

Methane Emissions Reduction Efforts Should Prioritize Organic Wastes, Energy Vision's Analysis Finds

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As governments work to cut methane emissions to fight climate change, analysis by the national sustainable energy non-profit [Energy Vision](#) shows that reducing emissions from organic wastes would cut methane more deeply and at lower cost than reducing emissions from the fossil fuel industry.

Last week the US and EU [committed](#) to cutting methane emissions 30% below 2020 levels by 2030. In recent legislation and the budget reconciliation, Congress is allocating billions for cutting methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will soon announce tighter regulations requiring oil and gas companies to find and fix methane leaks.

"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," says Energy Vision president Matt Tomich. "Our research shows that trapping the methane biogases from decomposing organic wastes could cut methane emissions more deeply and at much lower cost."

Using conservative assumptions, Energy Vision analysis finds that building anaerobic digesters to process organic wastes into ultra-low-carbon renewable natural gas (RNG) avoids greenhouse gas emissions for just \$16 per ton of CO₂e (i.e. carbon dioxide equivalent) vs. \$67 per ton for capping abandoned oil and gas (AOG) wells. While both approaches reduce methane emissions, investing \$5.5 billion to develop 400 new RNG projects over the next five years could cut 33 million tons of CO₂e a year — comparable to capping AOGs, but at a small fraction of the \$50 to \$100 billion cost. The \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill includes a 30% tax credit for building anaerobic digesters, which would further improve the economics of capturing methane biogases from organic waste and converting them to RNG.

"Organic wastes deserve top priority in U.S. methane reduction efforts," said Tomich. "Fossil fuel operations are 30% of U.S. methane emissions, but 50% comes from agriculture and organic waste, including our vast livestock operations and waste decomposing in landfills, on farm fields, and at wastewater treatment plants. According to the UN [Global Methane Assessment](#), methane is 'the strongest lever for reducing warming in the next 25 years.' Our data shows organic waste is the strongest lever for reducing methane."