

Three proposals from researchers to meet EU climate goals

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The EU countries have decided that the EU is to be climate neutral by 2050. By 2030, greenhouse gas emissions must have been reduced by at least 55% compared to 1990. To meet this target, continued vigorous

efforts are needed to reduce emissions, but that alone will not be enough.

This is the conclusion of seven researchers from Sweden and Germany in an article in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment*. One of them is Mathias Fridahl, associate professor at the Department of Thematic Studies—Environmental Change at Linköping University, Sweden.

"We have painted humanity into a corner. It's no longer possible to solve the climate crisis simply by reducing emissions. We also need to clean the atmosphere of [carbon dioxide](#)," says Mathias Fridahl.

The problem is that there are currently no incentives for companies and countries to invest in new technologies to remove carbon dioxide. That is why a change in the EU's climate policy is needed. "There are many technologies that are quite well developed but which aren't economically viable," says Mathias Fridahl. He and his colleagues have three proposals that they believe could soon make a difference.

Anyone contributing to the removal of carbon dioxide should be able to get paid for it under the EU emissions trading scheme. This should only apply to methods that have a long life span, that is, capture linked to the storage of carbon dioxide for thousands of years.

To get the trading scheme up and running, the researchers propose that the EU set up a [central bank](#) for carbon dioxide. The bank would give investors a good price for the carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere. In order to maintain the drive to continue reducing emissions at the same time, the proposal is that the bank strongly regulates how removal may be used to compensate for continued emissions.

The bank's financial muscle could come from revenues from carbon

tariffs on goods from outside the Union.

To stimulate other measures with a shorter life span, the researchers propose an extension of the EU's land use regulation. This sets out the measures to remove carbon dioxide that member states are allowed to be credited with when reporting their climate emissions.

Today, there is a limited amount of removal methods in forestry and agriculture. The researchers contend that if the regulation were extended to more measures, it would encourage countries to invest resources in carbon removal.

The researchers also want the EU to identify which emissions will be very difficult or impossible to do anything about. Greater clarity would reduce the risk of companies and member states postponing measures in the hope that their emissions will belong to the group that is difficult to tackle. This would stimulate innovation and efforts to reduce emissions in parallel with initiatives to remove carbon dioxide.

Mathias Fridahl stresses that if the proposals are implemented, it is important that they are not used to avoid the requirements to simultaneously reduce emissions. He thinks the issue will be addressed as early as next year. The European Commission is then to present proposals for a new intermediate objective for climate action up to 2040. "In this process, the prospects are good for addressing the question of removal methods," says Mathias Fridahl.

More information: Mathias Fridahl et al, Novel carbon dioxide removals techniques must be integrated into the European Union's climate policies, *Communications Earth & Environment* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s43247-023-01121-9](https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-023-01121-9)

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