

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



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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?

New Zealand has a reputation as a progressive country embracing change, e.g. when it came to universal suffrage. For climate change, I would like to see New Zealand take a similar stand -- progressively addressing the issue, implementing policies that make a real difference to the country's emissions. This would be good not only for climate, but also for NZ's standing in the world and even its economy. Considering its natural resources and low population density, NZ could lead the developed world in the transition to a decarbonized economy.

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?

A near-term target should be to decarbonize our electricity sector. We are 4/5 of the way there already. Solar power is now the cheapest form of electricity available and ideally complements hydro. However, NZ has next to no installed capacity in solar power. This is readily achievable within ~ten years, with the right policies in place to encourage uptake, as has been done e.g. in several European countries. Emission targets should follow a realistic yet ambitious trajectory, again based on political encouragement, to promote the use of electrical vehicles. This would over time reduce our dependency on imported oil.

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?

It does not have to cost much. If we did not decarbonize our economy, billions of dollars would need to be spent on fossil fuel exploration. This money could simply be redirected towards environmentally sound alternatives. At this point, we do not need to discuss a general reduction of consumption. Putting an adequate price on carbon emissions would encourage a transition towards cleaner alternatives. At present, the price is too low (here and abroad) to promote much change.

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?

1. Decarbonisation of the electricity production through expansion of solar, wind, and geothermal production. This is distinctly within reach and should occur soon.

2. Gradual transition to an electrical vehicle fleet. Owning an electrical car is still quite unpractical in this country. This would not cost much to get going.

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3. Outlawing fossil-fuel based home heating in new homes. There are alternatives to that.
4. Transition from the most climate-unfriendly agricultural practices (such as flying NZ cherries to Taiwan) to more sustainable alternatives.

Summary

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

There is no way to completely take future price fluctuations into account. We can only base this on present costs and make educated, conservative guesses about future evolutions. But prices can be influenced by the market, i.e. if policy is in place to promote uptake of a technology, economy of scale often means that technology becomes cheaper.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
In a recent ranking of countries for sustainability and climate-friendly policies, NZ ranked very poorly for some aspects. I would much like that to change. The outside world, and even many of us, have the impression NZ is very unambitious in addressing climate change. This needs to change, particularly considering that we are in a very good position to do so.