

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



Copy of your submission

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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 fairness so that all emitters (particularly in the agricultural sector) meet the full costs without any taxpayer subsidies. Ambitious targets are needed set in such a manner that everyone is motivated to take action now because of the urgent need for such a response. A target based on current scientific knowledge should be set to ensure that global warming is kept below the 2 degree rise above pre-industrial levels.

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?

Agriculture is the major contributor to New Zealand's emissions (almost 50% of our total emissions) largely through the breeding of animals for food. Not only is this an inefficient means of food production but it has also led to large scale deforestation and degradation of water quality and rivers particularly in areas like Canterbury. Because farmers are excluded from the ETS there is no incentive to reduce emissions, as the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has observed, and the taxpayer is expected to pick up the tab for an estimated \$1.3bn. Given this country's historic economic dependence on agricultural production this represents a big challenge to conventional thinking: this issue is too urgent to rely on mitigation measures which may not be available for up to twenty years and whose efficacy is uncertain. The most effective way to reduce agricultural emissions is by reduction in stock levels through a move to non-animal based types of farming.

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 would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?

If the current level of greenhouse gas emissions is not reduced the potential costs through rising sea levels and climate-related natural disasters could be expected to be significantly higher than the cost of addressing greenhouse gas emissions. Based on calculations of the Royal Society of New Zealand emissions from industrialised nations need to be reduced by 80-95% by 2050 relative to 1990 a target should be set of at least 40% by 2030 relative to 1990.

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?

Given the scale and impact of animal-based agriculture on New Zealand's emissions excluding any measures to reduce that impact is a significant omission. The simplest and most immediate course of action would be to reduce

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current stock levels, particularly dairy herds, in combination with incentives to convert to less polluting and more sustainable forms of primary production.

Summary

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

New Zealand cannot afford to continue on its present path: to continue as a major producer of dairy products and meat runs the risk of an economy threatened by significant regularly occurring natural disasters: droughts, storms, flooding. Now is the time to diversify into new low carbon activities which are likely to work to our economic advantage if we get in ahead of other countries.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
It is ironic that the Government is talking about reducing emissions on the one hand while subsidising or encouraging the exploration and extraction of yet more fossil fuels including the dubious process of fracking. Oil and coal need to be left in the ground and subsidies applied to clean energy - it is surprising how little use is made of solar energy compared with a country like Germany - and other renewable initiatives on which a low carbon economy could flourish.