

When Do Environmentalists Not Hate Methane? When It's Rebranded 'Renewable Biogas'



By *Hank Campbell* — May 28, 2018



When environmental activists discovered that it was bad optics to be opposed to natural gas, because it lowered the CO₂ emissions they insisted must be lowered drastically or else the apocalypse was nigh, they changed tactics.

It wasn't easy to do without looking ridiculous. For decades they had endorsed natural gas and they had to thread the needle by being against new things without undermining their own history. So instead of being against natural gas, they were against methane - which is most of natural gas. They began to claim the earth would deflate (apparently the planet is just a really big balloon), earthquakes would cause the country to crumble, [tap water would set us on fire](#) ^[1], and because methane has 23X the warming ability of CO₂, it would be even worse for global warming.

But what about anaerobic digestion, which other groups tout as natural because it is methane from cow flocs? How can they trot out marine biologists claiming methane is even worse than CO₂ while embracing methane as clean alternative energy?

Simple. Don't call it methane. Call it renewable biogas.

This reframing is a common tactic by anti-science groups. When Whole Foods didn't want to admit they were adding sugar to foods, they rebranded their added sugar as the far more wholesome "evaporated cane juice." And customers paid a lot more for that health halo.

I am not saying the organic corporation Vermont Coffee Company is anti-science the way Greenpeace and Natural Resources Defense Council are, I instead [like that they are embracing the modern world](#) [2] when touting that they [are using](#) [3] "thermal and electric energy sourced from renewable methane" to make their product. Yay capitalism.

But like with Whole Foods and evaporated cane juice, they seem to be counting on the fact that their customers are rubes.

Renewable bio-energy costs more to produce, so we pay a premium price to our suppliers. [\(That's what it takes to make renewables sustainable.\)](#) [There is no additional cost for you to enjoy slow-roasted, 100% organic coffee from our renewable roastery.](#) We've

Ummm, this CEO needs to learn that a bunch of people paying extra to promote their beliefs is not what sustainability means.

As for "no additional cost", why would there need to be?



I bet I'd love their coffee, if I could afford it. I don't object on principle because if \$25 billion in supplement companies are allowed to exist outside FDA regulations and Non-GMO Project can sell expensive stickers without having any clue if food is Non-GMO or not (unless it is rock salt, we know that is not a GMO), I don't see any reason why this company can't brag that their methane from cow manure is somehow better than identical methane from the ground. Well, sort of not from the ground. The *source* is an engineered landfill operated by [EBI Énergie Inc.](#) [4] and delivered by Vermont Gas Company, and some of that is above ground.

There are some obvious questions. Is there not enough cow poop in Vermont to even keep the lights on for one company? Why do they have to import greenhouse gases from Canada and use a legacy energy company to deliver it? That smells like hoopie.

And what about the much higher cost of such anaerobic digestion, extracting methane from cow feces? How can the coffee company be competitive when they pay so much more for energy? Well, you just saw the price you pay for virtue signaling.

Plus, they have optimized in other ways. They became more efficient, they note, thanks to free market technologies invented by other companies that are using regular old natural gas.

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Links

[1] <https://www.realclearscience.com/blog/2013/06/theres-methane-in-your-drinking-water-so-what.html>

[2] <https://vermontcoffeecompany.com/pages/100-renewable-roastery>

[3] <http://www.beveragedaily.com/Article/2018/05/24/Vermont-Coffee-Company-launches-100-renewable-biogas-powered-coffee-roastery>

[4] <https://www.ebiqc.com/en/about/companies/ebi-energie-inc/>