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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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?

☐ Yes
☒ No

1b. What is most important to you?

Climate change is identified by health professionals worldwide as a leading threat to global health. This is mediated both through direct threats such as extreme weather events and heat, but also affect our access to food and safe drinking water. It is essential that we act fairly and decisively with an ambitious contribution, consistent with our status as a developed country and economy. We must aim for global carbon neutrality by 2050, and the sooner we begin this process the easier it will be to achieve these targets. It is also essential that in addressing climate change we recognise that
developed economies like ourselves have emitted far more greenhouse gases than developing economies, however developing economies will bear much more of the impact from climate change.

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 is a developed economy, and we have all benefited from the economic growth afforded by past carbon emissions. Now alongside other developed nations we must take the lead in calling for at least 40% carbon reductions compared to 1990 levels by 2030 and at least 95% by 2050. To do anything less would be morally unjustifiable and also require much faster, more costly and harder to bear emissions cuts at a later stage.

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?

The cost of climate inaction or delay far exceeds the cost of emissions reduction. Reduction on household consumption need not affect wellbeing, and indeed has the opportunity to both increase this and household health. An example would be reduced consumption of meat and dairy products and increased transport by walking and cycling will both improve health and wellbeing and decrease costs.

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?

Half our emissions come from agriculture. Although opportunities exist to decrease the carbon intensity of livestock farming, and these must be explored, we should not remain so heavily invested economically in livestock farming. Market incentives enabled the conversion of land from forestry to farming, and from less intensive (sheep and beef) to more intensive (dairy) farming. If internalising the full cost of greenhouse gas emissions reverses these incentives then this is just optimising the market and should not be resisted. Having an economy reliant on selling a single product (milk powder) to a single market is poor business sense, irrespective of the climate impacts.

The other half of our emissions comes from transport, industry and energy. Technology and policies already exist to reduce these emissions, and much simply requires political will to implement them. Examples include a carbon tax, favouring active and public transport over road building, insulating existing housing stock, ending coal mining etc.

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

Climate change is a leading threat to human health. The precautionary principal requires that we act now, without waiting for certainty about future technologies and costs. In addressing the health threat of climate change, changes in behaviour, priorities and processes will be much more important than reliance on uncertain future technologies.

Other comments

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

Health and wellbeing needs to be at the heart of government climate action. I recommend:

- A Parliamentary climate change and health summit.
- Health sector leadership on mitigation and adapting to locked-in climate impacts on health
- Involvement of public health expertise, and Health (including equity) Impact Assessment (HIA) to be routinely undertaken to inform key climate-relevant policies.
- Climate commitments that protect and promote health in the climate-vulnerable Pacific regions, and among the socio-economically deprived sectors of our own society.

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.