

INHABITAT



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While the focus is usually on fossil fuel **emissions** as the main climate change culprit, a new analysis by the nonprofit **Energy Vision** concludes that reducing emissions from organic waste would more steeply reduce methane. And it would cost less to accomplish.

Last week the EU and U.S. announced their commitment to cutting **methane** emissions by 30% by 2030, as compared with 2020 levels. Congress has allocated billions of dollars to target methane emitted by the oil and gas industry. The EPA is planning stricter regulations to ensure that oil and gas companies locate and repair methane leaks ASAP.

“Lowering methane emissions in the **fossil fuel** sector is critically important, but at the same time, policymakers should understand that there are much more efficient ways of cutting methane emissions than plugging methane leaks in abandoned oil and gas operations,” said Energy Vision president Matt Tomich, as reported by PR Newswire. “Our research shows that trapping the methane biogases from decomposing organic wastes could cut methane emissions more deeply and at much lower cost.”

While capping abandoned oil and gas wells can prevent greenhouse gas emissions to the tune of \$67 per ton of carbon dioxide equivalent, Energy Vision found a much cheaper way to reach the same outcome. If organic **wastes** are processed in anaerobic digesters, which turn them into ultra-low-carbon renewable natural gas (RNG), we can avoid that same ton of greenhouse gas emissions for only \$16.

The report said that investing \$5.5 billion in 400 new RNG projects could eliminate 33 million tons of **carbon dioxide** equivalent per year. This could be accomplished at a fraction of the \$50-\$100 billion cost of capping abandoned oil and gas wells.

Methane accounted for approximately 10% of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities within the USA in 2019. This includes raising livestock and methane leaks from natural gas facilities. While methane doesn't stay in the atmosphere nearly as long as carbon dioxide, it traps more **radiation**. According to the EPA, the comparative pound-for-pound impact of methane over a hundred-year period is 25 times greater for methane than for carbon dioxide.