

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



Copy of your submission

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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?

The most important objective is one that is fair to all; where those that are responsible for the emissions are required to meet the full costs and are not subsidised by others. Targets should be ambitious and ones that are set in such a way that motivates all to take action now.

A fair contribution is one that sets a target that is based on current scientific knowledge and will ensure that global warming is kept below 2°C rise above pre-industrial levels. It would also be one where all emitters meet the cost of their emissions and specific sectors, such as agriculture, are not subsidised by the tax payer.

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 clear from the information provided that the major contributor to New Zealand's emissions is agriculture comprising almost half of all total emissions. The majority of these emissions is from the breeding of animals for food. This is an inefficient way to produce food and is responsible for significant changes in land use that has led to deforestation and degradation of lowland water quality.

Currently the farming sector is not included in the Emissions Trading Scheme and so have no incentive to reduce their emissions. New Zealand taxpayers are expected to meet the estimated \$1.3 billion costs for these emissions. It is appalling that those that make a profit from the production of these emissions are not required to meet the costs. As the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has stated "if polluters are not paying for their emissions they've no incentive to reduce them".

All too often animal agriculture is ignored in discussions relating to climate change with such statements as "we all need to eat" and "you can't stop animals doing what they do". The discussion document outlines some mitigation measures that are being researched. However, these will not be available for use for up to 20 years and may not prove effective at all. As outlined in the document emissions for this sector have been able to be reduced for a short period by the reduction of herd size caused due to drought. Therefore the most effective way to reduce emissions from this sector is through reduction in stock levels by conversion to other non-animal based forms of farming.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it's greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?

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What you have failed to outline in your discussion document is what the affect will be to New Zealand if we do not reduce the current level of greenhouse gas emissions. The potential costs through sea level rise and climate induced natural disasters would be significant and have been shown in overseas studies (Stern Review) to be far greater than those costs required to address greenhouse gas emissions. The reality is that to do nothing or even very little, will cost New Zealand far more than addressing this problem now.

Regarding what target should be set: Based on the statement by the Royal Society of NZ that emissions from industrialised countries need to be reduced by 80-95% by 2050 relative to 1990, then a target of at least 40% by 2030 relative to 1990 should be set.

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?

Given the size and impact of animal agriculture on New Zealand's emissions it is a significant omission not to include any measures to reduce its impact. By far the easiest and quickest opportunity would be to reduce the current stock levels particularly in the dairy sector and combine that with incentives to convert to less polluting forms of primary production.

Summary

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

New Zealand needs to focus on the certainty that to do nothing and to continue on the current path of being a dairy and meat producer to the world will lead to a country that will face significant natural disasters; droughts, storms, floods, all of which will affect the very production that the country relies on. New Zealand needs to divest itself of these old world paradigms and look to diversify into new low carbon activities. What these are, who knows, but by encouraging innovation and development in new clean technology areas rather than continuing to subsidise the current polluting sectors would be a far more effective and efficient strategy to address climate change.

Other comments

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

I also consider that the NZ government should stop subsidising the exploration of oil and coal. It is absurd that this document discusses targets to reduce emissions whilst the government is actively encouraging the exploration and extraction of yet more fossil fuels. These fuels need to be left in the ground and the subsidies applied to renewable initiatives that would lead us to a low carbon economy.