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?
I agree with some hesitation, because ‘fair and ambitious’ may be interpreted in varying degrees, and the costs of action are highlighted strongly in your consultation document while the costs of inaction are almost totally ignored.

Of the three, I guess the third point would be my highest priority, to set us on a path to be a zero emission country by 2050.

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?
I think we are rich in renewable energy potential, rich by global standards, and have so far shown little leadership. Agriculture shouldn’t be our excuse, it should be another reason why strong action is taken. We can easily be an agricultural nation without such high emissions, with more focus on cropping and viticulture for example, or even lamb instead of dairy. I think we should be leading the world in our ambitions, and I think we are entirely capable of achieving 40% or more by 2030, and zero emissions by 2050.

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?
Considering we are projected to get richer between now and 2030, I would be completely comfortable to give up on all future gain in GDP, which is far more than the projection for even a 40% reduction as outlined in the discussion document.

What is missing is the balanced assessment of costs. The cost of inaction is far higher than the cost of action, and therefore I think an ‘ambitious’ target of 40% is more than likely to be a lower cost approach than the weaker targets. It will also spur economic opportunities for New Zealand in green technology and other industries including tourism and agriculture.

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?
All are likely to occur to some extent. I think the third and fourth point are very important. Energy security will be improved through reducing reliance on limited supplies of fossil fuels. And equally important, I think our health and...
wellbeing isn't tied to GDP, and I think we can be a happier and more prosperous nation, even with a lower GDP.

Summary

5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?
Model the uncertainties accurately, and follow the precautionary principle. The biggest risk comes from too little action, not too much action, so be very ambitious in order to minimise climate risks facing our future.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
I would also emphasise that we shouldn't rely on purchasing carbon offsets, and a vast majority should be met through domestic reductions, where there is far more certainty on the longevity and accuracy of the reduction. I think a maximum of say 10% should be allowed through international carbon offsets.