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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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Hannah Northover</th>
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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?

☐ No /somewhat. – I would want to add a bit (based on my notes below about what’s important to me):

  - it is seen as a contribution that is at least fair, and is ambitious, contribution – by both international and domestic audiences
  - costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately equitably
  - it must guide New Zealand over the long term in leading the global transition to a low emissions world.

1b. What is most important to you?

**Equity:** It is important to me that the fairness needs to be relative and internal. Those who have benefited more from the activities which have caused climate change need to now accept more of the impact. The impact on New Zealanders should not be uniform, but those who have done best
under the current system of unsustainably high emissions should make an equitable (higher) contribution to curbing emissions and to investing in a low emission future.

Leadership: I am keen for New Zealand to be a world leader in taking the significant, urgent, bold steps that are required to address climate change. The objective of an internationally “fair” contribution sounds good, but I fear that it might lead us to be ineffective, getting stuck on whether others are doing enough. Instead “fair” should be a minimum standard. We need to be taking steps we really believe are significant enough to be effective.

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 should aim for zero CO2 emissions, as well as reductions in other greenhouse gases. And we should be starting now, not in 2021. This is a symbolically important, and realistic, target.

On our way to zero CO2 emissions, we should aim for at least the minimum effective target of a 40% reduction in net emissions below 1990 levels by 2030.

Our small population base, our ability to re-forest, our neighbours’ vulnerability to climate change, and our historical and current responsibility for emissions all mean that we should be doing our best to address this crisis. We need to move swiftly towards clean energy and forestation.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that the emissions associated with transporting our exported agricultural products are taken into account in global measures. It may be appropriate that these are counted in our own emissions, so that we can market our exports as truly carbon neutral. (We need to be willing to support international carbon labelling of goods. If we are carbon neutral, we can support that labelling with less fear.)

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?

High on average (at 40% below 1990 rates), but equitable rather than uniform.

(And it need not be seen as a cost. It has to be seen as addressing a cost. Climate change costs are too high to ignore, potentially much higher than the costs of addressing climate change. Instead it needs to be seen as re-directed investment. We were willing to guarantee finance companies, but finance companies are much less important to our survival than the climate is. We need to invest significantly for significant returns, given what is at stake.)
I believe that we need to be willing to change our lives significantly ourselves rather than to wait for climate change to choose less desirable changes for us. However, I believe it is important to make the effects equitable. Policy steps need to aim to spread the impact equitably rather than equally. It is not appropriate for average annual consumption to reduce while some parts of the community continue to consume at a greater rate than is sustainable. Policy steps to externalise the environmental costs of consumption should target luxury consumption. Increased basic incomes and subsidies to low income households to assist them to meet the costs of lower-carbon consumption should be viewed as investment in a future.

I am keen for our government to invest significantly in addressing the pace of climate change and moving NZ to a low emission future. Investment may in fact allow for a positive effect on some households (for example by creating new jobs which may increase annual household consumption for the currently lowest-consuming households).

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?

None of these opportunities seem likely to occur and be maximised without government intervention and investment. But all of them can and should occur, through government investment and planning, in order to reap the significant benefits. The most important benefits of those listed would seem to me to be:

- security gained from lack of dependence on oil
- chance of improvement in natural environment through cleaner energy and planting
- planning and preparing for the effect climate change will have on the popularity of our products, including by moving to green technology early

Summary

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

Aim high, by setting targets for significant reductions. This is too big a deal for us to fail.

Start now. Start investing now in ways that will reduce our emissions and make the distribution of the effects more equitable.

Other comments

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

Urgency: we need action before there is international agreement. It’s great that the target will be out before December. We should also start working towards it immediately.
Cross-party political consensus is required! Climate change action must be de-politicised. It’s too important for party politics.

Climate change legislation: passing climate change legislation could work to de-politicise climate change action, and to support a long-term strategy.

Climate survival is the top priority, before free trade even: we need to retain our ability to legislate for climate change action, and we need to support other countries to also take the steps they need to take. We should not expose ourselves to international legal action for taking action on climate change. If the TPPA is signed, it must make it clear that climate protection is a legitimate reason for local subsidies. Subsidies for fossil fuels need to go, and pollution costs need to be externalised, but we need to protect our ability to act on climate change without ending up in an investor-state dispute resolution process. Those investing in NZ need to be clear that the climate is our top priority and that it is in the climate arena that we most want to be seen as a good, fair, reliable neighbour and partner – more importantly than in the trade arena.

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.