

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?

In answer to the objectives on Page 7 of the discussion document:

1. I consider that New Zealand's contribution should be both **fair and ambitious**. A 40% reduction along with the EU would be both fair and achievable here in New Zealand, but would require a distinct change of policy direction by both Government (nationally and locally) and individually as well. Such a change would require leadership and education of the population as to the difficulties that confront us as a nation with continuing global warming, and the need for humans collectively, and individually, to act to mitigate catastrophic warming.

2. I agree that the costs and impacts on New Zealanders as a whole need to be managed appropriately. I do not think that the current ETS does this at all well. The most successful schemes at managing the costs and impacts of adapting to Climate Change have been in British Columbia (and also in the now politically defunct) Australian Carbon Taxes. The former was instituted in 2008 at the height of the GFC. British Columbia now is the highest performing province in Canada with respect to GDP. The Carbon Tax increased steadily since its inception, has incentivized British Columbians to invest in good public transport (the Sky Train for the Airport to the City center of Vancouver is an example). The Australian scheme was only brief in its implementation and was only beginning to make an impact, but even now after its demise, Australian farmers are calling for its reinstatement. The redistribution of the tax to renewable energy, public transport, more efficient transport systems, and incentives for families and business to invest in renewables, better insulation of houses, and efficient energy usage, would ensure not only that the costs were understood but were being managed appropriately.
3. Just because oil may be low in price on any one particular day, does not mean that we do not have to pay for the burning of that oil many times over in later catastrophic events. It is false economy to ignore the externalized costs of burning fossil fuels, and **the costs need to be accounted, and accounted for now.**

While in general I agree with the objectives of the discussion document, I don't concur with the general tenor, which appears to be that we make as little contribution as possible, so as not to upset the general public of New Zealand and the farming community. People need to be apprised of the dangers of continuing business as usual, and life in the future will not be as rosy as it is now unless substantial changes are made.

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?

The planet does not distinguish between types of emissions – the overall effect of humans increasing GHG's is still the same. Noting that agricultural emissions make up almost half of New Zealand's total GHG emissions is simply a red herring. Methane (although it breaks down after about 8 years to CO₂ and water vapour) as a GHG, has a significant influence on the greenhouse effect, trapping wavelengths that are unaffected by CO₂. Furthermore, increasing drought is going to impinge directly on farming – particularly dairying – and to continue attempting to carry on business as usual in a deteriorating environment is foolhardy to say the least. Developed countries such as New Zealand have a huge responsibility to reduce GHG emissions, as it was they who created the problem in the first place. If New Zealand fails to take ownership of this, along with other developed nations we cannot ask others to bear the burden for us.

A target of 40% reduction in Gross Emissions by 2030 as set by the European Union, is the only ethical, realistic, and sensible target that developed nations can set. For many it is not enough, and I would reluctantly agree. But I believe that politically and with sufficient good will and education of the populations of all developed nations that such a target can be achieved. It may not be enough to save the Planet from catastrophic warming (2⁰C), for with less than 1⁰C we are already seeing signs of what catastrophic warming might look like. The global extreme weather events of the recent past are occurring with increasing frequency.

The choice of a 40% reduction Of Gross Emissions by 2030 is already agreed by an important sector of the global economy. If other developed nations also agree to this target, it more likely to be achievable. If others (such as New Zealand with high per capita emission rates) chose to plead special treatment, such a target goes out the window. We talk of a Global Economy, so we need to work as if it exists. In the Global village, all nations need to work together to combat Climate Change, not against one another

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?

I consider the Discussion Document to be misleading in its discussion of the costs of reducing GHG emissions. Bald figures are produced with no reference as to how they are obtained and what modeling was used to obtain them. If they are Treasury calculations, the ability of Treasury to predict even one year ahead from budget to budget is seriously inaccurate (the Prime Minister is quoted as saying that it is like trying to land a 747 on a pin head!) so I see no reason to trust a projection of 15 years hence. What we can say however is that if we do not seriously address this issue the consequences of increasing extreme weather events – such as “Sandy” and “Katrina” on the Eastern Sea Board of the United States, “Haiyan” in the Philippines, Drought in the Sahel and Western Australia (which has had inflows into its water catchments drop by 50% since 1970), the extreme European heat wave of 2004 causing the death of over 20,000 people, and on and on, will only increase. In New Zealand, as I outlined above, we are already experiencing the effects of Climate Change induced by human activity. Reduced production on farms measured in the millions of dollars, cities disrupted because of extreme weather, and in the Coromandel where I live, the extreme weather event which struck the north of the Peninsula caused so much damage that the entire budget for the maintenance of roads in the area was consumed in one event.

And we have not even begun to consider the consequences of sea level rise. The waterfront of Auckland (host to the high rise buildings of Vodafone, Microsoft and Air New Zealand, to name a few), is on reclaimed land where one only has to dig half a metre (the conservative projected rise of sea level in the next 70 – 80 years) to meet sea water. The cost of moving Auckland will be enormous. Other cities around New Zealand will fare much the same.

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?

All of the opportunities outlined in the discussion paper are feasible and will assist New Zealand to work towards reducing our GHG emissions. The sooner New Zealand works towards these goals the better. Already in Australia for instance 2.6 million Australians rely on Solar energy. Israel has mandated the use of Solar heating of domestic hot water since 1974. New Zealand has greater solar insolation than Germany, yet Germany has begun a huge installation of solar energy and has a target of 50% by 2030. New Zealand has an abundance of wind energy and already we have enough consented projects in the pipeline to replace Huntly. We should do it.

The main reason that New Zealand lags Australia and other developed countries in investing in renewables and reducing GHG emissions is our now iniquitous ETS that dis-incentivizes investment in renewables and incentivizes increased logging!

A proper price on Carbon would raise monies that could be reinvested in helping businesses and individuals work towards reducing their Carbon foot print, as is happening in British Columbia. Far from reducing their GDP, British Columbia's GDP has increased, while their consumption of fossil fuels has declined. Adaptation of new technologies and investment in low carbon transport systems is achievable. There are many instances of countries moving away from dependence on fossil fuels without suffering economic collapse, and these examples point the way forward. The quicker one moves to renewable energy, the greater the economic advantage.

Summary

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

The future uncertainties of new technology are minor compared to the known consequences of unmitigated global warming. The consequences of the melting of the West Antarctic Ice Shelf (which is in a parlous state), the continued rapid melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet, and the rapid decline of the Canadian Ice sheets should be sufficient for all to understand that life on Earth will not continue in the future, the way it is now. As of 2012, the melting of the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets added 11.1 mm to global sea levels from 1992. This amounts to about 20% of all sea-level rise over that 20 year period. About two thirds of the ice loss was from Greenland, and the remainder was from Antarctica. This figure is increasing, last year Antarctica contributed around 159 Billion tonnes of ice to sea level rise.

Other comments

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

The consequences of Climate Change are unrelenting and long term. It is thought that that the effects of Climate Change in New Zealand will be mitigated to some extent by our temperate and maritime environment, however we are already seeing adverse effects on our farming and our cities with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. In the Waikato, for instance, the frequent

summer droughts over the past 10 years has reduced grass growth by 20% from 15 tonnes of dry matter per hectare to 12 tonnes. This scenario is being replicated along the whole Eastern side of the country, with the Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, and Canterbury also experiencing troublesome drought. The medium term outlook does not look any better. As the current El Nino continues, the summer of 2015-16 promises an even more extensive drought than the last. From an economic point of view, the continued emphasis on dairying seems muddle headed. Dairying demands high energy input per unit of energy produced, and has a high demand on good quality water. With the likelihood of increasing drought in the future it seems to be the wrong way to go.

Even if, the consequences of global warming are not going to be as severe in New Zealand as elsewhere in the World it does not excuse New Zealand acting as a good global citizen in doing its part in reducing its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions along with all other developed and developing countries. New Zealand is currently the 5th Highest emitter of GHG per capita in the world, and we continue to grow our gross emissions rather than decreasing them. This is hardly the behavior of a responsible and global citizen. Europe has committed to a reduction of 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. That is an ambitious target for them, not having the abundance of hydro-electricity that we have. However they have goals and plans to meet that figure. Here we have, what can only be described, as an abortion of an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). The ETS as it is now constituted, has no effect on half of our GHG emissions (farming), and it currently awards polluters, and penalizes those who would attempt to work constructively in reducing GHG's. There is **no** plan to incentivize New Zealander's to work individually, or collectively, to reduce their GHG emissions. The cost of a cup of coffee for a tonne of Carbon does not do it.

The Planet and the people on Earth, can no longer wait while Governments play chicken as to who is going to act first on combating global warming. Now is the time for positive action by all; including Governments owning up to the need for collaborative action across Nations.

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.