

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?

That we make a fair contribution. Along with every other country in the world we must do our utmost to avert the disastrous temperature rise that is threatening to do lasting damage to our planet if we don't get it right or we don't do enough. Our emissions target should be 40%. We will be challenged to meet this target, but if none of us are prepared to make tough choices and to implement fundamental changes in the way we do things, the Paris Convention in December will be a setting for compromise and weak solutions, and the consequences of this, the climatologists are clearly telling us, will be disastrous for the future of our planet.

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 nature of New Zealand's emissions and economy both create unique challenges for us as a developed country. The agricultural sector which drives our economy is generating almost half of our total national greenhouse gas emissions, and while government supported research programmes are underway, there is little opportunity to reduce these biological emissions in the immediate future. Similarly, we have an unusually high proportion of our electricity generated from renewable sources, so that this sector is not available to make substantial emissions reductions, unlike many other developed countries. However, every country will be challenged one way or another, if the Paris Convention achieves an international agreement that will be strong enough to meet the goal of holding global temperatures at no higher than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. We are a 'relatively wealthy' country. We are a peaceful and stable society. These are factors that should make it easier for us to make changes in the way we run our economy and live our lives. We need to build on our strengths to meet the challenge of a higher target than the government is proposing.

The government's proposed plan of buying reductions or paying to offset emissions on international markets sells New Zealanders short. A much better long term investment for New Zealand would be a policy of positive development and change in our economy, encouraging and supporting innovation, investing in low carbon projects and implementing low carbon policies. The government's planned policy removes the opportunity for New Zealand to have a clean, low emissions economy in the future, and to be working towards this goal in the years immediately ahead. It removes the opportunity for New Zealand to be a major player in innovation. The Discussion Document mentions this as the 'downside' (Discussion Document Section 2, p.11) of the government's plan. In fact, this is a very serious downside. The transition to low emissions economies and the implementation of low emission technologies will happen largely overseas, while we continue much as before, probably slowly increasing our output of harmful gases into the atmosphere, and bargaining on international markets to be allowed to continue to pollute. But we are a clean, green country, not a dirty, green country, are we not? We have got a lot of mileage out of our clean, green image. Would we have to sacrifice that as well? By heading down this path, the government is undermining the image that New Zealand has traded on for many years now, and depriving our country of the opportunity to keep pace with global developments, working towards a low carbon footprint and being at the forefront of technological advances. Rather than spending money on purchasing carbon credits or emission reductions, it would be preferable to invest in making our country a better place to live.

Our international reputation is important. At present our total contribution as a country to global gas emissions is quite small – 0.15%. However, our level of emissions per person is high, one of the highest compared to other developed countries. In the future we could well find ourselves in the position of having the highest per capita emissions of all developed countries.

The greenhouse gases that our agricultural sector produces have a very harmful effect on the atmosphere. While carbon dioxide may be *'the main driver of global temperature rise over long term'* (Discussion Document Section 2, p.11), methane and nitrous oxide have a shorter cycle (decades rather than centuries), but they have a much higher GWP (global warming potential) than carbon dioxide and their impact on global warming over the next two decades will be significant.

To continue to run our economy in its present form will fail to deliver benefits long term to New Zealand and to the world. New Zealand needs to diversify agriculturally to reduce our dependence on the dairy industry. Growth in dairying presents an immediate problem in increasing rather than reducing emissions, without viable means to mitigate them for at least a decade. Our economy would also benefit from being less vulnerable to fluctuations in dairy prices overseas, and we would benefit from reduced pollution of our waterways and reduced land degradation.

Diversification would be advisable not just in the agricultural sector but in the economy as a whole. This would be another advantage of committing to a policy of meeting our reductions target through changes in our domestic economy rather than by using international carbon markets. With the sort of changes climatologists are predicting for New Zealand as a result of global warming, agriculture becomes more risky and production becomes less reliable. To quote from the New Zealand Farmer magazine of March 2013, *'long, dry spells are forecast to double by 2040 as temperatures continue to rise... Experts warn it could spell the end of farming as we know it'*. Although the global demand for food is set to rise to an estimated 70% higher level than the present by 2050 (Discussion Document Section 2, p.10) our capacity to supply food to world markets may well be severely compromised.

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?

It is important to avoid an unfair distribution of cost (objective no.2), and it is also important to avoid placing extra cost on households that are unable to afford additional financial burdens. If families are unable to feed and clothe their children adequately, they are going to have no spare money for extra costs. Ways to help beneficiaries and low wage earners meet increased costs for essentials like petrol and electricity would certainly need to be provided.

Current and past government policies have not worked well for too large a sector of the New Zealand population and government measures to implement policies to reduce the extremely high level of inequality in this country are well overdue. I do not think it will be possible to face the costs of meeting an emissions target (especially one as high as we should be proposing) without making changes to our tax system and providing more support for the 622,000 New Zealanders who are said to live in poverty.

A carbon tax should be a part of key policy. If this is combined with a system of tax rebates, there is a real incentive for changes to be made towards a greener economy and lifestyle.

It is important to keep in mind the cost of **not** reducing greenhouse gases. What impact on New Zealand households, farms and businesses will future climatic disruption have?

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?

I do not support the use of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme as a tool to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, or as a tool to assist New Zealand in meeting its emissions reduction target.

All the domestic policies suggested on p.15 of the Discussion Document would have my wholehearted support. It would be difficult to rank them in importance because they would all contribute in different ways, leading to incremental advances in New Zealand's progress towards a low emissions economy.

I'd like to see more along similar lines. Improve waste collection systems to separate out biodegradable waste from non biodegradable. Set up more methane collecting systems at landfills. Help make electric cars readily available at a price we can afford. Invest in major improvements in public transport. Make cycleways in all our cities so cyclists are safe and can avoid busy roads. Change city plans to create more high density housing and more compact cities. Increase the support available to households to become more energy efficient with better insulation and solar water heating. Subsidise compost bins. Provide more community gardens. Develop more tree-filled parks and reserves.

Summary

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

Research that is being done to reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions in the agricultural sector is valuable work that is likely to yield useful results in the future. However, results will not be available in the immediate future, and for this reason, other ways to reduce our emissions have to be found. Expansion in the dairy industry is counterproductive in the present timeframe.

Government support of research into other useful areas of technology would be desirable in order for the uptake of new ideas to be able to happen as quickly as possible, and in order to maximise reductions in emissions. For example, current research into biofuels and their use for transport. At 17% of our total national emissions, transport is a sector where much useful work could be done.

Other comments

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

The New Zealand government carries a huge level of responsibility into the Paris Convention in December. Our future and the future of our children and grandchildren is in your hands.

A cross party initiative would be an excellent way to share ideas, pool resources and combine efforts to meet the crisis that climate change presents to the world. Make wise decisions. Think long term and not short term. Look after all New Zealanders, especially the ones who most need help. Give us a country that we can be proud of and that is genuinely clean and green. Leave a worthwhile legacy for your grandchildren and ours. We have five, and we love each of them dearly.

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.