

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?

Fairness and ambitiousness should be from the perspective of 'developing' countries, which have contributed little to the current problem, but stand to be the most affected. We need to commit to rapid reductions to allow a slower transition for these less privileged counties.

Costs need to be covered by those profiting from supply of fossil fuels and other polluting materials (e.g. fertiliser) and distributed evenly across the population, to compensate for the rising costs of goods and services, and ensure the most financially vulnerable are not further impacted.

Guidance to a low or net no emission country needs to be ensured by a legal entity created to hold governments, councils and companies accountable for targets and regulations.

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 is one of few countries that has a very high % of renewable electricity generation. Within a short time frame we could realistically increase efficiency and renewables to be predominantly 100% renewable in electricity generation.

NZ has a high rate of car ownership and usage, which gives large potential for gains through enhancement of public and active transport, and encouragement of low emission vehicles.

NZ has a huge land resource, and in order to continue a dairy industry, we can balance this with an aggressive forestry policy. A fair carbon price and scheme, unlike our current scheme, would reward forestry and encourage the industry to grow. Also, much land unproductive for agriculture and difficult for extractive forestry can be planted in pine and then left for native regeneration through the exotic forest, creating a rapid and permanent carbon sink.

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?

With a fair system of carbon pricing such as fee and dividend (<https://citizensclimatelobby.org/carbon-fee-and-dividend/>) the reduction of household consumption will occur naturally as the carbon price increases. The dividend paid to individual citizens and residents will compensate for the price increases, but individual savings will become very financially beneficial. Framing this question around household consumption reductions gives the impression that families will have to suffer consequences of a transition to low carbon; this is not the case; families could be better off making savings while living more sustainably.

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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?

The most likely to occur depends on government. Climate change mitigation cannot effectively be spontaneous and individual led, due to basic principles such as The Tragedy of the Commons. Government must direct our response through multiple avenues, on behalf of all New Zealanders, both living and still to be born. So which I think is likely to occur is irrelevant, only what should occur is relevant.

The most important opportunities are not weak non binding intentions to make future reductions, but solid policies that will reduce emissions or capture carbon. These are: Drive Forestry. Announce the closure of Huntley. Establish a renewable energy push to make this closure happen. Regulate efficiency for appliances and vehicles. Legislate electricity buyback by distribution companies from households / businesses. Stop fossil fuel exploration and new developments. Stop driving dairy beyond the capacity of the environment.

All of the above actions will be supported by a functional genuine carbon pricing scheme. The Kyoto scheme's cap and trade mechanism can provide incentive to reduce emissions, but in NZ it has been weakened to the point that it is ineffective, and can even allow profit from pollution. A fee and dividend scheme would be fairer, more controllable, and waste less potentially public money in a trading industry.

Summary

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

NZ should set the most ambitious target available, in proportion to the scale with the enormity of the climate change issue. No potential future 'magic bullets' should be considered, as these may not materialise, and will cost precious years if we delay.

Other comments

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

Climate change is a hugely challenging issue because the impacts will be severe, and action is needed now (or earlier preferably) but we are not yet seeing much of the impacts of the problem. This is why world leaders must act courageously to make the best decisions in the interest of those living in our country in 50 and 100 years and beyond, even though some of their current voters may not wish to see this change. Politicians have the power to solve this problem, but only by looking beyond the financial focus for the present, and making decisions by which history will judge them favourably.