An EU strategy to reduce methane emissions

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The European Parliament adopted by 563 votes 122, with 11 abstentions, a resolution on an EU strategy to reduce methane emissions.

Methane is the second most important greenhouse gas contributing to about a quarter of today's global warming. It accounts for **10% of total greenhouse gas emissions in the EU**. More than half of global methane emissions are due to human activity in three sectors: fossil fuels (35%), waste (20%) and agriculture (40%).

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assessment, ‘reducing humancaused methane emissions is **one of the most cost-effective strategies to rapidly reduce the rate of warming** and contribute significantly to global efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C’.

Binding methane reduction targets

Parliament called on the Commission to propose a **fair, comprehensive and clear legislative framework** , setting binding measures and methane reduction targets covering all sectors, leading to a significant reduction of methane emissions in the EU by 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement.

Stressing that many of the emission reductions required by the Paris agreement could already be achieved through low-cost and technically feasible methane mitigation measures, the resolution called on the Commission and Member States to propose and negotiate a binding global agreement on methane emission reductions at COP26 in Glasgow.

Members underlined the importance of adopting mandatory monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) for all methane-emitting sectors, including through the adoption of rules, standards and methodologies. Mandatory leak detection and repair (LDAR) programmes covering the entire supply chain in the energy and petrochemical sectors should also be adopted. Upcoming regulatory measures on methane should strive to achieve significant **emissions reductions swiftly and as cost effectively** as possible and provide incentives and support for companies to achieve performance standards in an optimal manner, while fully respecting the polluter pays principle.

The Commission is invited to include methane in the zero pollution monitoring framework and to support the creation of an independent international methane emissions observatory, in partnership with UNEP, the Clean Air and Climate Coalition and the International Energy Agency.

Energy sector

Imports account for **more than 80%** of the oil and gas consumed in the EU and most of the methane emissions associated with oil and gas are generated outside the EU. Parliament therefore called on Member States to adopt national plans to phase out all fossil fuels as soon as possible with a view to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.

Members called on the Commission to make all imports of fossil fuels into the EU subject to **compliance with EU rules** on monitoring, reporting and verification, leakage detection and repair, as well as rules on venting and flaring, applicable throughout the fossil fuel supply chain, up to and including production. To this end, the Commission should develop a robust independent methodology for assessing the compliance of imports with EU requirements.

The Commission is invited to create a specific programme to tackle methane emissions from **abandoned and closed coal mines**, by providing incentives to former coal mines to reduce their methane emissions.

Agriculture sector

Agriculture is the sector with the largest share of anthropogenic methane emissions in the EU, with methane emissions in agriculture mainly due to livestock, in particular ruminants.

Parliament called on Member States to **introduce effective and sustainable measures** against these emissions in their national strategy plans. It called on the Commission to thoroughly assess them before approving them. However, tightening the framework conditions for methane emissions in the agricultural sector, in particular the livestock sector, should not entail production being shifted abroad.

Recalling that a significant proportion of methane emissions from the agri-food sector is due to imports, the resolution called on the Commission to ensure a level playing field for EU producers by insisting that **imports from third countries** meet the same high standards as in the EU.

Members also called on the Commission to explore the development of a regulatory framework for the **certification of carbon removals** on the basis of robust and transparent carbon accounting that takes into account the differences between greenhouse gases, and to verify the authenticity of carbon removals and reward farmers for their mitigation efforts.

Technologies and practices to limit methane emissions from agriculture, including sustainable livestock management practices, should be promoted and deployed as soon as possible.

Waste sector

The resolution stressed that landfill is the most polluting waste management method in terms of emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere, soil and water. The Commission is invited to:

- set binding EU targets for commercial and industrial waste;

- propose targets to cap the generation of residual waste in the planned review of the Waste Framework Directive and Landfill Directive in 2024;

- align the Landfill Directive with the EU’s overall climate change and greenhouse gas emissions reduction objectives, following an in-depth analysis to better address greenhouse gas-related issues;

- produce a best available techniques reference documents (BREFs) for landfill, including provisions on methane.