Consultation on setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

Contact information

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Objectives for the contribution

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?   Yes

1b. What is most important to you?
The most important objective is that NZ's contribution is fair. NZ's contributions will be undermined if businesses migrate offshore to countries with no emission reduction targets but lower costs. Any trade agreements should include the ability for NZ to levy emission taxes on all imports that are not certified as having emissions mitigated at source.
This does not need to affect free trade agreements as even if the source nation does not have a national emissions reduction target, individual manufacturers could get certified to meet NZ standards, in which case their exports to NZ would incur no surcharge. The principles of free trade should be that local and offshore suppliers have access to the market under the same conditions, however if NZ businesses are taxed on emissions but offshore suppliers are not, this is no longer a level playing field, with foreign suppliers having an unequal advantage.
This would allow NZ to 'punch above its weight', by setting standards that manufacturers outside NZ would need to meet to export to NZ or face surcharges, so providing incentive for global action, and possibly a model for other countries to emulate.

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?
New Zealand has good opportunities to reduce emissions while actually enhancing economic stability and possibly improving the economy.
While direct agricultural transmissions may be challenging to reduce, secondary emissions related to transport and processing could be easier to address.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it's greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?
The biggest direct contribution to household greenhouse emissions is likely to be vehicle emissions. Many urban residents could afford to use smaller vehicles, and rural residents although likely to generate more emissions through transport are also more likely to have land that can partially be used to plant trees to offset some of their emissions.
Perhaps a way to impose fair costs would be to impose a tax on light vehicles based on their difference from median fuel consumption for the current year, and include this tax on second hand vehicle sales as well. This would scale as technology improves, or as more consumers choose more efficient vehicles. This would actually provide
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an incentive for households that reduce their carbon emissions and give people a choice. If they want to maintain consumption, they will need to make vehicle buying choices that reduce emissions.

A big reason for NZ emissions increasing over 1990s levels even though vehicles have actually become more efficient, is a nearly 29% population increase.

While immigration can benefit NZ, immigration should not be imposing costs on existing New Zealanders as a result of increasing emissions. Immigration and foreign investment policy should be targeted at immigrants and investors who are likely to make the smallest possible increase to emissions possible or possibly decrease them - eg by choosing to live in areas with public transport infrastructure, investing in green business, forestry etc.

Properly managed, it should be possible to avoid reduction in household consumption, although it may be necessary for households to modify behaviours, for example make more use of public transport, ride sharing etc. Targets should be set so that if households follow best practice in their use of public infrastructure to minimise their emissions they should experience little to no reduction in consumption.

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?

Due to NZ’s extensive renewable electricity resources, and extensive rail network, it would be possible to convert a great deal of the longer distance heavy transport network to renewable energy by electrifying the whole rail network. This would provide jobs, and has the advantage of using existing technology, rather than waiting for electrical propulsion suitable for widespread road transport. This would also provide protection from exchange rate and global petroleum price fluctuations.

Summary

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

The government should set targets using medium to best case usage of existing, mainstream technologies, which the expectation that as newer technologies become available, higher targets can be set.

Other comments

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