

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? No

1b. What is most important to you?

Overall, the proposed objectives are uncertain and could lead to the setting of unambitious objectives in the name of "fairness" and cost management.

The objectives for the setting of New Zealand's emission target should be:

- New Zealand shows ambition, leadership and sets the example for ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to the international community
- New Zealand actively contributes to a low emissions world, for the protection of people's well-being, now and for the future
- New Zealand targets drive New Zealand policies, now and over the long term

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?

This question should only be relevant to the pace of transition to achieve the targets, and not to the setting of the targets themselves. Climate change is happening, and WILL trigger change to New Zealand's economy and the nature of the country's emissions.

Economic assessments have showed that the costs of doing nothing far outweigh the costs of acting now. In an island nation like New Zealand, with so many coastal settlements, the costs of climate change are bound to be extremely significant. Using today's costs as a reason not to act now is extremely short-sighted and ill-advised. Although agriculture is a major source of emissions, there are opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions over the short to medium term by reducing its reliance on transport fossil fuels: with a mostly urban population, the development and promotion of public transport, active transport modes and alternative fuels could go a long way in reducing GHG emissions. Better and more efficient homes could also assist in reducing emissions, while improving New Zealanders' health and well-being.

Moreover, New Zealand could play a leading role in innovating for lowering agricultural emissions, and, at the same time, diversify its economy to enhance the country's resilience to future changes to the world's food sector (greater demand for vegetables and grains), and to the risks facing the agricultural sector (more frequent droughts and floods).

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it's greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?

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It would have been helpful to include a reference to the study on which the estimates published in the discussion document are based on. Chances are that it is based on very strong and unverifiable assumptions, and that it does not take into account the inherent dynamic of a country's economy, and the many ways the country could achieve significant reductions in its GHG emissions.

Several matters need to be raised:

- Creating policy constraints for achieving ambitious targets will change the status quo, this could result in costs. It will also result in opportunities.
- Any costs resulting from climate change policies need not be borne equally by all New Zealanders; income redistribution, or tax structure, can be a powerful mean to "mitigate" the impact of economic costs on people's well-being, and on consumption levels.
- Some policy initiatives, for the reduction of energy emissions for instance, could also have multiple benefits, notably in terms of health and safety, which will have a positive impact on the economy.

More importantly, tackling climate change is a temporal trade off matter: how much efforts are we willing to pay now, for future generations' sake? I'd like to think that we are ready to put a lot of efforts in.

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? New Zealand will certainly benefit from all those opportunities.

We could also try anticipate how the transition to low carbon economy will shape demand, and innovate accordingly.

Summary

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

Meaningful targets, complemented by well-designed policies, should fuel innovation and new technology.

National targets are not enough as a framework to tackle climate change on a global basis, and New Zealand should advocate for; and participate in, international programs and funds for the development of much needed new technologies.

Other comments

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

Reducing emissions should be preferred to mitigation wherever possible. Commercial forests in New Zealand have significant adverse effects on New Zealand's environment: it reduces catchment yield, which could aggravate some of the issues resulting from climate change, harvesting often leads to significant sediment run-offs in river, and it does not provide good habitat for New Zealand indigenous species.

I would like the government to consider all those factors before enabling too much forestry development.