

Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill

Introduction

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill.

We request an opportunity to present an oral submission to the Select Committee.

RWNZ supports New Zealand's continued efforts of addressing the severity of climate change and taking action as a leader in environmental sustainability. We believe it is in the best interest of rural communities, New Zealand, and the world to ensure the environment remains healthy and secure. This Bill is hugely pivotal for New Zealand agriculture, and believe it is imperative to receive as much feedback possible from the members of agricultural sectors. We have surveyed our Members asking their opinions about the Bill, and how it will affect their lives in rural communities. We were particularly interested in how our Members receive information about upcoming legislation.

General Comments

The Zero Carbon Bill means serious change for the farming industry if enacted. Members of rural communities are worried about their livelihoods and change this Bill will cause. They are hesitant to support a legislation they do not know clear facts about. They need proof that these reforms will work to make a difference in the environment. Reliable scientific research is required by the public to fully understand the Bill and what it means for rural communities.

Specific Comments

1. Emissions are not just an agricultural issue, but a concern for the whole country and world. Other industries release high amounts of emissions but are not included in the Bill, including travel and waste management from landfills. Doing nothing is no longer an option, and we need everyone involved and doing their part to combat climate change.
2. Farmers want to make environmental improvements and help reduce greenhouse gases. They understand the importance of having healthy land and environment since their livelihoods depend on it. The stigma that they are "degrading the environment" is simply not true. Many farmers have proved time and time again that they are "eco champions" and are open to new practices that are well researched and clear.

3. Many Members are sceptical that the methane targets are not reachable without severely damaging the agriculture sector and therefore rural communities. They are eager to help, but want confirmation that their livelihoods aren't in jeopardy. They are open to practical steps to reduce carbon emissions.
4. Changing farming practices to lower emissions is possible without hurting the agriculture industry, but not without aid from the government. Research assistance and technological developments are required for any environmental change to occur.

Feedback

1. RWNZ would like to see a holistic plan from the government on how we, New Zealand as a whole, are supposed to reach these targets. The lack of a plan is causing concern and frustration within rural communities, and to an extent putting a wedge between forestry and the meat and dairy industries.
2. RWNZ believes more education is required about the Bill and its implications for the public, directly from the government and experts. Media outlets are simply reporting what is being said by sector groups and not the actual scientific research being done. Honest information regarding the Bill's objectives will provide clarity to concerned farmers and rural families.
3. RWNZ encourages media to educate the urban population on what agricultural sectors are accomplishing to help combat climate change. These stories of leadership within the rural area will help mend the rural and urban disconnect and motivate everyone to do their part for the environment.
4. RWNZ calls for an increase in assistance from the government for farmers. Technological developments are happening, but need to be made known and available to farmers in order to make their business more efficient and sustainable for all. Constant and honest research is requested to keep farmers updated on the best ways to reduce their emissions and stay running.

About Rural Women New Zealand

1. Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities and has an authoritative voice on rural environment, health, education, technology, business and social issues.
2. RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural residents, workers and families have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development.

3. RWNZ is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World and as such upholds all United Nations, ILO and WHO conventions and outcome statements as they relate to women and rural women in particular.
4. RWNZ would like to draw particular attention to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13, Climate Action, which takes urgent action to combat climate change and its devastating impacts.

Yours sincerely,

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