New Assessment Documents Expansion of US Renewable Natural Gas Industry

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RNG Growth Can Slash Methane Emissions and Help Fulfill Methane Pledge Goal

NEW YORK, March 4, 2022 -- The sustainable energy NGO Energy Vision released its 2021 annual assessment of the US renewable natural gas (RNG) industry, conducted for the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory.

It documents rapid growth in RNG production nationwide. The number of RNG production facilities grew 33.5% (from 313 in December 2020 to 418 by the close of 2021), including 230 RNG facilities now operating (up 46% from 2020), 108 under construction (up 42%), and at least 80 new projects in planning.

This growth has increased production capacity 24% since 2020. The US can now produce enough RNG fuel to displace nearly 574 million gallons of diesel annually. That can power 63,800 refuse trucks (35% of the US total). Robust capacity growth should continue in the years ahead.

Decomposing organic wastes (landfill, wastewater, animal manure, food waste), the feedstocks for RNG, account for 30% of US methane emissions. Energy Vision estimates that capturing and processing half of these wastes into RNG would cut methane 15%, getting the US halfway to its Methane Pledge goal of cutting 30% by 2030.

Realizing full domestic RNG resource potential (up to 30 times greater than current production) would generate enough fuel to displace over 25% of current on-road diesel demand (>10 billion gallons/yr), cutting GHG emissions by an estimated 300 million metric tons annually on a lifecycle basis. Diesel-powered fleets that convert to RNG can meet and exceed the international goal of cutting lifecycle GHG emissions 80% by 2050, and they will do so not 30 years from now, but today.

Matt Tomich, president of Energy Vision, said "Expanding RNG production in the US will be critical in meeting our Methane Pledge, as it is the most effective strategy for cutting methane emissions from our vast organic waste streams and agricultural activities. The more RNG we produce, and the faster production ramps up, the greater the climate benefits will be."

"RNG can decarbonize a meaningful share of the fuel consumed by heavy-duty vehicles," said Marianne Mintz, who manages the project for Argonne National Laboratory. "This new Energy Vision assessment shows how rapidly RNG production is ramping up to meet that challenge."

"We're getting serious about stopping fugitive methane emissions from the fossil fuel industry," said Joanna Underwood, Energy Vision's founder. "That's critical, but oil, gas, and coal account for only 37% of US methane emissions, compared to 53% from organics and agriculture. There are literally millions of leaks in fossil fuel infrastructure to plug up. By comparison, there are a few thousand major sources of methane-emitting organic wastes. We know where they are and we can address them now by producing RNG. Doing so would create tens of thousands of new permanent jobs -- a win-win situation."