

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Government Introduces Climate Action Plan for Agriculture

Country: Denmark

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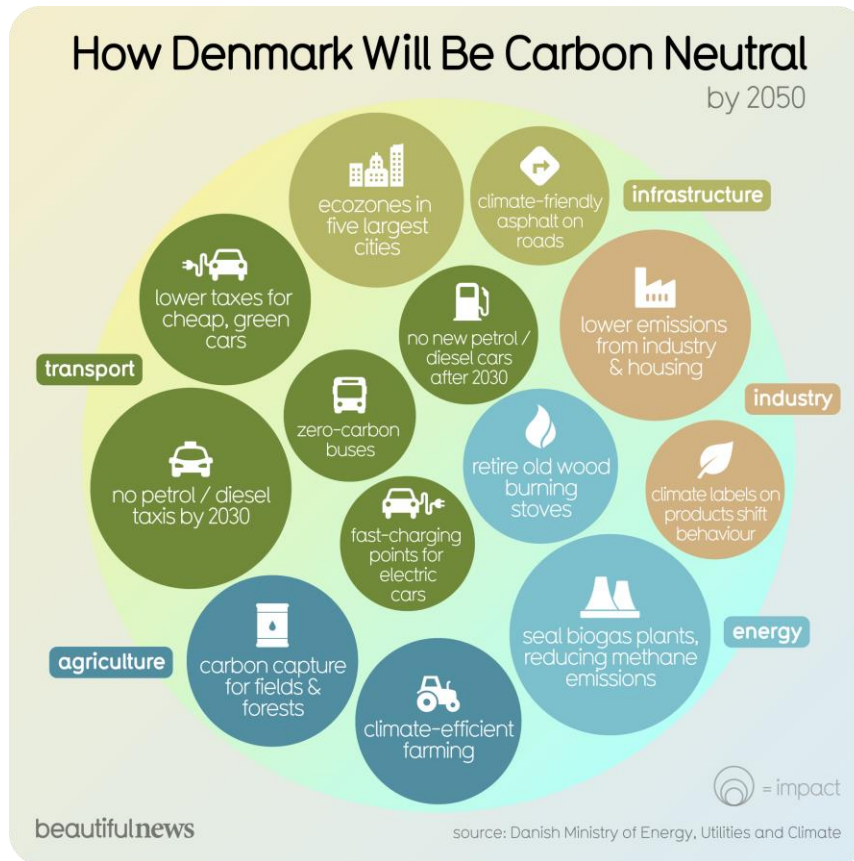
Approved By: Christopher Riker

Report Highlights:

On April 28, 2021, the Danish government announced its intention to cut carbon dioxide emissions from agriculture by 7.1 million tons by 2030 through increased spending on green farming technologies. The Danish government also proposes a partial ban on farming on peat soils (through which carbon is being emitted). Denmark's Social Democrat government plans to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent in 2030 (compared to 1990 levels), going beyond the 55 percent target agreed to by European Union Member States.

Background

At a press conference in April, Danish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Rasmus Prehn presented a proposal to reduce Danish agricultural emissions by 7.1 million tons by 2030. The plan was drawn up by the Danish government in close collaboration with the Danish food and agriculture sector, which has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.



Source: <https://informationisbeautiful.net/beautifulnews/743-denmark-carbon-neutral/>

Danish agriculture is responsible for roughly one-fifth of Denmark's total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions,¹ equivalent to roughly 15.6 million tons.² According to a recent study conducted by Copenhagen Economics in 2016, 90 percent of greenhouse gas emissions from Danish agriculture are attributable to cattle and swine breeding.³ Today, roughly 62 percent of the country's land area is being used for agriculture.⁴

¹ <https://www.thelocal.dk/20190315/danish-agriculture-wants-to-be-carbon-neutral-by-2050/>

² <https://agricultureandfood.dk/-/media/agricultureandfood/climate-neutral-2050/klima-2050-english.pdf>

³ <https://www.copenhageneconomics.com/publications/publication/danish-agricultures-emission-of-greenhouse-gases-and-production#:~:text=Danish%20agriculture's%20emission%20of%20greenhouse%20gases%20and%20production,-Original%20title%3A%20Dansk&text=Almost%2090%25%20of%20greenhouse%20gas,are%20milk%2C%20beef%20and%20pork.>

⁴ <https://agricultureandfood.dk/-/media/agricultureandfood/climate-neutral-2050/klima-2050-english.pdf>

Focus on Green Farming Technologies

The [Climate Action Plan for Agriculture](#) contains concrete actions to reduce CO2 emissions from agriculture. One of the main components of the plan includes a 700 million kroner (\$114 million) boost in public investments in research and innovation for biogas fuels and other technologies. In addition, the plan also includes a partial ban on farming on peat soil, through which carbon is being released.

The measures put forward by the Danish government to reach a 7.1-million-ton reduction in CO2 emissions from agriculture can be divided into three categories:

- **5 million tons** to be reduced via new technologies, such as pyrolysis that can convert livestock manure and straw into sustainable fuel.
- **1.6 million tons** to be reduced via what are being referred to as yet existing instruments, such as afforestation and removing at least 88,500 hectares of the most climate-damaging lowland soils (that emit CO2) from production and converting them to nature.
- **0.5 million tons** to be reduced via agreements that have already been concluded.

In addition, the Danish government aims to reduce nitrogen emissions from agriculture by 10,400 tons by 2027, increase support for organic agriculture, and make active use of EU funds to ensure a green transition within the agricultural sector. The Danish government further plans to revisit the Climate Action Plan in 2023/2024, to ensure the sector is on the right track to meet Denmark's ambitions.

The plan centers around seven key principles that guide the government's actions towards reaching the defined ambitions by 2030. These key principles defining the future of Denmark's agricultural sector include:

- The Danish government emphasizes that the sector must develop rather than stand still. The green transition of agriculture must be done wisely, for example, by making use of new technologies and solutions. The goal is not to produce less, but to produce smarter.
- Danish agriculture must be transformed to be more climate- and environment-friendly, while, at the same time, remaining economically sustainable. This requires a stable framework, which must be ensured by broad support in Parliament and in close cooperation with the business community, the financial sector, and employees.
- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture, which account for approximately one-third of Denmark's GHG emissions, must be reduced as much as possible, considering the continued sustainable development of the industry, the competitiveness of Danish agriculture, public finances, employment, cohesion, and social balance.
- The Danish government notes that additional care needs to be extended to the country's aquatic environment (streams, lakes, fjords, coastal waters, and groundwater) -- for example, by significantly reducing the discharge of nutrients.
- Agricultural production must be able to go hand-in-hand with the Danish government's ambition to ensure good habitats for animals and plants, while maintaining room for nature and biodiversity.

- Danish agriculture must ensure sustainable work conditions and a retention of jobs in all parts of the country.
- Danish agriculture must continue to create jobs and contribute to producing good, healthy, climate- and environment-friendly and safe food, thereby maintaining its crucial position as an exporter.

Criticism from Leading Experts

While the Action Plan for Agriculture is ambitious, several leading Danish experts have raised their concerns. In particular, the reliance on a five-million-ton CO₂ reduction on provisional technologies, such as the conversion of manure and silage into biofuels, has been questioned by various experts. Additional experts, particularly academics, criticized the government's plan to reduce agricultural sector CO₂ emissions, calling it "too slow" and "unrealistic".^{5/6} A leading professor from Aarhus University commented: "{w}e don't have a lot of time and what really worries me is that it is questionable whether {a} real commitment exists regarding investment into research and innovation."⁷ The deputy leader of the Danish Climate Council (Klimarådet), Jette Bredahl Jacobsen, stated: "{t}he government is telling farmers which technologies they ought to use, but not how they should do it."⁸ She wonders if changes will come through subsidies, taxes, or assistance. "We haven't been given any answers and without them, the government's plans are unrealistic,"⁸ Jakobsen noted.

The Climate Director of Denmark's Food and Agriculture Council, Niels Peter Nørring, stated that "{t}he most important thing for Denmark is that we develop. We are a small country that does not mean much in the big climate accounts. Therefore, what we can do best is to develop technologies that we can export and thus make a really big difference on a global level."⁹

In response to the varying reactions to the government's action plan, Minister of Agriculture, Rasmus Prehn, told the press: "{s}ome people say that our plan lacks ambition, three leading researchers say it is too ambitious. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between."¹⁰

Attachments:

No Attachments.

⁵ <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2021-04-27-regeringen-landbruget-skal-skaere-71-millioner-tons-co2-frem-mod-2030>

⁶ <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12938435/eksperter-faelder-nu-haard-dom-over-klimaplan-selv-de-kendte-virkemidler-er-usikre/>

⁷ [Jyllands Posten](#)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.