

Climate at a Glance: Cattle and Methane

Bullet-Point Summary:

- **American ranchers and meat consumption have virtually no impact on overall greenhouse gas emissions or climate.**
- **EPA reports cattle and beef account for just 2% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.**
- **EPA reports all livestock account for less than 4% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.**
- By contrast, crop production accounts for more greenhouse gas emissions than total livestock production.

Short Summary:

Climate activists, many of whom are vegans for other reasons, often claim that ranchers, livestock, and meat production are a leading cause of rising greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), however, has compiled information on greenhouse gas emissions by source. According to EPA, beef production accounts for just 2% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, while livestock production as a whole, accounts for less than 4% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. By contrast, agricultural crop production accounts for more greenhouse gas emissions than total livestock production. This is the case even though the United States [leads the world in beef production](#).

The primary manner in which livestock impacts greenhouse gas emissions is through methane released when livestock burp or pass gas. Yet, this is clearly not a growing problem, as U.S. methane emissions actually declined between 1990 and 2018, [according to data compiled by the EPA](#).

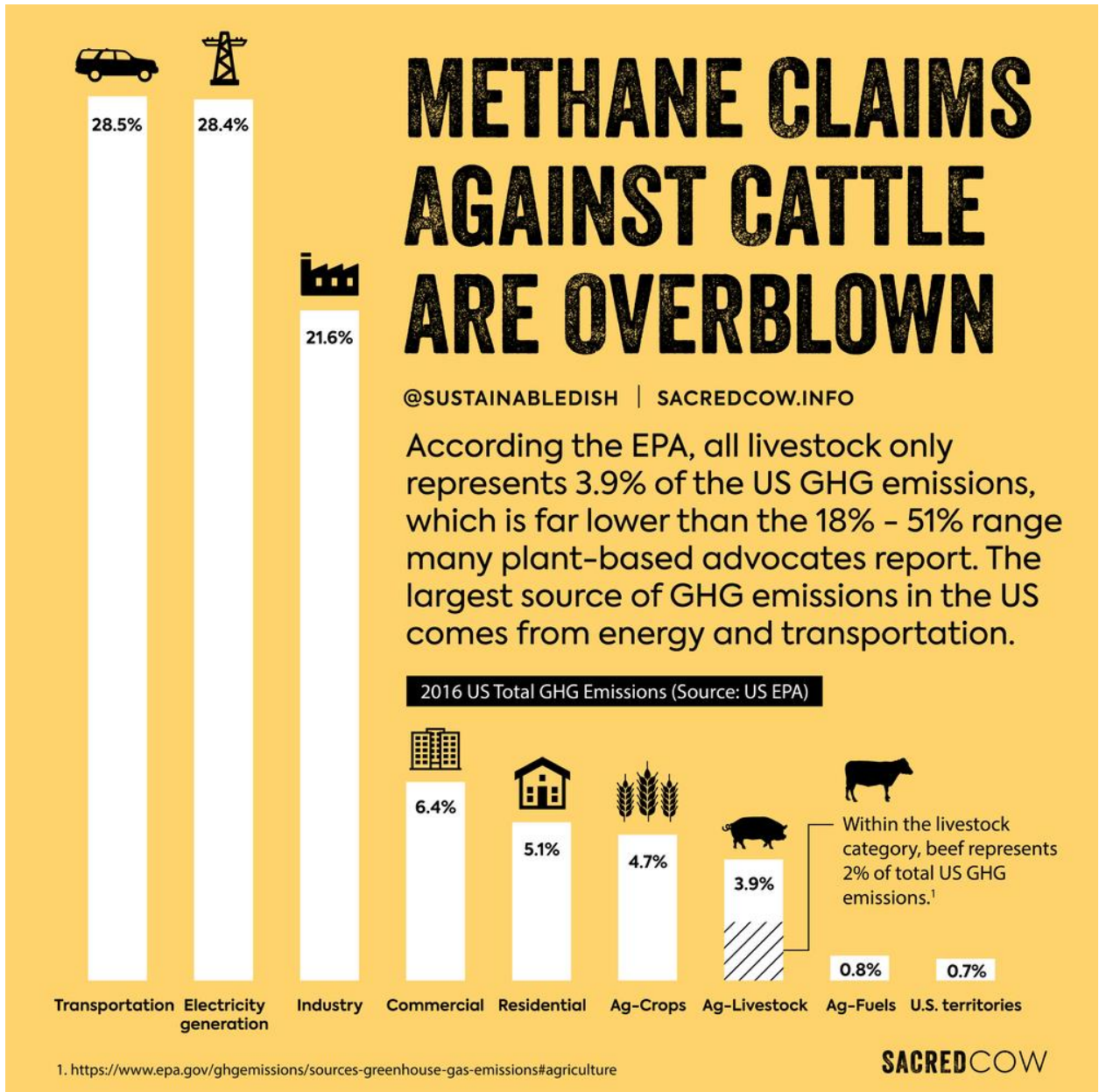


Figure 1: Methane emissions by sector in the USA. Note that beef production is less than half of the entire livestock sector at just 2%. Graph by [the Sacred Cow Project](#)

Further reading:

1. *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/inventory-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks>
2. *Greenhouse Gas Inventory Data Explorer*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <https://cfpub.epa.gov/ghgdata/inventoryexplorer/>

3. *The Sacred Cow Project*, <https://www.sacredcow.info/>

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