

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 2, 2021**

**METHANE AGREEMENT IS GOOD FIRST STEP, AGRICULTURE SIDESTEPED**

*Factory Farm Animal Production Gets a Free Pass, United States and European Union Should Take Action*

**MINNEAPOLIS/BERLIN**—Today, the United States and the European Union, along with more than 90 countries, announced a joint pledge to reduce methane emissions 30% by 2030. According to the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy ([IATP](https://www.iatp.org)), the agreement is a good first step that countries recognize the urgent need to cut potent methane emissions, but the pledge is missing an immediate and strong commitment to take on a major source of methane: large-scale, industrial meat and dairy production.

Agriculture contributes around 40% of global anthropogenic sources of methane emissions, with livestock accounting for [32% of agriculture emissions](#). Any global agreement must include a timeline and concrete targets for methane reductions from large-scale industrial livestock systems.

Today, the Biden administration announced a Methane Emissions Reduction Plan that focuses primarily on expanding factory farm gas production from massive manure lagoons through public subsidies. The plan runs counter to calls earlier this year from U.S. rural and environmental justice groups for the [Biden administration's Environmental Protection Agency to regulate methane emissions](#) for large-scale dairy and hog operations. Rising U.S. agricultural methane emissions stem from large-scale hog and dairy factory farms and associated liquid manure. This factory farm system is also linked to air and water pollution, the loss of independent family farms and harm to the quality of life for rural residents.

Fifty percent of methane emissions in the EU come from agriculture, primarily livestock, while unsustainable livestock practices have also led to significant nitrate and ammonia-related pollution. The EU's revision to its climate package, including its Effort Sharing Regulation, does not have concrete targets to reduce agriculture emissions, let alone emissions from the livestock industry.

"Methane from the factory farm system of livestock production should be a key target for emissions reductions by the U.S., EU and other massive livestock exporting countries in the global methane pledge. The growth of the factory farm system in the U.S. is contributing to rising agriculture emissions, driving out independent family farmers and polluting the air and rural waterways. The Biden administration's strategy to use public spending to prop up an expensive factory farm gas system creates perverse incentives to produce more manure, and more water and air pollution for rural communities," said Ben Lilliston, IATP director of rural strategies and climate change.

"Action on methane can't be based on techno-fixes such as new feed additives and factory farm gas (or biogas digestors) as the EU alludes to in its campaign pledge. These are band aids on a broken system of rising animal numbers, more methane, and air, land and water pollution. The EU should ensure that joining the pledge translates to demands on EU member states to move away from an export-led model of mass livestock production. EU action should not result in incentivizing further proliferation of this destructive model," said Shefali Sharma, director of IATP's European office. "For agricultural methane to decrease significantly, public

policy in the U.S., EU and globally must begin to appropriately regulate livestock emissions and redirect public funds to support farmers in a Just Transition towards biodiverse, agroecological systems of animal production.”

Noticeably absent from the countries that signed onto the Methane Agreement are Russia, China and India. All three are major livestock producers. Russia and China have embraced the high-emitting factory farm system. India has plans for the expansion of both domestic and export largescale dairy. However, leadership must come from the U.S. and EU to regulate livestock emissions as part of the pledge. It would have an enormous impact in driving global cooperation to reduce agricultural methane emissions.

###

Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. To learn more, visit: [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).