Submission to the Climate Change Contribution Consultation, Ministry for the Environment

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?

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1b. What is most important to you?

1 and 3

It is essential that we set a meaningful target, e.g. 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 together with a plan of action with annual steps towards that target.

Since 1990 our emissions have increased by 21% and are predicted to rise a further 50% if we continue on our present path. We will only meet our current target by buying emissions reduction units from previously Soviet states. These are seen by many countries to be fraudulent. They were never intended to be a substitute for taking action in one’s own country. Furthermore, buying emissions reduction units caused our domestic carbon price to crash, and the ETS was rendered useless. Polluters pay only a few cents per tonne. In other words at present we are not taking any meaningful action to reduce our emissions. This cannot continue if we want to retain any respect from the international community.
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 increases in our current emissions are largely caused by government policies in farming (intensive agriculture), forestry (we are cutting down twice as many trees as we are planting), roading (rather than rail and public transport), and energy (subsidies, funding and tax breaks for fossil fuel industry)

A target of 40% below 1990 levels of emissions by 2030 is achievable if government adopts the following policies:
- Place an immediate moratorium on fossil fuel exploration and phase out all subsidies, funding and tax breaks to the fossil fuel industry within 10 years. Legislation to progressively reduce the use of fossil fuels would lead to a real carbon price, greatly benefitting tree planting.
- Commit to 100% renewable electricity in 10 years.
-立法 that all areas of energy (electricity, heating, transport, industrial use) must come from clean energy sources by 2050.
- Switch the $12 billion road building programme to investment in rail and public transport.
- Prioritise solving import and infrastructure needs for hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Harness the enormous potential in plantation wood waste for transport fuels which would create thousands of jobs and reduce our oil import bill.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

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

The discussion paper talks only of the cost of action to reduce emissions, but the cost is really in not taking action. We risk increased extreme weather events like droughts and floods, acidic oceans and sea level rise. Treasury estimates the cost of not acting as $52 billion. Drought in 2007/8 cost $2.8 billion, in 2013 $1.3 billion. Insurance will greatly increase. Also the discussion paper touches only lightly on the benefits of lower emissions – clean air, more liveable cities, lots of jobs in clean technology and forestry, a healthier population, less dependence on foreign oil. The intention in the discussion paper to buy international carbon offsets to meet a higher target makes up much of the cost to households. With a genuine plan to meet a higher target through a switch to 100% renewable fuels, a real carbon price, mass tree planting etc as spelled out above, the cost to households will be greatly reduced.

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?

We need to do all of these, The most important single step is to signal to industries that all areas of energy (electricity, heating, transport, industrial use) must come from clean energy sources by 2050.
Summary

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

It is clear that we must act decisively to reduce carbon emissions in ways we have not done so far. The steps I have outlined under question 2 are not dependent on future technologies. They simply require a legislative framework and existing technologies. Such a framework will then encourage future technologies to develop.

Other comments

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

Climate change has to be taken more seriously than any other issue we have ever had to consider. The price of failing to act is the planet and all its species. The longer we delay taking real action, the more costly the adaptation is going to be. Therefore we need a cross-party climate working group and the writing of our emissions target into domestic law – an action plan with annual steps clearly stated. I would like to see an independent Climate Commission created to advise government on policies and hold it to account. We would then have a stable climate policy endorsed by all political parties, so that businesses could make good long term decisions. Instead of being one of the highest emitters of carbon dioxide per person in the OECD, New Zealand would then have a climate plan we can be proud of.