Foundation, and Bond Beter Leefmilieu. We also explicitly seek partners with overlapping

interests, such as organisations advocating for a healthy environment or companies implementing sustainable business models. It is also important to collaborate with governments so that issues regarding law enforcement can be resolved quickly, or to better leverage European policy.

## **We take action when necessary**

Fair Resource Foundation holds companies, governments, and politicians accountable when needed. We expect politicians and governments to formulate transparent and effective policies that respect planetary boundaries and are favourable to people, while placing responsibility on parties that can promote sustainable transitions. We expect companies to take appropriate responsibility for their impact and influence. Ideally, they should take a leading role in the transition to a sustainable and just economy, or at least align their business activities with it. If governments or companies break the law, we will take legal action.



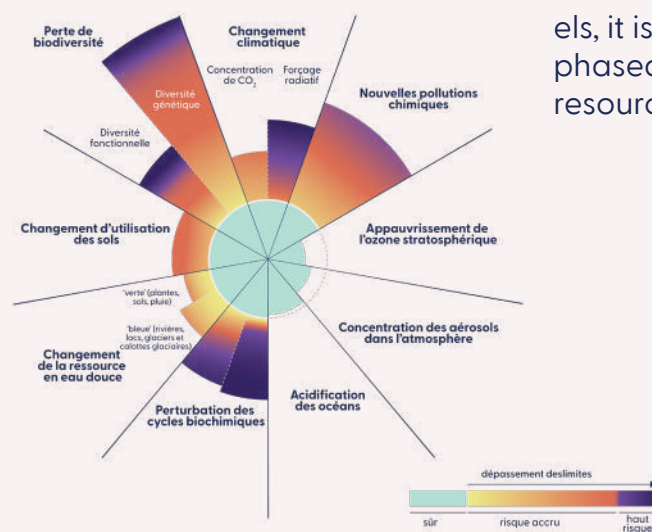
# OUR COMPASS

Our way of thinking and working is based on various scientific concepts and theories.

## Planetary boundaries

The proposals and ideas of Fair Resource Foundation are based on and aligned with scientific insights on sustainability. We start from the scientific framework of planetary boundaries, which estimates the ‘**safe operating space**’ for humanity across various categories of environmental impacts. The exceeding of planetary boundaries is the result of human activity, specifically our way of producing and consuming. Therefore, policy must be assessed against these boundaries, which Fair Resource Foundation will advocate for.

### Limites planétaires



Status of the nine planetary boundaries, 2023.

## R-ladder

The R-ladder describes strategies of circularity. In our work, we adhere to the hierarchy of this ladder, prioritising the higher and most impactful steps when determining and implementing environmental policies. This is not always straightforward: we observe that adherence to the R-ladder is sometimes under pressure because prioritising higher sustainability strategies from the ladder, such as prevention and reuse, may conflict with established interests.

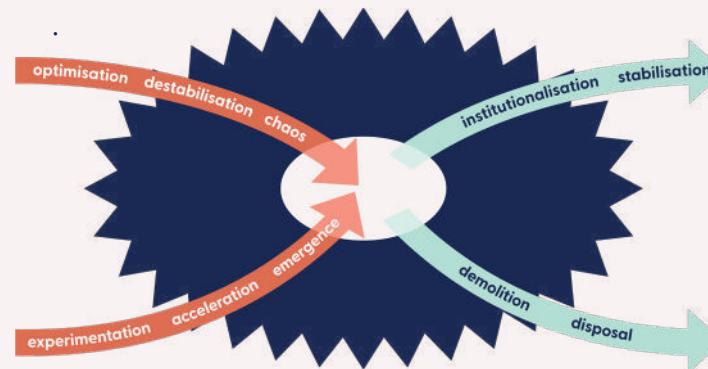
However, relying solely on policy that follows the R-ladder is not sufficient, as it only indicates how we can handle products as sustainably as possible and does not address the absolute environmental impact, which must be reduced below the planetary boundaries. For plastics made from fossil fuels, it is imperative that they are completely phased out and substituted with renewable resources.





## Transition theory

We are also inspired by the **transition theory**, which acknowledges the complexity of transitions, embraces the necessity of chaos, and focuses on the dismantling of old and the construction of new socio-technological systems. A good understanding of how transitions unfold is important for steering them effectively. From transition theory, we learned for example that there are moments when new systems take shape, followed by their establishment. Successful steering requires identifying those moments and responding to them.



Drift's Transition Model

## The well-being economy

To achieve a sustainable and fair society within planetary boundaries, a different economic model is necessary. In the current economic system, companies are incentivized to produce unsustainably and pollute, and there is insufficient motivation to change this situation. The focus is on growth, often at the expense of the Earth and humanity.

Therefore, we advocate for an economy that prioritises well-being. In a well-being economy, GDP is not the measure of economic success. Instead, indicators of health, equality, social well-being, and the well-being of nature are considered to determine economic performance.

In shaping our economic thinking, we draw inspiration from models such as **Kate Raworth's Donut model** and the **degrowth movement**, which has gained traction in recent years. The Donut provides a visual representation of the so-called '**fair operating space**' of the economy within planetary boundaries, with a minimum social level, but it is up to us to give it substance. The degrowth movement highlights that an economy pursuing "growth for the sake of growth" is much harder to operate within planetary boundaries. Therefore, it is essential to prioritise societal well-being over growth.





# OUR FUNDING MODEL

With this policy plan, we outline our intentions for the coming years. We are full of plans, and there is a lot of work to be done because the urgency is enormous. This requires funding. The financing of Fair Resource Foundation is divided into so-called core funding and project-related funding.

Firstly, we secure funding for our basic operations, the so-called **core funding**. Fair Resource Foundation is an organisation with a unique proposition, and to achieve our goals, we need partnerships with parties who support our mission and believe that we are crucial. Core funding is essential to ensure the basic operations of the organisation so the more challenging, but important, topics can also be addressed. We call on governments, businesses, and philanthropic organisations for this.

Additionally, we seek **project-based funding** for concrete initiatives that align with our themes and expertise. Depending on

the situation, this may involve donations for initiatives that we would like to develop ourselves but cannot realise from core funding alone, or it may involve projects that closely align with our mission and are carried out as a service for another party.

Maintaining a balance between funding streams is important. Project funding helps to increase impact, but core funding is crucial to safeguard and realise the mission.



# FAIR RESOURCE FOUNDATION

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