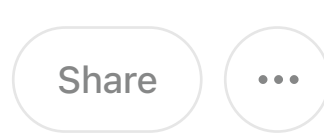
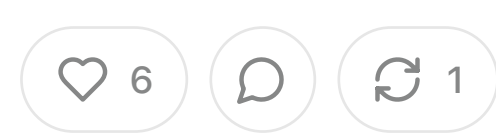


# Weekly Progress Roundup

US maternal mortality has returned to normal, scientists learned how to reduce rice emissions, some parasites have been eliminated, and more.

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## Maternal mortality in the United States has “returned to normal”

According to [new data](#) from the CDC, the US maternal mortality rate in 2023 was 18.6 deaths for every 100,000 live births, down from a local peak of 32.9 in 2021 and below the prepandemic rate of 20.1.

[Many news outlets](#) chose to headline the bad part of this story, which is that the racial gap in maternal deaths has widened. While it’s important to take note of which populations are struggling, we shouldn’t lose sight of the broader good news: American women of all races are dying from pregnancy and childbirth at far lower rates than a few years ago.

## Scientists learned how to reduce rice emissions

Rice farming is an underrated driver of climate change, responsible for roughly one tenth of global methane emissions. The problem is not the rice plants themselves, but the methane-emitting microbes (methanogens) that thrive in their flooded paddies.

A team of researchers in China has found a [promising solution](#). First, they identified two compounds with a significant impact on these microbes; fumarate and ethanol. The former enhanced methanogen abundance, and the latter inhibited it. By breeding hybrid rice varieties low in fumarate and high in ethanol, they were able to reduce methane emissions by 70 percent in field trials while achieving high yields.

## Guinea and Niger eliminated some horrific diseases

Last week, the World Health Organization reported that two African countries have defeated a parasite:

In Guinea, public health authorities [stamped out sleeping sickness](#), a parasitic disease carried by the tsetse fly. Sleeping sickness is easily treated early on, but if allowed to progress causes irreversible brain damage and, ultimately, death.

Niger, meanwhile, became the [first African country to eliminate river blindness](#), which, as its name suggests, can make you blind and is spread by flies that breed near rivers. The parasites in this case are long thin worms that burrow around in the sufferer’s skin.

Good riddance!

Thanks for reading Doomslayer! This post is public so feel free to share it.



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