

Written evidence from About Changing Markets (MET0009)

About Changing Markets

The Changing Markets Foundation works across a number of campaigns to drive change towards a more sustainable economy. Working in partnership with other NGOs, foundations, and research organisations, we create and support campaigns that shift market share away from unsustainable products and companies and towards environmentally and socially beneficial solutions.

Overview

As a green-house gas over 80 times more warming than CO₂ over a 20-year period, tackling methane emissions is urgent and a priority to avoid climate tipping points. If we cross these points in warming spikes, we may risk uncontrolled warming. Moreover, methane is responsible for 0.5 degrees of warming already (compared with CO₂'s 0.8) and is also a powerful air pollutant, a key component for the development of ground level ozone.

As the latest [Climate Change Committee report notes](#), the UK's emissions reduction must quadruple (outside of the power sector) if we're to meet the NDC commitment of a 68% fall in emissions by 2030 – only 6 years away. [As the largest emitter of methane in the UK](#), the agriculture, forestry and land-use sector should be a priority sector for reducing methane emissions. Methane from enteric fermentation and manure [account for just under half](#) of all of the UK's methane emissions.

International Commitments

2) What is your assessment of the Global Methane Pledge: is the UK on track to meet it? If not, how could this be accelerated?

- Under current policy, the UK can expect to reduce its methane emissions by 19.3% by 2030. [The UK will need at least a 44% reduction](#) in methane to contribute to the Global Methane Pledge target of 30% reduction globally. To do this, the UK will need to take action across sectors, including agriculture – responsible for the majority of the UK's methane emissions.
- Although livestock numbers have decreased, the current rate and ongoing levels of anaerobic digestion [risk the UK not meeting its commitments under the Global Methane Pledge](#). Changes in the food and farming sector could reduce UK methane emissions by [15% by 2030](#), but technical measures alone are not enough, and a shift to more plant-based diets must also be prioritised.
- The UK must develop a national methane action plan to ensure it meets the Global Methane Pledge 2030 target.

7) What lessons could the UK learn from abroad?

- The Climate Change Committee is clear that there is an urgent need for [policy to encourage a shift to healthier diets](#). Positive examples from other countries the UK could take inspiration from include [Denmark, where an Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods](#) has recently been published by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries. The plan was developed after collaboration across civil society but also with buy-in and support from the agriculture sector and agriculture unions. This also included a national assessment on the cost-benefit analysis of shifting diets, which found that in Denmark 1-3 billion euros a year could be saved from shifting to more plant-based diets, for human and planetary health. [South Korea](#) are also set to follow suit with a plant-based strategy.

Data, measurement, and monitoring

11) What are the advantages and disadvantages of available metrics used to report and compare methane emissions, including GWP100 and GWP*?

- Existing metrics like GWP100 are widely used across countries and sectors to measure green-house gas potential warming, including methane, and is the formal metric used by the IPCC and to monitor country's NDCs under the UNFCCC. GWP* measures the increase or decrease in the *rate* of methane emissions at a global level, it does not measure the overall warming impact. Unfortunately, the sector or regional scope which this metric is now being used, carries significant risk of misuse by industry players. A few key risks to consider include:
 - [High baseline based on existing emission levels](#): While GWP* measures the change in the rate of methane emissions, it does not account for the significant increases in methane emissions over time. Recent research has found that there are [significant risks to this metric being misused by high emitting sectors](#), by rewarding small reductions in the rate of methane emissions. This results in the grandfathering of historical emissions and could contribute to reducing incentives to further decrease other pollutants in the agriculture sector, which are urgently needed to mitigate biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. [Research has found](#) that GWP* is being used to mask the warming effect of continued emissions in the agriculture sector. In other words:

“The potential wider implications become clear if we apply the same thinking to the fossil fuel sector: natural gas (methane) producers could use a reduction in leakages in their processes to claim climate neutrality because the resulting

'cooling' offsets the warming caused by the continued combustion of the used gas." *Caspar L Donnison and Donal Murphy-Bokern 2024 Environ. Res. Lett. 19 011001*

- In the agriculture sector, the metric can be used to make it appear as if the emission reduction goals have been achieved, when in fact existing high levels of emissions continue to be produced, continuing to emit warming that would set us way past the 2 degrees limit.
- Equity and the Paris Agreement: The Paris Agreement clearly states that reduction in emissions and carbon removals must be done with equity and in line with sustainable development. [GWP* would allow historic emitters to keep producing high levels of methane](#), as it utilises a high baseline (based on already existing GHG emission levels). For countries or sectors with small historical emissions, GWP* would make any increases look substantial. Moreover, the Paris Agreement commitments are measured using GWP100. Changing a metric this late in the decade could create a significant delay at a time of much needed and swift action to bring methane emissions down.
- Other metrics that can look at short lived climate pollutants: Although it is important to recognise the policy required to manage emissions from pollutants like methane with a short life span, existing metrics like GWP20 can help to account for this alongside GWP100. Moreover, GWP* is not currently utilised by the UNFCCC and would be out of line with the reporting the UK is required to do under its NDC. To better account for SLCPs like methane and to remain in line with ongoing reporting of CO₂, GWP20 can be a useful metric to support this, as has already been [shown in New York State's GHG Emissions Report](#).
- Adopting the use of GWP* at sector or national level, could enable big polluters to greenwash very small reductions in methane, while hiding ongoing high rates of emissions. It is important this is not allowed to happen, and that the agriculture industry be prioritised for further reducing methane emissions through the measures mentioned above.

Agriculture

18) What other policy tools, frameworks or incentives could be employed in agriculture to drive methane reduction?

- One of the most [promising policy solutions](#) to reduce methane emissions from livestock are policies which drive a switch to healthier consumer diets – a diet with reduced meat and dairy consumption. [The Climate Change Committee also recommends at least a 20% reduction](#) in meat and dairy consumption in the UK by 2030.

- Moreover, the European Environment Agency recently found that [restoring nature and shifting diets would be essential](#), not only for mitigating climate change, but also for adapting to climate change even at 1.5 degrees; better supporting food security and sustainable farming and land use.

20) How can efforts to reduce methane reduction be balanced against other important considerations in the agricultural sector, including food security?

- As the climate continues to change, shifting to more plant-rich diets and reducing meat and dairy production has been identified as an [essential step to ensure food security](#). Not only to ensure agriculture in the UK is able to adapt to warming through farming practices, but also to mitigate challenges in feeding cattle for meat and dairy production, which would be impacted by climate events across the globe, affecting feed imports. [FAIRR's Climate Risk Tool, developed with the IPCC](#), has already identified that climate related costs are set to increase by 9% in the livestock sector, both across carbon taxes, and increased feed prices, potentially leading to losses of nearly \$24billion globally across the sector. Without urgent action on climate and diversifying the sector away from high production (and consumer consumption) of meat and dairy, the economic and environmental impacts could be significant.