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Report Name: EU Adopts Its Methane Strategy

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Report Highlights:

On October 14, the European Commission presented its EU Methane Strategy, in which the main objective is to reduce methane emissions by 35 to 37 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In the agriculture sector, the Commission wants to improve the reporting of emissions. It also wants to boost the production of biogas from non-recyclable agricultural waste. The Commission will also propose a revision of the Feed Additives Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming by the end of 2021.

On October 14, 2020, as part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission published an [EU strategy to reduce methane emissions](#). The Commission wants to reduce methane emission by 35 to 37 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. To that end, the strategy looks at actions that can be taken in the energy, agriculture and waste sectors since, in the EU, 53 percent of anthropogenic methane emissions come from the agricultural sector, 26 percent from waste and 19 percent from energy¹. The strategy also looks at reducing methane emissions at global level. Indeed, the Commission notes that “while the EU contributes only to 5 percent of global methane emissions, it can use its position as the largest global importer of fossil fuels and as a strong player in the agriculture sector to support similar action from global partners.”

Reducing methane emissions in the agriculture sector

According to the Commission, methane emissions from EU agriculture have decreased by 22 percent since 1990, mainly due to a reduction in ruminant livestock numbers. However, in the past 5 years, herd sizes have increased again, leading to a slight upturn in methane emissions in that period.

To reduce these emissions, the Commission wants to improve the reporting of emissions from farming through better data collection. The Commission announced that it will support setting up an expert group to analyze life-cycle methane emissions metrics in the first half of 2021. This group will look at livestock, manure and feed management, feed characteristics, new technologies and practices and other issues. It will also work in setting up a life cycle methodology on the overall emissions for livestock. The Commission will also provide a digital carbon navigator template and guidelines on common pathways for the quantitative calculation of greenhouse gas emissions and removals by 2022.

Additionally, the Commission also wants to promote opportunities to reduce emissions with support from the Common Agricultural Policy. To that end, by 2022, in cooperation with sectoral experts and Member States, the Commission will develop an inventory of best practices and available technologies to explore and promote the wider uptake of innovative mitigating actions.

In the strategy, the Commission states that non-recyclable agricultural waste such as manure can be utilized in anaerobic digesters to produce biogas or in biorefineries to produce bio-materials and intermediate bio-chemicals. For the Commission, this can generate additional revenue streams in rural areas and avoid methane emissions at the same time. As a result, the Commission announced that boosting biogas production will be part of the upcoming revision of the Renewable Energy Directive². It will be also part of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas that the Commission will put forward in 2021.

Moreover, the European Commission notes that reducing methane emissions in the agriculture sector is also feasible through the improvement of the health and fertility of livestock, animal diets (mix of feed

¹ European Commission, Questions and answers: An EU Methane Strategy, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_1834

² More information on the revision of the Renewable Energy Strategy can be found in GAIN Report ‘[European Commission Launches Public Consultation on Possible Revision of REDII](#)’

materials), feed additives, and feeding techniques. For the Commission, one of the biggest potentials for reducing emission intensity is in novel approaches to feeding. This is part of the Farm to Fork Strategy³ which foresees a legislative proposal for a revision of the Feed Additives Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming by the end of 2021.

The strategy also lists a change in diets as one of the ways to reduce methane emissions in agriculture. It states that “technical mitigation measures will complement other important developments for the sector and rural areas, in particular an expected societal shift to more balanced diets, with less red and processed meat, more fruits, vegetables and plant-based protein sources, in line with the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.”

More Information:

- GAIN Report ‘[European Commission Launches Public Consultation on Possible Revision of REDII](#)’
- GAIN Report: ‘[European Commission Publishes Roadmap on its Upcoming EU Methane Strategy](#)’
- GAIN Report: ‘[Green Deal Strategies for the EU Agri-Food Sector Present a Politically Ambitious Policy Roadmap](#)’
- GAIN Report: ‘[EU Commission Unveils EU Climate Target Plan 2030](#)’

Attachments:

No Attachments.

³ Farm to Fork Strategy, https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en