

Japan already asks its gas suppliers about methane. No one has yet asked about coal.

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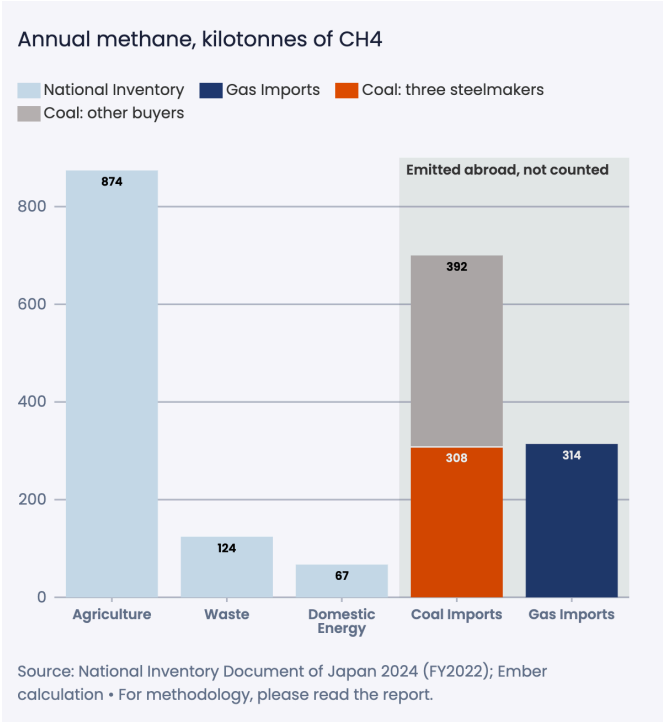
Coal mine methane adds a quarter to steel’s near-term climate impact, and almost none of it is counted

Mining releases methane trapped in coal; over 20 years it warms the planet about 80 times more than CO2. Coal mining releases roughly as much methane globally as the gas sector; for steel, that methane adds around 27% to the 20-year climate impact. The UN Secretary-General’s 2026 Call to Action on Methane names coal mining a “fix-it-first” priority for 2030, and metallurgical coal methane as “largely overlooked” in steel decarbonisation.

Japanese steelmakers’ coal carries as much methane as the country’s LNG

The 54.5 Mt of coal that reached Japan’s eleven blast-furnace mills in 2024 carried an estimated 308 kt CH4 – 4.6 times the country’s reported domestic energy-sector methane (67 kt), and about the same as its LNG imports (314 kt). None of it appears in Japan’s inventory, its Global Methane Pledge accounting, and whether any steelmaker’s Scope 3 captures it is unclear.

Japan has the know-how. Under CLEAN, LNG buyers ask LNG suppliers for upstream methane data through existing sales contracts, verified under OGMP 2.0, with JOGMEC aggregating the results. Two reporting cycles lifted project-level disclosure from 35% to 64%, with no new law or institution. The same trading houses and JOGMEC divisions sit at the centre of the coal supply chain.



	Governance Element	Governance Backstop	Secretariat	Buyer Coalition	MRV Framework	Core Actors	Commercial Lever	Current Outcome
LNG	CLEAN (since Jul 2023)	METI → JOGMEC	JOGMEC	27 companies (25% demand, 40% supply)	OGMP 2.0 + IMEO	Buyers, producers, JOGMEC, IMEO	SPA-linked disclosure	Project-level methane baseline (2025)
Coal	None	None	None	None	IMEO Steel Methane Program	Steelmakers, Trading Houses	SPAs & equity available	No disclosure

Recommendation

Japan should run a first CLEAN-style coal mine methane disclosure cycle, starting with the steelmakers and trading houses that already hold offtake and equity ties to the mines. Buyers should count that methane in Scope 3 and plan to cut it as part of their transition.

Methane doesn't read the label

Only [10%](#) of global hard coal production has ever had a methane plume attributed to it. In Australia's Bowen Basin, a mainstay of Japan's supply, [aircraft measurements](#) found open-cut mines releasing about 3.6 times what they reported; underground mines, metered at the shaft, came within 8%. Indonesia, Japan's second-largest coal supplier, is [barely measured](#) at all.

In 2024, the same Indonesia-to-Japan coal was 52% "for coking" to Japan's customs, 39% "coking" to Indonesia's, and 2% "metallurgical" to commercial tracking. Methane is released when the seam is cut, before coal is graded. A label this unstable says nothing about methane intensity, yet coal phase-out policies, finance taxonomies and disclosure frameworks still rest on it.

Global investors are asking

In June 2026, investors representing [US\\$9.85 trillion](#) declared steel value-chain methane a material risk and asked for mine-level measurement. Rules are moving the same way: the EU sets coking-coal methane rules by August 2027, China is governing coal methane at home, and from FY2028 Japan's GX Surcharge reaches imported coal, which does not yet cover the methane mined with it.

99.7% imported

Almost all of Japan's coal is [imported](#). Every tonne of methane released in mining it is on someone else's territory, and in no Japanese inventory.

US\$1.18 bn

Lent by Japan's five largest [banks](#) to metallurgical coal developers in 2022–24, with no methane conditions attached.

11 months

Until the EU's August 2027 decision on coking-coal methane. A disclosure cycle before then makes Japan's standard the first in Asia.

About Ember

Ember is an independent energy think tank that aims to accelerate the clean energy transition with data and policy. Its vision is a clean, electrified energy system for all. It gathers, curates and analyses data on the global energy system, publishing this openly and accessibly. It uses data-driven insights to shift the conversation towards high impact policies and empower other advocates to do the same. Founded in 2008 as Sandbag, it formerly focused on analysing and reforming the EU carbon market, before rebranding as Ember in 2020. Its diverse team brings together energy analysts, data scientists, communicators and team-builders based around the world in over 20 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Poland, South Africa, Türkiye, the UK and the US.