

BEST PRACTICES FOR METHANE MITIGATION

REPORT FROM 23 FEBRUARY SPEED DATING EVENING

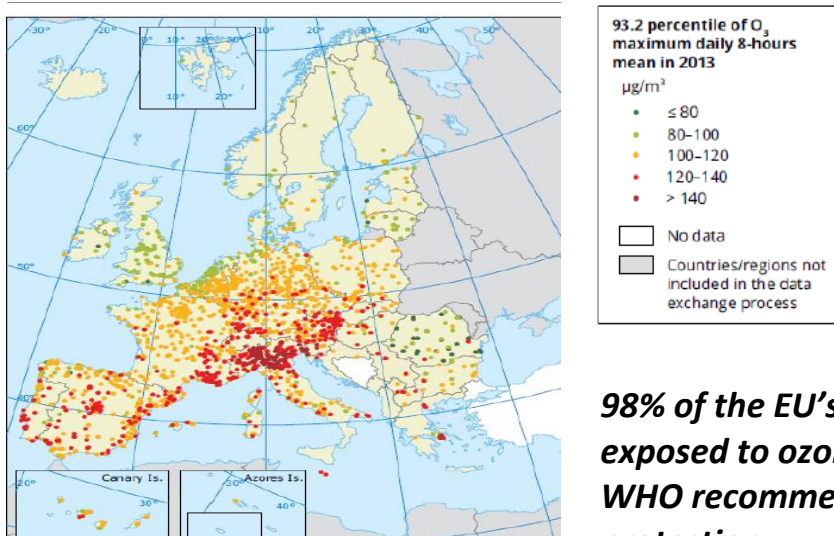
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: THE REVISION OF THE NEC DIRECTIVE

Pieter de Pous from the EEB opened the evening by calling the EU to take bold action for air quality and climate change after COP21. He also raised the issue of overcapacity in the agriculture sector and the importance of tackling ground level ozone for health protection. **Tom Verheye from the European Commission** mentioned the ongoing revision of the National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive in the context of which the Commission has proposed to cut methane emissions by 33% by 2030 for the whole of the EU. He explained this would help air quality by limiting the formation of ground level ozone and would pave the way for similar reductions at international level. **Bas Eickhout, Dutch Green Member of the European Parliament**, insisted on the importance of cutting methane emissions through the NEC Directive, especially as methane is not specifically regulated through climate policy.

FACTS: IMPACTS & MITIGATION POTENTIALS

Dr. Erika von Schneidemesser from the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam (IASS) gave an overview of methane emissions' impacts on climate change and air quality. She highlighted that **methane is the second most important greenhouse gas as well as an ozone precursor**. She quoted the European Environmental Agency which reports that 98% of the EU's urban population is exposed to ozone levels exceeding WHO guidelines. Erika pointed out that methane emissions have not decreased as much as other ozone precursors e.g. volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) and that reducing methane was particularly important to address background ozone concentrations.

Map 4.1 Concentrations of O₃ in 2013



98% of the EU's urban population is exposed to ozone levels exceeding WHO recommended levels for health protection.

Lena Höglund-Isaksson from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) gave an overview of methane emission reduction potentials up to 2030 and 2050. She showed that methane emissions are expected to drop by 24% by 2030 compared to 2005, only by implementing existing legislation (baseline). She explained that the 33% reduction goal proposed by the Commission for the revised NEC Directive was only based on so-called “zero cost measures”, most of which relate to the energy and waste sector, not agriculture. She showed that a more ambitious and so-called “maximum technically feasible reductions scenario” (MTFR) would lead to even greater reductions i.e. 46% by 2030.

FARMING BEST PRACTICE: ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

Ernst van der Schans is a dairy farmer from the Netherlands. In 2012, he invested in an anaerobic mono-digester which prevents methane emissions from his cows while converting their manure into electricity. This investment was made possible thanks to subsidies covering half of the cost. Thanks to the energy produced, the farm is self sufficient. However, the high upfront investment cost combined with low energy prices make it difficult for him to make profit from the electricity sale, he explained.



Biogas digestion prevents methane emissions while generating electricity for his whole farm.

According to Mr. van der Schans’ own calculations, having such a digester equals a reduction of 892 tons of CO₂ equivalent per year compared to not having one (due to both methane reduction and energy self-sufficiency). He also presented other aspects of the farm e.g. animal welfare and quality of products. More information is available on the farm’s website: <http://www.boerderijzuivel.nl>.

FARMING BEST PRACTICE: EXTENSIVE GRAZING

Dave Stanley, farmer and sustainability consultant from the UK, presented the multiple benefits of extensive grain-free farming systems.

Benefits include reduced methane emissions in addition to biodiversity protection, soil fertility, human health, animal welfare and enhanced rural landscape.



WASTE BEST PRACTICE: MOVING AWAY FROM LANDFILL

Luk Umans from the Flanders Ministry of Environment presented Flanders' landfill ban introduced in 1990.



As a result of Flanders' landfill ban, only 2% of total municipal waste generation was lanfilled in 2012.

Participants discussed alternatives to landfill waste. It was stressed that solutions such as waste reduction, separate collection of biowaste, anaerobic digestion and composting should be promoted in order to avoid alternatives which could have adverse environmental and health impacts, in particular waste incineration.

All presentations as well as the agenda and participants list can be downloaded from the EEB website.