
Draft National Biomethane Strategy

**Response from the American Chamber of Commerce
Ireland (AmCham) to the Department of the
Environment, Climate and Communications.**

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The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland

The Voice of US-Ireland Business

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) is the collective voice of US companies in Ireland and the leading international business organisation supporting the Transatlantic business relationship. Our members are the Irish operations of all the major US companies in every sector present here, Irish companies with operations in the United States and organisations with close linkages to US-Ireland trade and investment.

AmCham welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Environment, Climate, and Communications' consultation on its National Biomethane Strategy.

Significant progress needs to be made in a relatively short space of time if Ireland is to reach its goals of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050.¹ As it stands, the Environmental Protection Agency has predicted that Ireland will fall short of these targets, achieving only a 29% reduction in GHG by 2030.² AmCham has continuously highlighted the need for action in the renewable energy space to ensure that Ireland meets its targets. Indeed, access to renewable energy will be key in ensuring Ireland's competitiveness into the future. Industry has ambitious goals within this space- a recent survey of AmCham members found that 42% have committed to reaching carbon neutrality by 2030, with this rising to 64% by 2040. Efforts should be made to ensure that there is a secure source of renewable energy to facilitate this. The Department's publishing of a draft National Biomethane Strategy is therefore a positive step in the right direction. However, specific timelines and further detail of the policies that will be put in place to achieve Government targets of 5.7TWh of Biomethane by 2030 are needed.

Ireland's energy policy, up to very recently, has not had a focus on the development of a biogas industry, a position that is almost unique in Europe. Ireland lags behind the rest of Europe in producing biomethane, for example, Denmark, with a population similar to Ireland and a large agricultural industry, derived 25% of its 2021 gas needs from biogas, and has set targets of 75% by 2030 and 100% by 2034.³ Industry experts note the significant sources of suitable biomaterial in the region and the competitive advantage that Ireland has in growing grass but there is an absence of national measures in place to support this compared to elsewhere in Europe. Up to 11% of current natural gas demand in Ireland could be substituted with sustainably produced biomethane by 2030, with the correct policy supports in place. Indeed Ireland, with its grass-based agricultural systems, has the highest potential for biomethane production per capita in the EU, and a proven business case.

Biomethane is suitable to replace natural gas on the network and is fully compatible with existing appliances, technologies, and vehicles, whilst also reducing emissions. It is a particularly useful tool to decarbonise industrial process heat, something which is

¹ Climate Action Plan 2024, Government of Ireland.

² Environmental Protection Agency , <https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2023/ireland-projected-to-fall-well-short-of-climate-targets-says-epa.php>.

³ Bioenergy News: <https://www.bioenergy-news.com/news/denmark-celebrates-record-amount-of-biogas-ingas-system/>.

hugely important for industry. In addition, biomethane is well-recognised in response to the EU's commitment to becoming a highly energy-efficient, low carbon economy. Ireland, with its large agriculture sector, is considered the EU member state with best potential to exploit biogas. In this context, Ireland needs a Biomethane Strategy that reflects Ireland's potential and matches the ambitions of its targets. Again, Ireland must look to its European counterparts and consult 'best practice' models, notably Denmark as referred to above. AmCham notes that this shouldn't be limited to any singular area, as the consultation survey asks to specify.

In order to get Ireland's biomethane industry where it needs to be, supports will be needed at various levels. These supports need to be enacted in a timely manner to accelerate the advancement of biomethane in Ireland. In particular there needs to be a support scheme to help companies transition to biomethane use. Many companies are already making significant investments in their efforts to decarbonise, assistance in this, where possible, would strengthen Ireland's attractiveness as a location for continued inward investment. AmCham would further like to see the appropriate and necessary level of funding given to R&D investment into areas focusing on biomethane development. Collaboration and consultation between industry, academia, and government will also be important in this regard.

AmCham acknowledges the Department's efforts to enhance awareness of the supports available and the work that is being done to facilitate biomethane production, notably the online portal for biomethane developers. AmCham would like to see further resources like this becoming available for stakeholders in this area, for example through supports provided by local energy agencies and local authorities to ensure clear communication and sustained engagement.

Finally, concrete guidelines for biomethane production are essential, as the climate change performance of biomethane varies considerably depending on feedstock, technology, and system boundaries.