31 May 2015

Submission Climate Change Contribution Consultation
Ministry for the Environment
P O Box 10362
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Sir/Madam

In answer to Question 1 regarding key objectives for our contribution, I do not agree with Objective 1 that focuses on appearances for “international and domestic audiences”. In my opinion we should instead be firmly guided by the contribution we have to make to meet the emissions level described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) where the Representative Concentration Pathway for stringent mitigation (RCP 2.6) is outlined. I quote “RCP2.6 is representative of a scenario that aims to keep global warming likely below 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures”. This scenario is characterised by 40-70% global anthropogenic GHG emissions reductions by 2050 compared to 2010. Reference: IPCC Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers.

Objective 2 discusses affordability – we will not have a choice and should accept the costs involved in RCP2.6. We can prioritise resource allocation to meet the costs, if we wish.

In 2012 we were 25.4% over our 1990 emission level of 60,641.4 gigagrams CO2 equivalent. There had been a 2% increase from 2011 to 2012 alone. Source document: NZ Ministry for the Environment Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1990–2012 ME1148.

The NZ Climate Change Target Discussion Document is limited in that it does not provide clear information on the levels of reduction New Zealand has to make from 2020 onwards in order to meet RCP2.6, given the emissions we presently have in 2015. There will be mitigation from forestry and the like however this is not clearly spelt out. While the document does describe the EU and US targets in a footer, it would have been valuable to have seen these explored in the NZ context.

I support a target level of at least 30% lower than 1990 emission levels for beyond 2020. I calculate that if we make a 40% reduction in emissions from 2010 levels, to follow RCP 2.6, then this is equivalent to a minimum of 30% below 1990 emission levels. While it could be argued that we would be disadvantaged by adopting a high target too soon, a high target shows us as having leadership on a major global issue especially as we also have territory and a role in Antarctica. Resources can be re-prioritised and made available to meet the costs involved.
If New Zealand has an ambitious emissions target that meets RCP 2.6 this will provide us with many opportunities. It will stimulate development of clean green opportunities as outlined in the discussion document. Our tourism and export food trade industries would benefit from a strong stance on emissions, adding “back bone” to our clean green image.

An ambitious target along with prioritisation for agriculture R & D spending and reallocation of existing R&D spending will drive development in the agriculture sector.

New Opportunities.
I support

- more electrification of transport in railways and in passenger vehicles, given that we have high hydroelectric generation capacity, especially if Tiwai aluminium smelter is closed.
- higher energy efficiency standards for building construction
- increased conversion of land use to forestry
- further controls and strategies to reduce soil erosion – loss of soil carbon and sequestration opportunity from loss of topsoil. Our rivers flowing through agriculture regions can have high silt and mud loadings e.g. the Waipaoa river in the Gisborne district.
- Increased pest control to protect native forests
- Increased research and development in the agriculture sector to reduce emissions following up on a wide a range of strategies to improve biological fertility of soils, (thereby reducing requirement for nitrogen fertiliser) sequester carbon in soil and reduce nitrogen fertiliser use.
  Develop production systems using deep rooting pasture species such as lucerne, chicory and other productive species to store carbon in the soil.
  Further emphasis on development of plant breeding to develop grass species that contribute more carbon to soils.

I strongly support a high climate change target due to the importance of this issue for mankind and all ecosystems on the planet.

P E Mulligan