MIGHTY EARTH

THE LION'S SHARE:

AHOLD DELHAIZE U.S. BRANDS FALL SHORT ON CLIMATE ACTION

DECEMBER 2025

BY IGNORING METHANE EMISSIONS, US GROCERIES FOOD LION, GIANT, THE GIANT COMPANY, HANNAFORD, AND STOP & SHOP PUT PARENT COMPANY AHOLD DELHAIZE AT RISK.

Ahold Delhaize is one of the world's largest food retailers with 17 different brands across Europe, Asia, and the US, including Food Lion, Giant, The Giant Company, Hannaford, and Stop & Shop.[1] This report reveals that Ahold Delhaize's US brands are responsible for half (49%) of the total group's methane emissions, yet they have failed to publish any plans to substantively reduce methane or other greenhouse gas emissions.[2] Ahold Delhaize has committed to robust sustainability targets, including a group net-zero by 2050 commitment and interim 2030 emission reduction goals. New analysis by Mighty Earth shows that Ahold Delhaize's US brands risk undermining the group's climate commitments by not taking action to reduce methane and other greenhouse gas emissions, and proposes Ahold Delhaize is not holding its US brands accountable for their role in delivering the groups' climate commitments. To meet these climate targets, Ahold Delhaize must ensure all of its subsidiaries - especially the laggards in the US - deliver their fair share of the progress committed to at the group level.

Previous analysis by Mighty Earth estimates that 49% of Ahold Delhaize's methane emissions are generated by its US brands and that methane emissions from meat and dairy products account for 44% of the group's scope 3 emissions from the food, land, and agriculture (FLAG) category.[3] It is hard to see how Ahold Delhaize will make the methane reductions necessary to meets its group climate commitments without urgent action from its US brands.

In this report, the climate commitments and actions of seven of Ahold Delhaize's largest subsidiaries are reviewed and ranked. The European brands Albert Heijn and Delhaize scored first and second place respectively, and the five American brands trailed behind. Albert Heijn earned 54 points, demonstrating positive climate leadership. Delhaize scored 17.5 points, leaving room for improvement. In contrast, the American brands faired much worse with Hannaford scoring 12 points, The Giant Company 7, Giant and Stop & Shop tied with only 5 points, and Food Lion scored a meagre 2.5 points.

These findings demonstrate Ahold Delhaize's US brands are taking almost zero action to reduce methane, especially in comparison to some of their European counterparts. Without urgent improvement, Ahold Delhaize will fail to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and its intermediary 2030 climate goals as promised to their consumers and investors.

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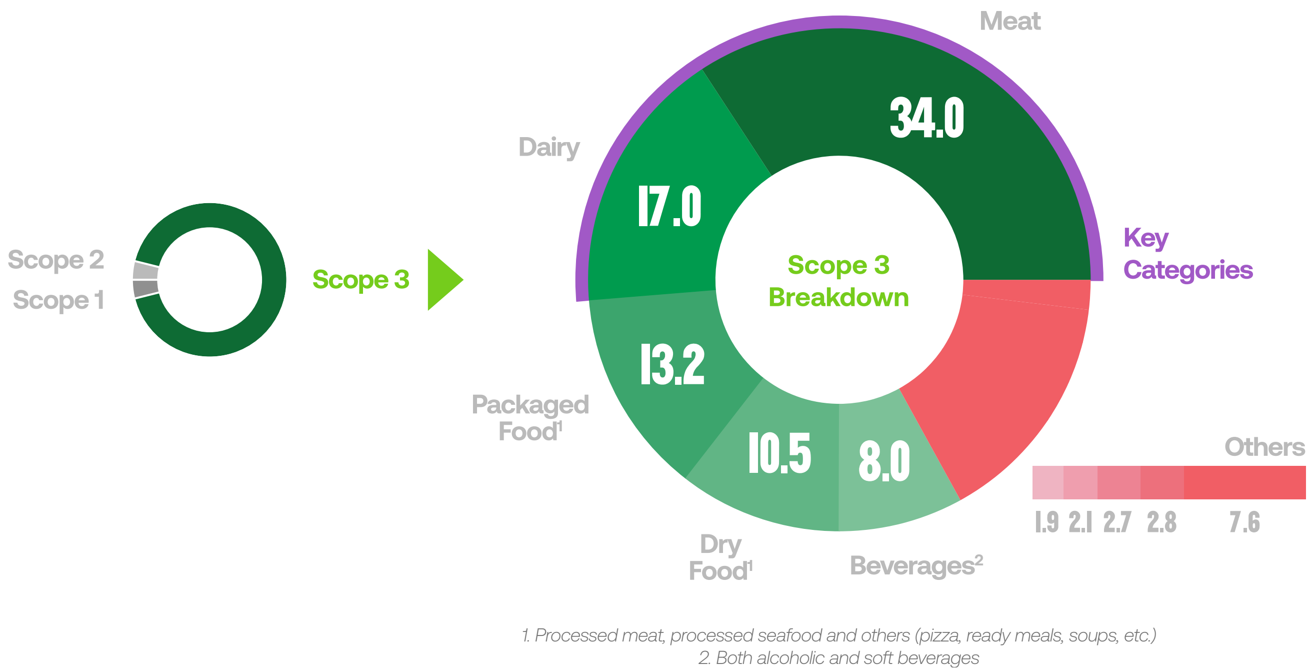
Introduction

Methane

The vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions (93%) from grocers like Ahold Delhaize are generated in their upstream and downstream supply chains – called Scope 3 emissions. It's estimated that half of retailer Scope 3 emissions can be attributed to meat and dairy products.[4] Methane is a "superheater" greenhouse gas; responsible for 30% of the world's warming since the industrial revolution, spurring on fatal heatwaves, increasing the number of days with poor air quality, and degrading agricultural yields and species habitats.[5]

Animal agriculture is responsible for 32% of man-made methane emissions – more than any other single source. Mostly, methane is released from the process of enteric fermentation, the digestive process of cattle and other ruminants.[6] Livestock manure, food waste, and rice production are other significant sources of agricultural methane.[7] According to a Profundo analysis commissioned by Mighty Earth, the meat and dairy in Ahold Delhaize's value chain create 11.7 million metric tons of methane emissions each year -- that's more than the country of Sweden, or the annual energy use of 44 million households.[8] It is estimated by Mighty Earth that almost half (49%) of Ahold Delhaize's total methane emissions are generated by the company's five US brands.[9]

Grocery retail GHG emission breakdown, % of CO_2e



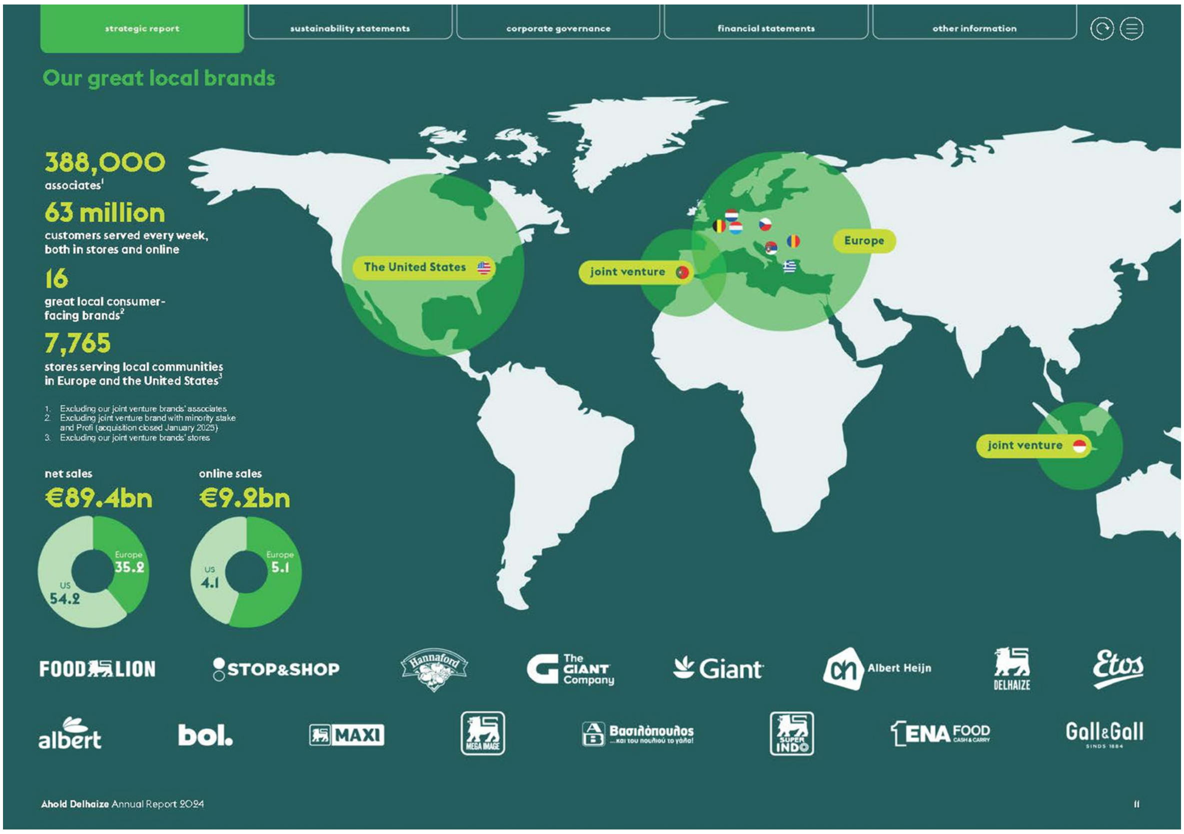
Breakdown of grocery's greenhouse gas emissions. Source: Euromonitor, Poore & Nemecek. Photo credit: Mckinsey & Co.[10]

Ahold Delhaize

With 9,400 stores across Europe, Asia, and North America, under 17 different brands, Ahold Delhaize is one of the largest food retailers in the world.[11] In 2024, The Netherlands-based corporation grossed $90 billion, 61% of which was generated by the company's US brands: Food Lion, Giant, The Giant Company, Hannaford, and Stop & Shop.[12] Together, these brands make up the largest retail group on the East Coast of the United States.[13] Ahold Delhaize's European brands make up much of the rest of the company's revenue from brands like Albert Heijn and Delhaize, which are located in The Netherlands and Belgium.

Ahold Delhaize is committed to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. More specifically, the company commits to reaching net-zero emissions from its own operations (Scope 1), its energy usage (Scope 2), and its indirect emissions (Scope 3).[14] Ahold Delhaize also set interim, near-term targets for 2030. By 2030, the company commits to reducing Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 50.4% from a 2018 baseline. By 2030 from a 2020 baseline, Ahold Delhaize also commits to reducing Scope 3 emissions from energy and industrial sources (e.g. emissions from landfill or fuel used to transport goods, etc.) by 42% and from food, land and agriculture (FLAG) sources (e.g. emissions from agricultural land use, livestock or manure, etc.) by 30.3%.[15] According to the independent Science-Based Target initiative (SBTi), Ahold Delhaize's net-zero commitment is consistent with the goal to prevent global warming.[16]

Despite pilot programs and small pockets of action, Ahold Delhaize's Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions are on the rise. Between 2023 and 2024, Ahold Delhaize's FLAG-related Scope 3 emissions increased by nearly 10%.[17] Despite this increase, Ahold Delhaize has failed to outline what impact increasing Scope 3 emissions has on the group's overall progress against its climate targets. Even Ahold Delhaize admits that their "exact road to net-zero is not clear yet."[18] **This lack of clarity manifests as inconsistent and lackluster action on climate by many of the group's subsidiaries.**



Scope of Ahold Delhaize brands, from the company's 2024 annual report.

Results

Methodology

This scorecard evaluates seven of Ahold Delhaize's subsidiaries on 18 indicators in five categories. Only publicly available data was analyzed, and the research took place between August 1st - 31st, 2025. Assessments focused on the latest climate reports where relevant, and were based solely on data published on retailers' websites. The greatest possible score was 100 points, distributed among 18 indicators. Each indicator was divided into full points, half points or zero points. Each indicator was assigned a specific number of total points, which varied between indicators, based on their importance in relation to the impact they would have on a retailer's methane emissions and climate accountability. The specifics of each indicator are discussed in the following analysis.

Rank	Country and Retailer	Role Of Methane	Emissions Reporting	Commitments and Action Plans	Food Waste and Landfill	Protein Alternatives	Score
1st	Albert Heijn	10/15	10.5/21	15/36	6/8	12.5/20	54/100
2nd	DELHAIZE	7.5/15	0/21	0/36	0/8	10/20	17.5/100
3rd	Hannaford	0/15	0/21	3/36	4/8	5/20	12/100
4th	The GIANT Company	0/15	0/21	0/36	2/8	5/20	7/100
5th	GIANT	0/15	0/21	0/36	0/8	5/20	5/100
5th	STOP & SHOP	0/15	0/21	0/36	0/8	5/20	5/100
6th	FOOD LION	0/15	0/21	0/36	0/8	2.5/20	2.5/100

Category 1: The Role of Methane

Ahold Delhaize brands should acknowledge the outsized role that methane emissions and meat and dairy products play in their carbon footprint for the sake of transparency with consumers, and as a precursor to taking action. At the group level, Ahold Delhaize does this, stating:

"Methane is emitted in the agricultural stages of our value chain through enteric fermentation (livestock digestion), manure management, and rice cultivation... reduction in methane can have a quick impact to slow down the rate of global warming." [19]

The Dutch-based Albert Heijn scored 10 points out of 15 in this section and Belgian-based Delhaize earned 7.5 points for working towards a reduction of meat and dairy consumption as a solution for climate change and acknowledging the impact of livestock in relation to climate change. For example, Albert Heijn's 2023 Sustainability Report explains that livestock is a significant source of emissions due to "CH4 (methane) emissions from ruminants such as cows..."[20]

However, all five US brands scored zero points in the section, failing to acknowledge any link between meat and dairy, methane, and climate change. This raises serious concerns as to how Ahold Delhaize can meet its climate targets because **the US brands generate 49% of the group's methane emissions yet fail to even acknowledge the role of methane in their supply chain's carbon footprint.**

Category 2: Emissions Reporting

Measuring and reporting methane emissions is the first step towards setting methane reduction targets and increasing accountability. Ahold Delhaize calculates its greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHGP), a standard that provides guidance for companies to report their emissions inventory.[21] Ahold Delhaize discloses its greenhouse gases in units of CO2-equivalent (CO2e), a metric combining all seven major greenhouse gas emissions, recognizing that each gas has a different potency and lifecycle.

Methane is 28 times more potent than CO2 over 100 years and 86 times more potent over 20 years. CO2e is helpful in that it provides a single metric that can be compared year over year. Yet it also obfuscates the potent nature of gases like methane and hides the proportion of each gas generated in retailers' supply chains. Although Ahold Delhaize states that it uses GHGP, it fails to disclose its separate greenhouse gas emissions -hiding the heightened short-term impact of methane. By disclosing and then reducing its substantial methane emissions and being honest with consumers and investors, Ahold Delhaize could make real strides in meeting its climate commitments.

Dutch-based Albert Heijn is a leader amongst Ahold Delhaize brands because it is the only subsidiary, and the first major supermarket in the world to publicly disclose the proportion of methane within its Scope 3 emissions.[22] For that reason, and because it reports all of its greenhouse gas emissions across all three scopes, Albert Heijn scored half of the possible points in the section – making it the only brand to score any points.[23]

NEWS

Dutch supermarket giant Albert Heijn first in world to report methane emissions

By Kevin White | 24 July 2025

Methane emissions accounted for approximately 14% of Albert Heijn's total greenhouse gas footprint, according to an update this month to its sustainability report

Not a single Ahold Delhaize US brand discloses its methane emissions or even Scope 1, 2, or 3 greenhouse gas emissions. **Yet given that the group uses the GHGP to calculate their emissions, it should be simple for each brand to disclose methane emissions; each brand could simply publish data they already have.** To withhold this information evades culpability of the company's significant climate impact. **In turn, by withholding their methane emissions, Ahold Delhaize's US brands avoid scrutiny and accountability for reducing them.**

Category 3: Reduction Commitments and Action Plans

After disclosure, the next steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are to establish reduction targets, and then to publish and implement action plans to meet those targets. In this section, Albert Heijn scored 15 points out of 36, because the brand has publicly committed to the 2050 net-zero target and Ahold Delhaize's near-term climate targets. Albert Heijn also earned points for its ambitious Scope 3 emission reduction commitment and for taking action to reduce methane emissions from their private-label products, even though they lack a comprehensive methane action reduction plan.[24] No brands scored points for having a deforestation and conversion free supply chain policy.

Only one US brand scored points in this section: Hannaford, earning three points for acknowledging Ahold Delhaize's 2050 net-zero goal.[25] None of its US peers acknowledge the group's net-zero commitment anywhere on their websites, which is the bare-minimum because it is a goal they are already nominally beholden to.

And despite the enormous methane footprint of Ahold Delhaize's US subsidiaries, they don't mention methane reduction plans on their websites. **At best, ignoring the group's climate targets and withholding emission reduction plans is negligent, and at worst, it demonstrates a willingness on the part of the US brands to impede the group's ability to meet its climate targets.**

Category 4: Food and Landfill Waste Policies

After agriculture and the oil and gas industry, landfills are the greatest source of man-made methane emissions globally.[26] Incineration is a bad alternative to landfill that releases many other harmful pollutants.[27] Ahold Delhaize brands can reduce food waste by exerting pressure up and down their value chain – calling on suppliers and consumers to reduce food waste.[28] Reducing food waste also can save the brands money because many waste diversion strategies increase supply chain efficiencies, ensuring that more product is sold instead of wasted.[29]

Only three brands scored points in this section, Albert Heijn earned six out of eight possible points, Hannaford scored four, and The Giant Company received two points in this section. Albert Heijn and Hannaford earned points because they do not incinerate or send food waste to landfills.[30] Albert Heijn also received points because it has a goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030.[31] The Giant Company received some points because it accomplished a 98% diversion rate for food waste from landfills and incineration in 2019 and has a goal to maintain a diversion rate of above 90%.[32]

The poor performance of Ahold Delhaize US brands in this section is surprising considering how widely each US brand promotes their own waste diversion initiatives, such as donating to food banks. The low scores in this section demonstrate that even cost-saving, low-hanging fruit methods of reducing methane emissions lack ambition, transparency, and consistency across brands. **This suggests that US brands are not being held accountable for even the most basic emission reductions by Ahold Delhaize.**

Category 5: Plant-Based Alternatives

Selling more plant-based proteins instead of meat and dairy products is one of the best ways for brands to reduce methane emissions. Ahold Delhaize recognizes that "a gradual shift towards more plant-based proteins is an important component of its plan to reduce carbon emissions and its impact on nature."[33] Brands could increase demand for plant-based options over meat and dairy by prominently placing meat alternatives alongside traditional meats on grocery shelves or by ensuring that plant-based options cost the same, or less, than meat and dairy products.[34]

Progress in selling plant-based alternatives is the only section in which all brands scored points, representing the most concrete progress made by Ahold Delhaize brands. Every brand offers a selection of private-label alternatives to animal-based meat and/or dairy products. However, US brands fared poorly against their European counterparts, only scoring between 2.5 – 5 points out of 20 - much less than Albert Heijn and Delhaize, which received 12.5 and 10 points.

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This may be due to the Ahold Delhaize policy requiring European brands to sell a 50:50 ratio of plant-based to animal-based proteins by 2030.[35] Albert Heijn and Delhaize are striving to exceed that target, and have committed to a 60:40 ratio of plant-based to animal-based sales by 2030.[36] For example, the Belgian-based Delhaize website states: "Delhaize has been supporting the shift towards a healthier and more sustainable diet for years by making plant-based products more readily available. The new "Plant-Based!" range, launched in 2022, is intended to encourage Belgians to adopt a flexitarian diet."[37] In contrast, not a single US brand mentions the benefits of transitioning to plant-based diets.

By increasing accessibility and affordability of plant-based alternatives, Ahold Delhaize brands can promote their customers' transition from animal-based proteins to plant-based proteins.

But Ahold Delhaize exempts US brands from corporate goals to increase plant-based sales.

Conclusion

The seven reviewed Ahold Delhaize brands vary significantly in their commitments and action to reduce methane and other greenhouse gas emissions. European-facing Albert Heijn is a clear leader for the group – scoring more than the rest of the brands combined. The US brands noticeably fill out the bottom end of the range, three of them (Stop & Shop, Giant, and Food Lion) scoring points in only a single indicator out of 18. The low scores of the US brands stand in stark contrast to the score received by Ahold Delhaize's group score in Mighty Earth's 2024 Methane Action Tracker, where Ahold Delhaize as a group scored 33 point and was ranked 4th out of the world's 20 largest retailers.[38] The company's US subsidiaries are performing poorly on climate compared to Ahold Delhaize at the group-level, yet the group has not established a transparent, time-bound emissions reduction strategy to bring all of its brands up to its standards. **It is unclear how, or if, Ahold Delhaize expects its US brands to contribute to the group's climate targets.**

We reached out to Ahold Delhaize's brands to discuss the results of the scorecard. Albert Heijn responded, but we received no acknowledgement from Delhaize nor any of the US brands. As a result, we can only guess the rationale behind the inadequate progress of the US brands, but the outcome is the same: the US brands are undermining the group's climate targets with insufficient action on methane and other greenhouse gas emission reductions, and they are not being held accountable by parent company Ahold Delhaize to improve. Ahold Delhaize brands in Europe prove that greater progress towards the group-level climate targets is possible, so inaction by US brands is inexcusable. **Until US brands take action to reduce methane emissions, Ahold Delhaize's net-zero commitment will remain an aspiration without any realistic chance of achievement.**

Implications

Reducing methane emissions may contribute to better performance amongst Ahold Delhaize US brands.

Ahold Delhaize's US brands are missing out on an opportunity by lagging behind on climate action. Businesses that prioritize sustainability goals in conjunction with revenue growth see greater total shareholder return compared to competitors that neglect sustainability.[39] This is evident among Ahold Delhaize's US brands. According to Consumer Reports, Hannaford is the only Ahold Delhaize brand to rank in the top 25 supermarkets in the US, based on consumer surveys of fresh food quality, price, and more. The Giant Company is the only other brand to make it into the top 50.[40] Hannaford and The Giant Company are the best-ranked US brands in our scorecard. This correlation is not an anomaly. A study by the Harvard Business Review found that Gen Z and Millennial consumers are 20% more likely to purchase brands they consider transparent over competitors. And the study identified corporate sustainability as a critical driver of trust and brand loyalty.[41] Ahold Delhaize brands could benefit financially by taking more action to reduce methane emissions and meet corporate climate targets.

Ahold Delhaize exposes itself to legal and financial risk by allowing some subsidiaries to lag on climate action.

Ahold Delhaize is accountable for ensuring that climate action is progressing meaningfully across all parts of its business. It is also accountable for the consequences of failing to meet climate targets. The legal risk for companies that contribute heavily to climate change is on the rise, and already certain food businesses, like Tyson and JBS, have been the subject of legal battles.[42] In the Netherlands, where Ahold Delhaize is based, KLM Airlines was found guilty of greenwashing because its weak efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions didn't justify the claims it made about its net-zero commitment.[43] Food businesses, like Ahold Delhaize, that release large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions may be under even more scrutiny now that the International Court of Justice asserted that inaction on climate change is a legal liability.[44]

Ahold Delhaize has released EUR1.8 billion of sustainability-linked bonds (SLB) that are dependent upon the company reducing greenhouse gas emissions by target years ranging from 2026 to 2036.[45] SLBs are a green finance mechanism that allow companies to accumulate large quantities of capital at low borrowing rates. Companies are subject to penalties if they fail to meet the targets identified in their SLBs - although the penalties are not always greater than the initial economic and reputational gains of issuing SLBs. That said, if Ahold Delhaize does not meet the climate targets identified in its SLBs, it will be subject to penalties, posing a potential financial risk. As a result, shareholders should be concerned about the lack of action from Ahold Delhaize's US brands.

Climate change is a risk to Ahold Delhaize; reducing methane emissions is the best way to mitigate that risk.

The cost of inaction in the face of climate change is too high to ignore, especially to food businesses, which are reliant upon a consistent supply of raw materials from around the globe.[46] Competitive and affordable prices depend upon consistency and productivity, which is exactly what is at stake as the climate warms. Researchers found that the most widely recognized outcome of climate change on the food supply will be reduced productivity at the farm level – for crops, grains, livestock, and more.[47] Temperature extremes, heavy precipitation, flooding, droughts, extreme storms, and more will drive productivity loss.[48] Additionally, natural disasters will deteriorate infrastructure and transportation networks needed to process and transport food. Ultimately, disruptions along the supply chain will follow, increasing food prices and food insecurity. All in all, it is estimated that global food supply chains will incur costs of up to $38 trillion by 2050 due to climate change.[49] In some way or another, these costs affect all participants in global supply chains – including retailers like Ahold Delhaize. In fact, in just 2024, Ahold Delhaize experienced "operational disruption and physical damage as a result of Hurricane Helene in the US and flooding in Eastern Europe."[50]

In its annual report to investors, Ahold Delhaize acknowledged that to mitigate climate-risk, the company must work towards net-zero emissions.[51] And to do that, Ahold Delhaize must ensure that all of its subsidiaries are taking their fair share of action to reduce methane emissions. Ahold Delhaize and its brands have not published comprehensive greenhouse gas emission reduction plans, but if they exist, they should make them publicly available and incorporate the following recommendations:

Recommendations

As a first step, brands should recognize the significant impact of methane on their emissions profiles and climate change plans, and raise consumer awareness of this important issue.

Brands should publicly acknowledge the impact of livestock methane emissions on climate change and articulate the need to support meat and dairy reductions in their stores to mitigate their overall climate impact. Incorporating methane emission reduction targets and plant-based sales increases into executive remuneration packages would help to focus senior leaders on further solutions related to methane reduction in supply chains.

To increase transparency in climate reporting, brands must:

- Implement annual public reporting of methane and other GHG emissions across Scopes 1, 2 and 3, as outlined in the GHG Protocol 2.0 methodology (with independent verification).
- Publish the methane emissions from meat and dairy products, to help inform relevant climate plans, and help consumers to make more informed decisions on product choices.

Brands should make climate action a top priority by implementing bold climate plans in a transparent and accessible way. This can be achieved by:

- Establishing and committing to a net zero target by 2040 or earlier.
- Adhering to science and setting methane reduction targets of at least 30% below 2020 levels by 2030.
- Adhering to AFi standards by implementing a group-wide policy of zero deforestation and conversion of forest risk commodities by 2025, including relevant cut-off dates.
- Making sure that the net zero emissions targets are backed by a comprehensive plan for the entire value chain, with time-bound interim targets and specific actions to achieve them.

Brands must increase their ambition and financial support for scaling plant-based products. They can do this by:

- Investing in alternative proteins, including an extensive and attractive own-brand plant-based product range.
- Setting a target of at least 60% plant-based versus 40% animal-based ratio by 2030, and regularly reporting on progress publicly.
- Supporting this with a price parity policy to ensure that alternative proteins and plant-based products are attractive to consumers.
- Shifting marketing efforts and food displays in stores to incentivize the consumption of healthy and sustainable plant-based proteins (including whole foods such as legumes and traditional alternatives, such as tofu) and away from meat and dairy.

Endnotes

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