OPEN LETTER

On the importance of addressing methane from industrially farmed animals to help slow global warming and build farm resilience

30 June 2026

CC: Executive Vice-President, Teresa Ribera; Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, Wopke Hoekstra; DG CLIMA Director General, Kurt Vandenberghe; DG AGRI Director General, Elisabeth Werner

Dear Commissioner Hansen

As Europe suffers under its second dangerous heatwave of the summer, we, the undersigned organizations, are writing to you with growing alarm that the EU's forthcoming Livestock Strategy will fail to grapple with the scale of animal farming's contribution to global warming, nor adequately provide farmers with the options and support needed to transition away from industrial livestock production or diversify their farms.

Methane is a super heating greenhouse gas. Global agriculture production has caused 40% of present-day global warming from all methane, about 0.2°C. This warming is on par with the contribution from fossil methane (see Annex).

In the EU, close to 60% of all methane pollution comes from raising farmed animals, 77% of that is from cattle.

Methane heats our planet 80x more than CO_2 on a twenty-year time horizon. The next twenty years matter: cutting methane pollution now is one of the fastest ways to slow near-term warming and limit how hot it ultimately gets. This is essential to better ensure food security and resilient agricultural production in the EU.

Media reports that the Commission proposes to treat biogenic methane from agriculture differently to fossil methane are concerning. Methane is a super heating greenhouse gas, regardless of its source.

Attempting to distract from livestock methane's real-world impacts on the temperature of our planet does not help farmers to transition to resilient, climate-proof farms. A point scientists and civil society have made repeatedly.

Animal farming in Europe is diverse, but that diversity should not be used to distract attention from methane reductions. First and foremost, effective methane reductions

should focus on high-density areas and rebalancing animal levels to what nature and the climate can support.

To help farmers plan for the future and transition to farming practices consistent with climate limits, the Livestock Strategy should:

- Be transparent with farmers and European society about the need for significant methane emission reductions in the livestock sector, clearly acknowledging the IPCC report assessment that biogenic and fossil methane warm the atmosphere at similar levels.

  Prudent risk management should consider a full range of possible methane cuts, otherwise farmers risk being locked into unsustainable production systems.

- Ensure support for farmers to rebalance herd sizes to the levels climate and nature can support by extensifying to agroecology, diversifying or exiting livestock production. The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change has found that systemic transition, including both structural and technical change, can climate-proof the European agri-food system. Relying on technical measures alone will not be enough, farmers need long-term planning to shift practices.

  Asking farmers to rebalance their herd sizes is a big ask and should be matched by a societal commitment to provide support during that transition.[1] *An Agri-food Just Transition Fund, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue, is key.*

- Reaffirm the EU's existing approach to accounting for methane's global warming potential as well as set a robust Paris Agreement-aligned target for methane reduction.

Livestock methane emitted in the future will contribute to future warming. The risks to the planet, society and farmers are real. To build a resilient livestock system and ensure the long-term viability of the sector, the Livestock Strategy needs to address this head on.

Sincerely,

Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy EUROPE FOODRISE Changing Markets FOUNDATION

[1] A societal commitment is also needed to shift to healthier diets based on more plant-based foods.


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CARBON MARKET WATCH
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An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland
Protect Our Winters Austria
Talamh Beo
Land · People · Community
stop climate chaos.

Signatories

1. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) Europe
2. Foodrise
3. Changing Markets Foundation
4. Greenpeace
5. Clean Air Action Group
6. TAPP Coalition
7. ECOLISE
8. Dryade
9. IFOAM Organics Europe
10. Germanwatch e.V.
11. Animal Advocacy & Food Transition
12. Advocates for the Future
13. Opportunity Green
14. The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
15. NOAH – Friends of the Earth Denmark
16. Compassion in World Farming
17. Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
18. Friends of the Earth Ireland
19. Fern
20. Agroecology Europe
21. Foundation pour la Nature et l'Homme
22. Farm Adaptation Network
23. CNCD-11.11.11
24. Milieudefensie
25. Corporate Europe Observatory
26. European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
27. Réseau Action Climat France
28. Carbon Market Watch
29. Environmental Pillar
30. An Taisce
31. Protect Our Winters Austria
32. Talamh Beo
33. Stop Climate Chaos

Annex: Methane is a super heating greenhouse gas, regardless of its source

	Global warming potential		Present-day warming* from methane	
	20-year time horizon (GWP-20)	100-year time horizon (GWP-100)	Share of methane's contribution	Temperature
Biogenic methane	79.7	27	59%	0.29°C
Agriculture			*39%*	*0.19°C*
Waste			*16%*	*0.08°C*
Fossil methane	82.5	29.8	41%	0.20°
Portion from fossil CO2 resulting from fossil methane decay			*2%*	*0.01°C*
All methane				0.49°C

*Present-day warming being the increase in global average surface temperature in 2010-2019 relative to 1850-1900.

Sources: IPCC AR6 (Ch7, Table 7.15), Reisinger 2024 (Table 1)

Methane is the second largest contributor to present-day warming (at about 0.5°C of warming). CO_2 emissions are the first (at about 0.8°C of warming).

Percentage figures in the table related to methane's share of warming, not total warming.

A recent statement supported by 42 scientists, including 11 IPCC lead authors, warned against the misuse of new approaches to methane that could downplay the significant climate impact of methane intensive sectors, including ruminant livestock. They reiterated the need for rapid and deep reductions in global methane in order to reduce peak warming, avoid climate tipping points and respect the temperature limits of the Paris Agreement.