



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

National Office
Level 4 Central House
26 Brandon Street
PO Box 25-498
Wellington 6146
(04) 473 7623
www.ncwnz.org.nz

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**Submission to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on
Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change**

Introduction

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 Nationally Organised Societies and National Members. NCWNZ has 31 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies as well as some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to work for the well being of women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members.

This submission is written by the Environment Standing Committee based on input from branch members and NCWNZ policy. It has also been reviewed by a member of the NCWNZ Board. This submission is compiled from responses from 24 Branches of NCWNZ.

NCWNZ has policy dating back to 1990 expressing its concern regarding the increase in climate change. Many submissions on this and related subjects have been made over the years. This present submission continues that long history of interest which NCWNZ members have taken in climate change matters.

Specific Comments

What do you think of the Option for increased research funded by Government and Sector, p.26?

The majority of respondents agreed that research is of prime importance, and must involve agricultural sectors.

Members also responded that the level of funding is too low for rapid progress, and the way research is funded at present is counterproductive. There is a need to make it possible for collaboration rather than have CRIs and scientists in competition. The competitive model works against getting top quality research when the 'most effective price' becomes a key determinant in what contracts will be funded.

How important is it that the proposed Plan of Action includes an ongoing process to adapt to climate change, p.30(7)?

It was universally agreed by respondents that climate change problems are the most urgent globally and nationally, and that any proposed action must give priority to climate change effects.

NCWNZ members cited the fact that New Zealanders rank 12th in the world for emissions produced per annum on a per capita basis. This statistic is something members are not proud of and it underscores the requirement to take action to change our status. Recent findings by climate scientists indicate a reduction of 60-90% greenhouse gases needs to be achieved to prevent further increase in the global temperature, or to achieve some level of temperature stabilisation. Members feel it is critical therefore that the reduction of greenhouse gases must be the primary result of any action, particularly in the context of sustainable land management.





Do you have any comments on the proposals and ideas about the Government, local government and sectors working together on the proposed Plan of Action, p.40 (15)?

All responders agreed that the first priority was an information campaign. Sweden mailed an information package on climate change to every house in the country, and now has one of the best records of response to climate change.

An information campaign is needed so people can see how they fit into the solutions for averting climate change, particularly in New Zealand's context. The changes required of people must be achievable by the majority, particularly when time sensitive. Many people want to make a difference to the current situation, but require leadership and guidance. The development and use of incentive-based systems can be used as one means of achieving change in people's practices, whether they are rural farmers or urban office workers.

On the surface of it, the proposals for central and local government and sectors to work together to develop and implement the action plan appears appropriate. Previously, the methodologies used by central government to institute taxes, such as the "fart" tax were undertaken in a manner that caught the affected community off-guard and naturally resulted in retaliation. There does need to be improved communication and reasonable timeframes applied so that affected communities can have the opportunity to discuss and examine the policies on the table. It should also be recognised that there are "communication gaps" between policy-makers located in central Wellington and the 'directly' affected communities, who frequently live in the rural community. Addressing this gap may not be as simple as involving local government (as a regional communication point of government) in talks, it will require legitimate and transparent discussion with bodies representative of rural interests.

Further, the problems associated with climate change are everyone's problem and so everyone should be involved in the solution. This may mean that everyone will also have to meet the costs of research, not just the specific industry or sector where the particular problem arises. NZ's economy is dependent on the rural community, for example with benefit being directly and indirectly derived from those living in urban areas. It is therefore justifiable to suggest that any dealings relating to climate change and sustainability need endorsement from all New Zealanders, as we are dealing with matters of 'national importance'. Consultations with specific sectors only, will not necessarily result in the support of the rest of the community, which is what responding to climate change will require.

Are there other options for addressing greenhouse gas emissions you would like to put forward, p.56(17)?

The majority of responders thought that at least some regulatory measures were essential, since voluntary measures have not worked yet to reduce emissions. However, there was some support for both being used, with a transition period to regulatory measures.

Choice 8 : RMA standards to control emissions, p.56(18).

There is concern that farmers/forestry owners demanding carbon credits for post 1990 forests, when NZ is currently in deficit of at least \$120 million a year (at present figures), is moving carbon as a commodity in the direction that NCWNZ does not support.

NCWNZ would be greatly concerned if energy and resources were invested in bickering over who gets paid carbon credits considering the urgency with which our national problems have to be addressed. Further, such a development moves the issue away from solution-finding.

Choice 10, p.56 (19)

- 1) Seeking least cost solutions could mean that better solutions are not used. It can be preferable to pay more to get a more effective solution.
- 2) There could be rates relief for land covenanted for conservation purposes. Such land enhances soil and water conservation with reduced cost to local body services.



- 3) One branch questioned whether there was any planning to assist Pacific Island peoples whose islands are disappearing under the rising ocean. Planning should start now for environmental refugees. There was a remit proposed by New Zealand passed last year at the International Council of Women to this effect.
- 4) Members pointed out that this is the first year that more trees are being removed than planted, and this is being done to provide for even more dairy cows. Some in the South Island have found that net profit stays the same in spite of retiring country and reducing size of herd. NCWNZ suggests that increasing dairy herds be stopped immediately. One response from a permaculturist said that farmers must look to net profit not gross profit; he also said that the nitrogen inhibitor has limited use, and does not work well.
- 5) One responder said there needs to be a change of attitude – farmers accept taxpayer maintenance and fixing of rural roads, but some will not even plant bush or trees above to stop erosion of roads. Farm plans are voluntary, and often end up in a drawery.
- 6) Some responders said that there could be a greater promotion of and support for Kiwi-made, purchasing from within the 100km limit. New Zealand produces some of the best food, wine, etc., in the world. Having imported goods may appear to be the privilege now – but if you lived on the other side of the world having New Zealand produce would be the privilege, and rightly so as we have won a truckload of awards. In the future, kiwis will be able to enjoy more of the locally produced goods that attract a premium from the rest of the world.
- 7) It was universally felt that all parties in Government should co-operate on climate change policy. Should a whole-of-government approach be adopted for developing solutions to climate change in New Zealand, NCWNZ would urge political parties to reach consensus on climate change; its impacts, sources and relevance to New Zealand at this time.

Information over the years, which has compared New Zealand's performance with other industrial nations, can distract the public from readily embracing what needs to happen here and now. Likewise, comparisons between carbon levels over this planet's existence, coupled with the identification of large sources of methane production that we lack the tools to ever change, particularly as they are part of the natural cycle of this planet, do not add value to our finding solutions.

Summary

NCWNZ is heartened that the Government announced its commitment to addressing the impacts and causes of climate change in New Zealand. The NCWNZ membership is likewise committed to laying an active role in finding solutions, hence the adoption of sustainable development as a target focus in September 2006.

Note: no signatures or designations on original document.
Christine Low served as National President during this period.