

PRESS RELEASE

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EU cannot deliver on Global Methane Pledge without cutting livestock numbers - new report

The EU is unlikely to deliver on its pledge to cut methane emissions by 30% by 2030 without cutting livestock numbers, reveals a new report released today. The Global Methane Pledge¹ was launched by the EU and US at the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow.

The analysis, conducted by CE Delft for the Changing Markets Foundation, shows that the EU's policies at the beginning of the decade put it on track to cut emissions by 13.4% by 2030. Recent developments, particularly in the energy sector, could deliver further reductions of at least 3.4% by 2030 but will still leave the EU well off target. It shows:

- A 30% cut in methane is difficult without action to cut livestock numbers. The EU can cut emissions by up to 34% by persuading just 10% of EU consumers to switch to healthier diets with less meat and dairy and accelerating existing plans for tackling emissions from animal manure, food waste and energy.
- A 45% cut, which scientists say is needed to stop global temperatures from rising above 1.5C, cannot be achieved without cutting livestock numbers. Reductions of 38 - 47% can be achieved if half of Europeans reduce their meat and dairy consumption, and additional measures - including action to tackle food loss and waste - are introduced alongside existing plans.

Nusa Urbancic, Campaigns Director at Changing Markets said: *“Agriculture is the Achilles heel of Europe's methane strategy. Methane emissions from the EU farms are equivalent to the total emissions of 50 coal fired power stations yet the policies which could deliver significant cuts by encouraging a shift to healthier diets with less meat and dairy are completely absent from EU plans.”*

The report, 'High Steaks', draws on the latest scientific literature to identify which measures have the greatest potential to cut emissions from Europe's waste, agriculture, and energy sectors by 2030. It reveals:

- Under a business-as-usual scenario emissions from livestock are set to fall by just 3.7% by 2030 however much larger reductions of 30 - 38% could be achieved through measures to encourage Europeans to adopt healthier diets with less meat and dairy. Technical measures deliver smaller and less reliable reductions: feed additives could cut emissions by 1 - 12% and manure management, including the production of biogas, by between 4 - 7%. Agriculture accounts for over half (53%) of EU methane, mostly from beef and dairy farming.
- Current EU plans in the waste sector could reduce emissions by 33% by 2030 but even greater cuts are possible. Eliminating food loss and waste could cut emissions by a quarter (20 - 24% by 2030) and separating and re-using organic waste by close to a third (21 - 31%). Waste accounts for 27% of EU methane emissions.
- Energy accounts for just 13% of the methane released within the EU because most energy is imported (86%). Methane emission standards for oil and gas producers, including those outside Europe, could cut emissions on fossil fuel imports by between 48 - 87% however these are not included in current EU proposals.

The average European would need to halve their consumption of pork and beef and cut their dairy consumption by a quarter to bring their diet in line with national healthy eating guidelines. Reducing meat and dairy will boost public health - the overconsumption of red and processed meat is [linked to](#) cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other life-threatening conditions. It will also free up land for food production and nature as 71 % of European agricultural land is currently devoted to growing animal feed. Reducing the amount of grain used to feed livestock [by a third](#) would compensate for the collapse of Ukrainian exports.

Measures that would encourage a dietary shift include redirecting funding towards healthy eating campaigns - the EU spent [€143 million](#) over the last five years promoting meat consumption, financial incentives such as reducing VAT on fruit and vegetables, and offering healthier options in public venues such as schools.

Methane is over 80 times more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a twenty-year cycle, and accounts for more than 30% of the EU's annual greenhouse gas emissions. Scientists have [warned that](#) sharp cuts in methane and other short lived climate pollutants is critical as cutting carbon dioxide alone will not achieve the reductions needed to stay within 1.5C of warming.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation, said:

“It beggars’ belief that EU money is still being spent promoting red and processed meat, whereas experts tell us we should be eating less of it to minimise cancer risks. Healthier, more plant-based diets with less and better animal products can benefit consumer and planetary health. The EU had better focus on making sustainable healthy diets widely available, attractive, and affordable to all consumers.”

Reinier van der Veen, medio researcher at CE Delft, said:

“Our results show that required methane reduction in the EU cannot be realised without taking measures in livestock agriculture, and that encouraging Europeans to eat healthier diets with less meat and dairy may contribute the most to such reduction.”

Notes to editor

The report, [Methane Reduction Potential in the EU](#), was produced by CE Delft for Changing Markets Foundation. A briefing, [High Steaks](#), summarises the reports key findings.

[Changing Markets Foundation](#) is launching the High Steaks Campaign today calling on the EU to act on agricultural methane: www.highsteaks.eu (live from Tuesday)

The ‘Global Methane Pledge’ commits signatories to the collective goal of reducing global methane emissions by at least 30% from 2020 levels by 2030

The business-as-usual scenario used in the study is based on policies and developments as of 2020 and puts the EU on track to cut methane emissions by 13.4% by 2030. Developments since 2020 - largely in the energy sector - could result in further cuts however the impact will be marginal as the energy sector contributes a relatively small proportion of the EU's domestic methane emissions.

The overlap between measures, such as reduced consumption, has been considered in emission estimates.