

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



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## Contact information

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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?

Reducing net emissions so that we do not contribute to catastrophic 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?

In a way, they are irrelevant. Failing to set strong reduction targets simply because we have a small population (and thus fairly low \*gross\* emissions) is unacceptable. So too is avoiding setting strong reduction targets simply because we happen to have an agricultural economy.

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?

Significant emissions reductions will not necessarily lead to dramatic decreases in GDP/total consumption (see the Stern report). However, if necessary, we should be willing to face substantial short-term reductions in economic welfare to avoid catastrophic climate change.

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?

Increasing forest sinks seems the most likely strategy to actually occur, but is the least important. Using trees to absorb carbon dioxide temporarily delays the enhanced greenhouse gas effect, but those trees will eventually either rot or burn, releasing the stored carbon dioxide. In other words, once carbon dioxide is released into the carbon cycle, we cannot simply remove it again by planting trees - the idea that growing trees is the *deus ex machina* to save us from climate change is unfortunately not really true.

Transitioning to greater use of renewable energy and electric transportation (point 4) seems the most important. Points 3 and 5 are too vague for me to state how likely they are.

## Summary

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

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Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mo Te Taiao*

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target?

We should be aware that the presence of uncertainty is NOT an excuse for inaction. Rather, uncertainty means that the impacts and costs of climate change could be even higher than currently projected. We need to act now.

Other comments

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

Climate change is happening, and it is virtually certain that this change is occurring due to human activities. New Zealand's record on climate change is an embarrassment. Our per capita emission rate is one of the highest in the world, despite the fact that we market ourselves as "clean and green". Excusing ourselves based on our small population (and thus relatively low gross emissions) is unacceptable. We need to set an example to the world, including larger countries like China and the USA.