Will the global focus on methane reduction detract from the global attempts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions?

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In recent years, the focus on methane (CH_4) reductions in the global climate negotiations has grown significantly. The 26th session of the Conference of Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) urged countries to consider further actions to reduce non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions, including CH_4, by 2030, which was reiterated by COP27 and COP28. This article discusses how an obsessive focus on CH_4 reduction is a serious distraction from the real challenge of limiting and reducing CO_2 emissions and masks the inability of developed countries to meet their commitments. Further, even with regard to reducing CH_4 emissions, the article points out that these efforts need to be placed within national contexts and circumstances. In particular, CH_4 emission reductions need to focus on energy, industry, and waste sector emissions rather than the agriculture sector to ensure that there are no adverse consequences for developmental imperatives such as protecting and enhancing small farmer livelihoods and ensuring food security. In this context, the article argues that India's actions on CH_4 are entirely consistent both with her national priorities and circumstances and with the foundational principles of the UNFCCC, which prioritize the importance of poverty alleviation and sustainable development for developing countries.

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