



15 December 2022

Dear President Von Der Leyen,
Dear Vice-President Frans Timmermans,

Subject: Animal agriculture remains the EU's methane emissions strategy blind spot

We are writing to raise our concerns with regards to the European Commission's lack of leadership in cutting potent methane emissions and aligning policies with our commitment under the Global Methane Pledge.

Although you described methane emissions reduction as the "*lowest hanging-fruit of climate policies*" at COP26 in Glasgow, we are extremely concerned that the lack of action in the agricultural sector has been identified as jeopardising the EU's ambition to meet a 30% reduction by 2030, as per its commitment under the Methane Pledge.¹

The European Commission set out different actions in the 2020 EU Methane Strategy to tackle methane emissions from agriculture. However, it is becoming clear that these actions are not going to deliver sufficient methane emissions reduction. As animal agriculture represents over half of EU's methane emissions, there is a glaring gap in policy measures in that sector.² In particular, the CAP Strategic Plans lack ambition to cut emissions from animal farming as only 8 countries have set (very low) targets in their strategic plans to reduce emissions from livestock (and none of the largest emitters), while the emissions reductions through technical measures, attempted by revising the Industrial Emissions Directive, are clearly at risk and will not be sufficient on its own, achieving only 2 to 4% reduction at most. In fact, according to a study conducted by the environmental consultant CE Delft, the EU is only on track to achieve 3.7% reductions in the animal agriculture sector, which will lead to a mere 17% overall methane emissions reductions by 2030.³

The European Commission must maintain leadership to transform the way we produce and consume meat and dairy products in the EU. At the core of this transformation is the reduction of consumption these products, by ensuring that Members States develop and implement the guidelines for healthy diets. This could be achieved through the upcoming Sustainable food system law. At the same time, we must encourage better production, through agroecology and higher animal welfare, as cattle can bring environmental benefits in

¹ Bloomberg (2022), EU is falling short of its methane reduction pledge, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-06/eu-is-falling-short-of-its-global-methane-pledge-ambition>

² Changing Markets Foundation (2022), High Steaks Part 2, <http://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CM-Report-ENG-Web-High-Stakes-02-October-2022-Final.pdf>

³ CE Delft (2022), Methane Reduction potential in the EU between 2020 and 2030, http://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CE_Delft_210502_Methane_reduction_potential_in_the_EU_Def.pdf

low density areas. Decrease in herd size number should be prioritised in regions where the density is too high, done through a planned transition that would compensate the loss for farmers.

The European Commission should also strive to be consistent when it comes to trade agreements to ensure that there is no leakage with new tariff-rate quota of meat, such as the ones with New Zealand or Mercosur.

We are asking the European Commission to review its existing policies and develop a specific integrated strategy and accompanying measures for methane emissions from agriculture, ensuring that there is no gap when it comes to achieving the 30% reduction committed to through the Methane Pledge. **We believe that the EU should even go beyond the Pledge and align with Science, which indicates that methane reductions of 40-45% are needed to stay below 1.5-degree temperature increase.** This should be at the heart of our actions to strengthen 2030 emission-reduction targets, an initiative agreed at COP26 in Glasgow.

Increasing the focus on the largest methane emitting sector in the EU - **animal agriculture is responsible for 53% of methane emissions** - is the best strategy to achieve the needed drastic reductions. We are calling on you to **propose a specific methane reduction target**, in the same spirit as the non-CO2 targets suggested by the European Parliament in its report on the Effort Sharing Regulation.

We are in the climate emergency and the window to stay below 1.5-degree temperature increase is rapidly closing. In this respect, cutting methane can be seen as an emergency break and must be implemented with the urgency it requires.

We would welcome a meeting to discuss this issue in person.

Best regards,

1. Eric Andrieu
2. Francisco Guerreiro
3. Anja Hazekamp
4. Attila Ara-Kovacs
5. Aurore Lalucq
6. Benoit Biteau
7. Clare Daly
8. Claude Gruffat
9. Dan Stefan Motreanu
10. Ignazio Corrao
11. Jutta Paulus
12. Karen Melchior
13. Karsten Lucke
14. Kira Peter-Hansen
15. Manuela Ripa
16. Margrete Auken
17. Maria Noichl
18. Martin Buschmann
19. Matjaž Nemeč
20. Mick Wallace
21. Nora Mebarek
22. Pascal Durand
23. Pierre Larrousurou
24. Rosa D'Amato
25. Sidl Gunther
26. Sirpa Pietikäinen
27. Sylvie Guillaume
28. Sylwia Spurek
29. Tilly Metz
30. Ville Niinistö