

Sustainable Innovation 2025
Sustainable Innovation in Products, Services and Business Models
Past, Present and
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**Maya de Souza, Co-founder,
Materia Verde, UK**

Maya de Souza is a co-founder of Materia Verde, a Goa-based Biomaterials Incubator & Venture Studio. She leads on the policy & advocacy side of this new organisation, part of Quicksand Ltd, and in building partnerships including on R & D.

Maya is an expert on circular economy policy and practice. She has worked at a senior level on public policy and collaborative projects in this field as well as business practice and transformation in a number of countries: UK, India and Hong Kong (China).

In India, Maya led the research into and development of a new programme on circular economy at a well-known Think Tank including exploring policy gaps and government goals in fields such as textiles, electronics and batteries. She co-led a project on the merits of introducing EPR for textiles and undertook research as part of an international project for Habitat for Humanity on circularity in construction. In Goa, Maya is also a director of the Kokum Design Trust (Act for Goa) and has led discussions and events on circular economy, developed policy submissions and co-designed projects for collaborative action which include circularity.

In the UK, she played a strategic role leading Defra's Circular Economy & Resource Efficiency Team in developing a cross-sectoral policy programme on preventing waste generation – from design to reuse/repair – as well as recycling, working with several government departments to do so. She led on specific policy areas: textiles, construction and on ecodesign standards and labelling as well as spearheading the UK's contribution on circular economy at G7, G20 and UNEA events and on other international policy areas including trade. Maya was also the lead policy official in setting up the National Inter-disciplinary Circular Economy Research programme.

As Circular Economy Director at Business in the Community, she led on developing a programme, designing projects and securing funding in this field. She worked with businesses on their transformation to circularity by developing metrics, a roadmap for business transition, procurement for innovation, steering a leadership dialogue on effecting change as well as leading/playing a key role in specific projects including on bioresources and construction. She sat on working groups relevant to innovation including the government's Advanced Materials

Working Group.

In Hong Kong, Maya worked deeply with the private sector – large and smaller corporates to support transformative change. Her focus was on enabling and supporting change by businesses, with both risk and opportunity in mind. Maya spearheaded notable collaborative initiatives, galvanising businesses to act to cut emissions and shift to circular business models. She steered the co-creation of a Climate Resilience Routemap, a Low Carbon Charter in Hong Kong, seeking to embed an SBTi approach, and led a series of workshops bringing finance, business and intermediaries together to explore this risk assessment approach.