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Mr Christophe Hansen  
Commissioner for Agriculture and Food  
European Commission

*In copy:*

Dr Ursula von der Leyen, President of the  
European Commission  
Mr Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for  
Cohesion and Reforms

Brussels, 7 February 2025

Dear Commissioner Hansen,

**Re: Inclusion of focus on methane emissions in the Vision for Agriculture and Food**

We are writing to you in the context of the Vision for Agriculture and Food, expected to be published this month, to highlight the **key opportunity to include in the Vision a strong focus on the reduction of methane emissions in the dairy sector.**

At a time when discussions on European agriculture can be polarised, Environmental Defense Fund, as a leading environmental organisation, has been working very constructively with companies in the dairy sector. We hope that this degree of multi-stakeholder alignment demonstrates to you how important and how possible methane progress in the dairy sector can be with the correct policy leadership.

The opportunity to address methane in dairy in the upcoming Vision is three-fold. First, we all recognise the contribution of methane to climate change. Not only is methane a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, but if we reduce methane emissions early, these reductions will also have a more immediate impact on climate warming, at a time when Europe and all continents are facing extreme weather events. Secondly, as you explained to the European Parliament last November, 85% of Europe's agricultural emissions are related to livestock, of which methane is a potent contributor. Thirdly, there are a number of identified and commercially tested solutions available to dairy which can be leveraged with improved public policy to help farmers mitigate the risk of new management options.

**Solutions are there:** Member States, farmers and companies in the supply chain have already started to take action. For example, projects establishing local farmer cooperatives enable centralised manure collection and processing to inject biogas and digestate into public gas networks – generating clean energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing farming costs and protecting groundwater quality. Projects aimed at providing advisory support to farmers on sustainable practices are also being rolled out, to optimise manure management, limit emissions and identify financing solutions. In addition, technology is progressing quickly around manure management (such as compost barns, liquid-solid separators and biogas projects), herd management (such as genomics, improved nutrition, sustainable animal welfare) and enhanced feed management, which all directly reduce methane emissions from livestock.

**However, to scale-up action, we are missing clear direction from policymakers,** and financial support or incentives that are commensurate with the variety of options available to dairy farmers while minimizing added administrative barriers, so that we can collectively work with farms to accelerate and scale. The solutions need to be **as close to cost-neutral as possible for farmers**, ensuring this transition can be achieved without jeopardizing the livelihoods and resilience of the agricultural community.

Bringing the transformation to scale requires *all* stakeholders within the supply chain to act, but this can only happen if EU policy better supports methane reduction in dairy. We also risk that some EU countries do not act, and those that do act will each choose a different policy path. Guidance and recommendations on incentivisation from the EU are crucial.

Since the publication of the Commission’s Methane Strategy in 2020, progress has been made on methane in the energy sector, but there has been far less progress on methane in agriculture. The Commission’s assessment of Member States’ CAP Strategic Plans in November 2024 estimates that there will be no meaningful methane reductions in the current CAP period. We recognize that methane action needs to take place through a systems approach to complement sustainability efforts that are being implemented in the European dairy industry, which aims to make efforts in environmental and climate protection across a range of areas. And while we recognise and welcome the ongoing Commission’s work on agricultural emissions, we believe that policy and incentives are crucial in the short-term to enable action and impact.

This is why we strongly count on the Vision to grasp this opportunity for Commission leadership on methane in dairy, and answer the following key questions:

1. There are solutions available to reduce methane emissions in EU agriculture, but uptake is still too slow, due in part to concerns related to state aid. How does the Commission see innovation efforts as helping overcome these challenges? How does it plan to make it easier and more affordable to roll out solutions more widely? Does the Commission intend to give guidance to Member States and the dairy supply chain as part of its Vision for Agriculture and Food?
2. The EU, through the European Investment Bank (EIB), has launched a €3 billion loan package for agriculture, to boost investments in sustainable practices, soil health, water management and climate resilience. At the same time, EIT Food aims to strengthen sustainable innovation and bring new solutions to global societal challenges to the market through grants and funding opportunities for businesses. The Strategic Dialogue report also focuses on access to finance as an impactful solution. How will the Vision

steer and prioritize enough of this type of financing to flow towards methane reduction action in the agrifood chain?

3. The new Commission has promised to reduce red tape. We know European farmers and other stakeholders face bureaucratic difficulties and delays to implement solutions in manure management and feed optimization. For example, some techniques in manure management filter nitrates to manufacture fertilisers which reduce the risk of nitrate losses in water compared to manure, known as RENURE. However, the current Nitrates Directive does not enable its broader and effective application, limiting farmers from utilising more environmentally beneficial techniques - despite calls from member states to review the legislation and incentivise such new techniques. What steps will be taken by the Commission to make processes such as these simpler and faster?

In addition to writing to you directly, we hope that this open letter, which we will be publishing, will encourage a constructive dialogue and contributions from other stakeholders. We would welcome discussion with you as your planning for the Vision moves forward, and we will seek a meeting with you after the publication. You can count on our organisations to remain highly engaged on this essential topic for climate action and farmers' resilience, and **we look forward to collaborating on bringing the Vision to life and delivering a plan for methane reduction in the dairy sector.**

Yours sincerely,



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