



METHANE AND BLACK CARBON

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EU GREEN WEEK 2021 PARTNER EVENT

Methane and Black Carbon – hidden air pollutants and underestimated game changers to achieve short-term climate targets

Summary

Besides climate change, fighting air pollution remains one of the major challenges in environmental and health protection. In this context, short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs), like black carbon (BC) and methane as a precursor of ozone, are relevant pollutants that provide a huge potential to combat global warming and air pollution all at once. However, these pollutants are not considered in air quality regulations and strategies, nor does current policy exploit the potential of their reduction appropriately.

This year's [EU Green Week](#) was dedicated to the 'zero pollution ambition' of the European Green Deal. In this context, Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V., DUH) organised a virtual partner event to underline the relevance of the major SLCPs methane and black carbon. Experts from science and involved NGOs gave short presentations to provide a brief insight about methane and black carbon and their different sources (especially domestic heating and agriculture) as well as impacts on air pollution and climate.

With his key note at the beginning of the event, Prof. Lawrence from IASS Potsdam showed impressively why SLCPs in the context of climate protection and air quality can work effectively as game changers:

- Climate change and air quality are highly connected.
- SLCPs like methane and BC are assumed to be responsible for half the global temperature increase.
- Ambitions to reduce emitting these greenhouse gases needs to be raised under the Green Deal.
- Most effective way of combating high emissions is to look for co-benefits of climate change and air pollution, involve citizens and be realistic in reduction expectations.

Participants were invited to join different working groups to intensify discussions on black carbon, emitted from domestic heating or on methane, emitted from agriculture. Both groups identified possible policy interventions to assure progress in the emission reduction strategy.

Within the **Black Carbon session** main findings were that different pillars of EU's clean air policy need to include provisions for black carbon in order to address emissions of residential burning as the largest source of BC in Europe. In particular, BC (and ultra-fine particles) need to be included in the revised Ambient Air Quality Directive and much stricter requirements have to be introduced into the revised eco-design regulations for local space heaters (stoves) and solid fuel boilers.

During the **session on Methane**, it was made clear that the timeframe for implementing effective mitigation measures is very short and existing measures must be implemented as quickly as possible. However, this is not feasible in the near future with the current agricultural policy. Implementing measures in the agricultural sector can have many side benefits that need to be promoted. Mitigation measures and Green Deal strategies must be linked to behavioural changes. Pending adaptations, revisions (Gothenburg Protocol, organic production and animal welfare standards) and implementation processes (NEC Directive; CAP and its national strategic plans, Methane strategy, Farm to Fork Strategy) of various directives and regulations need to be more ambitious and include more specific measures.

In the closing part of the event, representatives from the EU Commission and the EU Parliament provided their perspectives on the topic. It is always important to think climate action and air quality/health impacts together to prevent disincentives. There are still some uncertainties and open questions about measurement methods, detailed impacts and emission sources that need further research.

But: Impact and relevance of black carbon as well as methane on health and climate are not in question. It is crucial to act now and tackle emissions. Most measures are already well known and widely discussed. Minor knowledge gaps should not prevent taking action now. The EU Green Deal and the Zero Pollution Action Plan are tackling all these topics and their relevance is emphasised. Nevertheless, concrete and binding plans as well as short-term measures are still lacking and need to be defined now.