Setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

Submission form

The Government is seeking views on New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change contribution under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

You can have your say by making a submission using this form or using the online tool available at www.mfe.govt.nz/more/consultations.

For more information about this consultation:

- Read our Consultation on New Zealand’s post-2020 international climate change contribution web page
- Read our discussion document: New Zealand’s Climate Change Target: Our contribution to the new international climate change agreement

Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.

Publishing and releasing submissions

All or part of any written submission (including names of submitters), may be published on the Ministry for the Environment’s website www.mfe.govt.nz. Unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submission, we will consider that you have consented to website posting of both your submission and your name.

Contents of submissions may be released to the public under the Official Information Act 1982 following requests to the Ministry for the Environment (including via email). Please advise if you have any objection to the release of any information contained in a submission and, in particular, which part(s) you consider should be withheld, together with the reason(s) for withholding the information. We will take into account all such objections when responding to requests for copies of, and information on, submissions to this consultation under the Official Information Act.

The Privacy Act 1993 applies certain principles about the collection, use and disclosure of information about individuals by various agencies, including the Ministry for the Environment. It governs access by individuals to information about themselves held by agencies. Any personal information you supply to the Ministry in the course of making a submission will be used by the Ministry only in relation to the matters covered by this consultation. Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish.
Questions to guide your feedback

Your submission may address any aspect of the discussion document, but we would appreciate you paying particular attention to the questions posed throughout and listed in this form. You may answer some or all of the questions. To ensure your point of view is clearly understood, you should explain your rationale and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

Contact information

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Objectives for the contribution

1a. We have set the following three objectives for our contribution:

- it is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution – both by international and domestic audiences
- costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately
- it must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?

☐ Yes
☐ No

1b. What is most important to you?

Climate change is a hugely important issue for the global community, may be the most important. International responses so far have clearly been inadequate and we are well along the path to an intensity of change that will greatly perturb global ecosystems and hence quality of life for humanity as a whole. Our contribution has to be ambitious because only strong ambition is going to get us to where we need to be. Whilst arguing for ambitious goals from other nations we must set a strong example. The costs and impacts of climate change in the business as usual scenario are likely to be catastrophic by the end of this century. Any costs and impacts that are less than the costs and impacts of the results of a business as usual scenario are worth absorbing. Our life-styles and
business activities will have to shift very significantly in order to achieve this. I have always been attracted to the concept of “contraction and convergence” as the only truly fair approach at an international level. Unfortunately I have not seen mention of this in your discussion documents.

What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

2. What do you think the nature of New Zealand’s emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?

Clearly the intensification of our dairy sector is increasing our methane emissions. Current signs seem to be that export of dairy products is not going to provide a stable and increasing income over the long term. Greater diversification of agriculture and especially into plant crops would be a more economically stable route into the future whilst reducing our methane emissions.

We are wedded to private cars and trucks. There is huge scope for lowering CO2 emissions by stimulating public transport, cycling and walking and by transporting goods by rail and coastal shipping.

There is huge scope for using the conservation estate to sequester carbon in forests. Native forest regeneration could be encouraged over wide areas and the health of existing forests improved by more pest eradication programmes.

We must endeavour to use the challenge of reducing emissions to stimulate new low carbon industries and forms of employment. Using coal to evaporate the water from milk is not one of these!

A focus on the above would allow us to set ambitious targets.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what do you think would be a reasonable impact on annual household consumption?

As the levels of consumption that are prevalent in most “developed countries”, including New Zealand, are part of the problem then reductions in unnecessary consumption must be a large part of the solution. This does not mean there is a parallel reduction in the quality of life. A start down this path would require it to be a significant part of public discussion. Education would also have a major role.

4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions (as outlined on page 15 of the discussion document), which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?
Most of your bulleted points on page 15 are attractive and would contribute to achieving an ambitious emissions reduction goal. I am not convinced that mass use of electric vehicles or of conventional vehicles using biofuel are good future options. They are excuses for maintaining consumerism in the transport sector (environmental costs of manufacture of vehicles and maintenance and expansion of motorways and other infrastructure, environmental costs of growing sufficient biofuel (if based on land plants)).

Summary

5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?

Have maximum ambition in reducing emissions. The unpredictable future technologies and costs should be ignored. This is the biggest issue facing humanity. As I understand it, the current international ambition to try to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Centigrade is not so clean cut as it might seem to many readers. Is it not a 66% chance of keeping it below 2 degrees? Would you trust your future to a 66% chance of “success”? I wouldn’t. And no doubt this is a conservative assessment of the potential dangers.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.

When your submission is complete

Email your completed submission to climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz or post to Climate Change Contribution Consultation, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.