

How to write a submission: farmer guide

B+LNZ makes submissions to central and local government when proposed policy changes significantly impact our farmers and/or the sector.

While our submissions are informed by farmer engagement, we encourage farmers to write their own submissions to complement our advocacy.

It's important that decision-makers hear your real-world examples of potential impacts on farm and in your communities. Individual submissions carry real weight and can ground a proposal to what it means in practice.

Before you start

- Do your research on what's proposed (you might like to check B+LNZ's position).
- Make sure you provide the information required to accompany your submission – you may need to provide your contact details and information such as who the submission represents (eg individuals or others such as family, corporate farm, catchment group etc).
- Check the closing time and date.

In general

- Keep your submission brief and focused.
- Use examples.
- You don't have to respond to every part of the proposals.

We have created the following steps (using the 'FARM' approach) to help you write a submission that has real impact.

F Farming system – briefly describe your farm to set the scene

This section helps policy makers understand your context. Types of information to include:

- why you're making a submission
- how long you and/or your family have been farming the property
- details about your farm:
 - where you're farming (catchment/region/district)
 - land type (flat, rolling, hill or high country)
 - farm type (breeding, finishing etc. You may need to explain what stock classes you carry over the year, if this changes, and why)
 - if the property is under development – future aspirations and motivations.
- (if relevant) any environmental management you've already done or would like to do, such as:
 - fencing waterways, wetlands, or native bush
 - native planting and riparian strips, QEII covenants
 - erosion management – e.g. retired erosion-prone land, space planting trees
 - if the farm has a Farm Environment Plan or is part of a catchment group.

A

Address and respond to the proposals – support, oppose, suggest changes

Outline which parts of the proposals you want to comment on (refer to page numbers in the consultation document where possible).

If the consultation document contains questions: answering these is a good way to keep your submission relevant to what decision-makers want specific comments on - this will make your submission more effective. You don't have to answer all the questions.

Note which of proposals you like (support), which you dislike (oppose), and why. It's important to mention both because other submitters and may hold differing views. Policy and decision makers need to hear both sides of the debate.

You can also support in part or oppose in part, and suggest changes or alternatives. Recommend specific changes where you can. Some proposals might be too broad, and detailed suggestions may not be possible. Be clear about what benefit any change will make.

- Use sentence starters like:
 - *I **support / oppose** the overall intent of the proposal to.... because Therefore, this provision should be **retained / removed**.*
 - *I support an approach that maintains the viability of New Zealand's sheep and beef sector and rural communities. I believe that the proposal **does / does not** achieve that.*
 - *I am concerned about the potential economic and practical impacts of [proposal/rule] on sheep and beef farming....*
 - *I **support / oppose** [proposal/rule] in part. The provision should be **amended** as follows....*
 - *I **do / do not** support this provision. It should be changed to better.... This could be done by...*

R

Relate the impact - explain effects and implementation issues on your farm

This is one of the most important parts of your submission.

- Describe how the proposals would work, or not work, on your farm.

Here are some questions to consider when writing your submission:

- Will the changes impact your bottom line or your farm's financial viability? If so, how?
- Would it require major changes to your farming system or stocking rates?
- What will be the wider impacts of the proposals if you have to change your system significantly, or even sell? For example, on you, your family, staff, contractors or community.
- Do the proposals encourage improvements, or do they add regulatory costs for no benefit?
- Can you foresee any unintended consequences of the proposals?

Specific examples are more persuasive than broad statements.

- Include actions and costs to implement the proposals as evidence to back up your points. For example:
 - *To comply with [proposal/rule], I would need to.... [e.g. reduce stock numbers by X, fence X km of waterways/bush]. I estimate this would cost \$X.*
 - *This would deliver little or no benefit because I already manage this risk by.... [e.g. existing fencing, have a farm plan, low stocking rates, avoid grazing sensitive areas]*
 - *The cost and effort required to.... would outweigh any measurable gains.*

M

Make it real - examples, examples, examples

B+LNZ submissions can draw on the B+LNZ sheep and beef farm survey statistics, national and regional economic data, and legal and policy analysis, but examples that come directly from farmers on the land are very powerful because they show how policies play out on the ground.

Bring your submission to life by using:

- photos
- maps
- diagrams.

- Ensure you label them, explain what they show, and why they're relevant.

Many policy makers have limited experience with farming systems and visual examples help improve understanding.

Finally, thank you for your efforts!

Your voice counts.

If you need further support with your submission you can contact B+LNZ for advice.