

PRESS RELEASE



NEW REPORT BY FEEDBACK EUROPE FINDS THAT HIGH EU BIOMETHANE TARGET IS UNREALISTIC AND UNSUSTAINABLE.

As European reform of gas markets is underway, new analysis released today debunks the assumptions behind the high EU biomethane target and calls for a much lower target that is fit for food and the climate.

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As Member States and Parliament continue negotiations on the EU Gas and hydrogen markets regulation, a report published today by the campaigning group Feedback EU under the heading “Biomethane: setting a target that is fit for food and the climate” shows that the plan to ramp up biomethane production to 35 billion cubic meters (bcm) by 2030 from its current level of 3.5bcm is both unrealistic and unsustainable.

Biomethane which is a type of gas produced from organic materials known as “feedstocks” such as maize, straw, food waste and manure is often presented as a “green” alternative to fossil fuels by its industry proponents. However, Feedback EU’s analysis shows that the use of most of these feedstocks at the volumes proposed comes with significant downsides and unintended consequences such as encouraging more livestock production and food-feed-fuel competition.

The 35bcm biomethane target was set by the European Commission in the face of enormous political pressure to in part wean the EU off Russian gas imports. No impact assessment was carried out on the target and the only detailed analysis of the feedstocks needed to produce 35bcm of biomethane was done by the gas industry.

Feedback’s independent and in-depth analysis of the feedstock assumptions underlying the 35bcm biomethane target shows that at best, it will simply be unachievable. At worst, it will lock in dangerously unsustainable agricultural, land use and energy practices and could be an environmental disaster in the making.

Frank Mechielsen, Director of Feedback EU said: “a 35bcm target and lack of strong legal safeguards regarding unsustainable feedstock is not only completely unrealistic but, if made binding, would lead to a “scramble for feedstocks” causing unintended knock-on and lock-in effects. Member States must reject the target or face unintended consequences which will impact on the EU’s ability to meet its food security and climate commitments over the coming decades.”

Karen Luyckx, the technical advisor who conducted the research said: “Our analysis shows that the 35bcm biomethane target has been poorly thought through and fails to take into account the best expert advice. In contrast, a more conservative target, set in conjunction with independent sustainable food system experts – starting with the Commission’s own Chief Scientific Advisers – could allow biomethane to play its role in decarbonizing some of the most energy-intensive sectors. Let us set a new biomethane target, one that allows it to play its important but niche role, in a truly decarbonized future, within a sustainable, healthy and just food system”.

Feedback’s research also draws attention to the problem of methane leakage: at current rates, leakage of the extremely powerful greenhouse gas methane from the biomethane supply chain results in potentially higher emissions of methane per unit of gas than is the case for fossil gas. As a consequence, the 35bcm biomethane target may well end up contributing to climate change as opposed to helping to mitigate it.

LINK TO FULL REPORT

<https://feedbackeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FeedbackEU-Biomethane-Report-Setting-A-Target-That-Is-Fit-For-Food-And-The-Climate.pdf>

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