

B+LNZ Submission to MFAT on New Zealand's approach to international climate negotiations (COP28)

What is this consultation all about?

This consultation is an opportunity for New Zealanders to have their say on the negotiating mandate for COP28. The negotiating mandate guides New Zealand's participation in international climate change forums including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP). The 28th COP (COP28) will be held in the United Arab Emirates in November/December this year.

Why is B+LNZ submitting on it?

Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) submits on government policy that affects sheep and beef farmers. We represent sheep and beef farmer's interests and aim to ensure policy development is done in a way that is sensible and does not unfairly disadvantage the sheep and beef sector.

While climate change policy that directly influences sheep and beef farmers is made at a domestic level, this is influenced by what is agreed internationally.

The consultation contained questions relating to specific areas of climate policy. Our submission only covered the issues that are relevant to our sector.

What do we want to achieve?

While we have concerns about domestic issues such as afforestation and what appropriate targets for methane should be, this consultation focusses on issues being negotiated at an international level.

Coming into COP28, there are some key areas of focus for the negotiations, including the result of the first Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement which aims to assess the world's progress towards achieving the purpose of the agreement.

In 2025 countries will set their second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC2). The Paris Agreement requires each country to prepare a NDC, which sets out the emissions reductions that they are aiming to achieve.

Currently, these NDCs are mostly submitted as a Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO₂-e) using GWP100. We know that the GWP100 metric overstates the warming impact of methane when emissions are stable or falling, and therefore is unfit for the purpose of comparing long-lived and short-lived emissions.

In our submission we outlined what we believe the New Zealand negotiators should be focussing on at COP28. These are:

- Agreement on guidance for future NDCs to be set by gas as well as WP100 to provide greater clarity on warming impacts.
- Agreement for emissions to be managed based on their warming impact rather than through a GWP100 carbon dioxide equivalent.
- Recognition of the importance of ruminant agriculture for international food security.
- Recognition that New Zealand already provides a model for other countries to follow in regard to its unsubsidised, economically efficient, sustainable red meat production.

- Recognition internationally that forestry offsets should not be used in place of meaningful cuts to long lived gas emissions, especially when they impact food production.
- Recognition that if New Zealand wants to take a leadership position internationally on tackling agricultural greenhouse gases we need to demonstrate that it can be done in a way that does not impact food production.
- That NZ should take a leadership position on agricultural greenhouse gases and work with likeminded others on issues such as GHG metrics.
- Agricultural trade reform (and in particular the reduction of environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies)

Why did we focus on these areas in our submission?

B+LNZ wants to see recognition at an international level that ruminant agriculture has an important role in maintaining food security and can be done in a sustainable way. We believe that New Zealand pastoral agricultural systems already provide a model for others to follow as our red meat has a greenhouse gas footprint that is among the lowest in the world, manages biodiversity, has some of the highest animal welfare in the world.

Because of this, we support the New Zealand Government taking a leadership position on agricultural climate change and suggest that a good place to start would be an international coalition that recognises the short-lived nature of biogenic methane and manages it appropriately.

This would not be the first time that New Zealand has taken a leadership role internationally and we are already doing so with the Agreement on Climate Change Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS). We were also a founding member of the P4 (now CPTPP) trade agreement, demonstrating that great things can come from a small group of likeminded countries working together.

New Zealand is unique in our emissions profile – our electricity sector is already mostly renewable and therefore a significant proportion of our emissions come from agriculture. For most other countries, this is not the case, and therefore they are not focussed on agricultural emissions.

If New Zealand is to be seen as a leader in addressing climate change, we need to do this in a way that others will follow, and this means protecting food production. For many other countries, food security is also a national security issue, something that has only increased as a result of COVID-19 related supply disruptions and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Our current approach of allowing emissions of long-lived gases to be offset by planting trees on productive farmland is unlikely to be seen as a model for others because of its impacts on food production. In a time of growing international food insecurity this approach does not position New Zealand as a responsible member of the global economy.

New Zealand's approach to push this problem onto other countries by seeking to create overseas carbon markets to offset our emissions is environmentally, socially, and economically reckless. We should be seeking to reduce long-lived emissions to zero rather than offsetting them.

What else is B+LNZ doing to ensure farmers voices are heard?

B+LNZ also works directly with the New Zealand Government to ensure our voices are heard. Our environment team submits on domestic climate policies that will directly affect farmers.

In addition to this, we commission research in order to support our positions – such as the Life-Cycle Analysis of sheep and beef production and the ongoing reporting on afforestation.

How does B+LNZ work with other organisations representing farmers?

B+LNZ is a member of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), who will be attending COP28. By joining with other beef producing organisations and companies from around the world, we have a stronger voice while avoiding the significant costs of attending COP28.

The GRSB is well placed to advocate for sustainable beef production and at last year's COP in Egypt managed to obtain speaking slots on various panels to discuss the role of agriculture and climate change.

The GRSB will also be attending COP28 and we are continuing to work with them to ensure our views are heard.