

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?

To guide New Zealand in a transition to a low emissions world. This is essential for the well-being of everyone (and other species) on the 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?

It is morally wrong to argue that New Zealand cannot reduce emissions significantly because it has an economy which benefits significantly from livestock farming and that emissions from this source are difficult to reduce. This is like a country that is reliant on tobacco farming opposing measures to curb smoking across the world because it is bad for its economy. New Zealand either has to invest heavily to succeed in reducing emissions from livestock, or shift its economy away from livestock production. Coupled with this should be pro-active, government-supported research and production of new or improved low emissions technology, to diversify the country's economic base and take advantage of the global demand for more energy efficient ways of living.

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?

I challenge the assumption that households will be 'less well-off' the higher the target that is chosen. For one thing, this compares the situation with the status quo. In practice, it is likely that the effects of global warming will have a negative impact on some households, e.g. in terms of flood risk and other weather-related damage, and our agricultural industries also will do less well with more extreme weather conditions, so there is a strong likelihood that financial security will be reduced if we do not take adequate action to reduce emissions. In addition, there will be economic benefits to many households if, for example, there is better insulation in houses throughout New Zealand, by way of lower fuel costs. If commercial buildings were also better insulated, this would also lead to long term savings, which could be passed on to consumers or shareholders.

Also, the discussion document bases its assumption on costs on a need to buy carbon credits. I believe that we should be doing much more than proposed to reduce actual emissions here, which may be less costly and might be translated into alternative sources of income.

4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions (as outlined on page 15 of the discussion

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document), which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand? All are possible and can be achieved with the right will and good leadership from government. It is best to diversify our efforts to maximise the opportunities that arise.

Given the geography of the country, we are unlikely to reduce the need/desire for individuals to travel, so investment in low carbon transport, both private cars and more freight and passenger trains, is particularly important. This will have advantages for reducing pollution too, with the associated health benefits.

Summary

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

We need to be positive and optimistic about what is possible - the human, natural and economic cost of failing is too high for half measures. This is not unrealistic - humans have always shown incredible ingenuity in the face of crisis or when their are financial gains to be had.

Other comments

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

The consultation document focuses far too much on the financial consequences of setting too ambitious a target and too little on what the consequences will be for New Zealanders and others if the world fails to stop climate change.

In global terms, our contribution to emissions is small because of our small population, but we are an articulate, wealthy, well-educated nation with one of the best lifestyles in the world. In the same way as we have shown leadership in fields such as our anti-nuclear stance, we have a responsibility to put our very best efforts into reducing our carbon emissions significantly - not only because we each need to 'do our bit' but because we can be an example to others of what can be done. This may well have beneficial financial outcomes for us as well, if we are able to develop successful technology which other countries want to buy.

Carbon trading schemes have so far proved very ineffective and are in any case an abdication from our own responsibilities. We must find positive measures to reduce our own emissions here.

The opportunity to comment on this topic is much appreciated - thank you.