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Submission to Zero Carbon Bill

South Taranaki is a district of small towns surrounded by farms. The inclusion of agriculture into the Carbon Emissions Scheme could have a very negative impact on our community.

Farming leaders and the business community who I have spoken with in our district are very concerned and raise the following points:

- The introduction of a carbon tax on agriculture is going to divert money from our towns to central Government. This would be very negative for our community.

- The science around agricultural carbon emissions is not precise or clear and there are many different opinions from scientists as to what is the affect. It is very important that any tax is accurately assessed before being applied and it would be very unfair to apply a tax using unproven methods. If our Council sent a rates bill to residents with a vague explanation as to how it was created, we would quite rightly be taken to task by Audit NZ and others.

- There is total frustration that riparian planting, shelter belts, small woodlots and native bush reserves, amenity planting are not taken into account when calculating emissions.

- There is also total disbelief that the huge amount of carbon absorbed by pasture is not part of the calculation. That is wrong and should be amended.

- There was also relief that it is now realised that methane emissions, which are considered more harmful than CO₂, are now very short lived in the environment and revert to CO₂ quickly making their impact much less than previously suggested.

Given the very significant lack of clarity around the science and the unfairness as to what vegetation is included in the scheme and the very negative affect on small rural communities, I would recommend that including agriculture in the Carbon Emissions Scheme be put on hold.

Regards

Ross Dunlop
Mayor – South Taranaki