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AGRICULTURE MINISTERS MUST TACKLE INDUSTRIAL LIVESTOCK'S METHANE EMISSIONS TO MEET GLOBAL METHANE PLEDGE

U.S. and EU should lead the way on regulating methane emissions of industrial livestock corporations

MINNEAPOLIS/LONDON—Today, more than 25 Agriculture Ministers and high-level representatives from around the world are gathered in Chile to discuss how they can contribute to the implementation of the Global Methane Pledge. As agriculture is the world's largest source of anthropogenic methane, it is positive to see ministers engage on the issue. The meeting should give rise to scrutiny over the industrial livestock sector's emissions and raise countries' ambitions to tackle methane emissions from the sector.

The United States and European Union initiated the Global Methane Pledge; however, both the U.S. and EU methane plans for agriculture fall short of comprehensively addressing agriculture's contribution to the climate crisis. In the U.S., agriculture represents 37% of U.S. methane emissions, while in the EU it represents 53%. Announced at COP26, the Biden administration's [U.S. methane plan](#) for agriculture relies almost exclusively on various government grants and subsidies for the controversial use of methane digesters on giant manure lagoons created at large-scale dairy, beef and hog operations.

The EU is set to miss the 30% target by 2030 if it does not address emissions from animal agriculture. In its EU methane action plan submitted to the CCAC in 2022, the EU confirmed that it is currently on track to reduce its methane emissions by 23% by 2030 (from a 2020 baseline) and that "[additional action](#) in the other sectors than agriculture would not be able to ensure the 30% ambition level of the Global Methane Pledge." The EU has failed to set a specific target for its agricultural sector and is instead relying on EU Member States to decide how much they want to reduce their domestic agricultural methane. A recent [analysis](#) by the Changing Markets Foundation has shown that this continues to be a blind spot at the national level with most countries not having any reduction measures.

The recent [Emissions Impossible: Methane Edition](#) report co-published by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and Changing Markets revealed that 15 of the largest meat and dairy companies produce staggering methane emissions — roughly 12.8 million tonnes. All except one of these companies are headquartered in the countries that have signed the Pledge. Therefore, governments of countries where these large corporations are headquartered must urgently regulate these companies to reduce methane emissions.

"With just 15 meat and dairy companies responsible for more methane than some of the biggest methane emitting countries, it's clear where the focus on action needs to be," says Shefali Sharma, Director of IATP Europe. "As leaders of the methane pledge, the U.S. and the EU should lead the way on regulating these corporate emissions and creating resilient food systems that contribute to ecosystem restoration."

"Governments are often too timid when it comes to emissions reductions from agriculture, but the science is clear: Rapid cut in methane emissions is the best strategy to safeguard our climate system and the future of food production," says Nusa Urbancic, Campaigns Director of Changing Markets Foundation. "Big meat and dairy companies have huge revenues, but these are currently not being invested in transformative solutions to address the climate emergency."

“The U.S. emits high levels of methane emissions, granting subsidies and leaving regulatory loopholes that have allowed large, concentrated animal agriculture to decimate diversified farming in many parts of the country. Together with the EU, the two Methane Pledge initiators should instead serve as a model for other pledge signatories. Food systems can be productive and efficient without polluting the planet,” says IATP Executive Director Dr. Sophia Murphy.

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Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy:

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