



**We believe in evidence
over ideology.**

**Our farmers are world leaders,
you do not break the backbone
of our economy.**

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IT'S WITH US.

Democracy**NZ**

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OUR POLICY: Agriculture and climate

Background

Agriculture accounts for 82% of New Zealand's exports. Farming is the backbone of the economy; we need farmers to be successful if we want New Zealand to be prosperous.

Over regulation is putting massive financial and mental stress on farmers, with many seeing no alternative but to leave farming. Agricultural emissions pricing, and introducing Significant Natural Areas (SNAs), an Indigenous Biodiversity National Policy Statement, a new Freshwater National Policy Statement and Resource Management Act (RMA) reform will combine to significantly damage to the rural economy.

The dramatic expansion of carbon farming is destroying food-producing land and replacing it with pine trees. This does not benefit rural communities or the economy, and will further increase the cost of food, and living.

Farmers are frustrated, councils are overloaded, and the Government is developing policy with little understanding of the cumulative effect on farmers. There is an over emphasis on rules and restrictions and not enough focus on finding new ways to achieve better environmental outcomes.

New Zealand needs to take a sensible approach to climate policy. Recent extreme weather events have highlighted the need to invest more in climate adaptation to protect the billions invested in infrastructure, food producing land and property. We also need to protect our food producing land from being turned into carbon forests, which harms our wider economy and rural communities. And we need more transparency and scientific rigour when making significant and long-lasting decisions about climate policy.

Our solution

DemocracyNZ will focus on improving the environment through best practice management, and move away from over-regulation.

We will isolate local environmental risks and provide landowners with expert advice to decide what actions are most appropriate.

Farmers know their land better than anyone and should be part of identifying solutions. Environmental monitoring will be a focus to help identify what changes need to be introduced, and monitor progress.

We also recognise that we are already world leaders in emissions-efficient food production and our farmers should be encouraged rather than penalised for this achievement.

1. We will veto any new taxes on farming to keep food affordable, support our rural economy, and support work to improve emissions efficiency.

An emissions tax is a deeply flawed concept that fails farmers, consumers and the climate. New Zealand is one of the world's most emissions-efficient food producers. Taxing New Zealand

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farmers will shift production to less emissions-efficient countries and risks increasing global emissions. It would also devastate the rural economy as more farmers are forced out of business.

DemocracyNZ will update emissions accounting practices to report on the warming effect rather than gross emissions. Our policy will help global consumers understand the difference between the two.

We are already world leaders in emissions efficiency and can continue to improve, without introducing a farming tax.

DemocracyNZ does not support the principle of requiring farmers to meet environmental social governance scores. These impose a raft of additional requirements on farmers which will increase food production costs, similar to a tax, and could also reduce food production.

We will:

- Veto the He Waka Eke Noa ‘farming tax’ and any other proposed taxes targeting farming, including a fertiliser tax.
- Work with the primary sector to maintain and improve our world-leading emissions efficiency, and continue to improve farm profitability, without taxation or subsidy.
- Introduce warming-based accounting for methane, based on the latest science on methane.
- Improve public awareness of New Zealand’s agricultural gold standard low climate impact farming.

2. We will focus on improving environmental outcomes through locally targeted actions rather than regulation.

DemocracyNZ hold an ‘Outcomes over Regulations’ approach, which would do away with the majority of environmental regulations and replace them with voluntary integrated farm plans in rural areas.

To identify local environmental issues and monitor progress, a nation-wide network of catchment groups will be created, which will include landowners and regional and district council representatives. Catchment groups will prioritise local actions to improve the environment – and these actions will be included into integrated farm plans. The groups will monitor water quality and report regularly on progress. Regional councils will allocate resources and expertise to support local catchment groups. Water quality goals would be based on what is reasonable and practical for each specific catchment.

With a focus on carefully monitoring local water quality and identifying actions to address issues in each catchment, we will remove the national N cap. Fertiliser costs have risen rapidly in recent years, and this creates a strong incentive for farmers to avoid unnecessary fertiliser use. With their strong focus on improving water quality, catchment groups can advise on best management practice nitrogen use on vulnerable soils.

Landowners would have the choice whether to opt into the catchment group system, or follow existing council rules.

In time, this scheme would replace the need for consents and environmental regulations outside effluent management and water takes consents. It will dramatically reduce the compliance burden on farmers and councils; and focus time and resources on improving the environment, rather than litigating rules in court. This model would only apply in rural areas.

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We will:

- Scrap SNAs, the NPS on Biodiversity, NPS on Freshwater and overhaul the RMA.
- Replace current environmental regulations (excluding effluent and water takes) with voluntary integrated farm plans delivered via catchment groups in rural areas.
- Set up a catchment group scheme with landowners and council representatives which reports to Government annually.
- Increase monitoring to improve our understanding of water quality and assess progress.
- Regional and local councils should also develop an action plan to support catchment groups.

3. Methane is a short-lived gas, so we will promote adopting a more accurate measurement methodology, based on the latest science.

Short and long-lived greenhouse gases cannot be equally compared for their impact on climate. Methane makes up a small percentage of our country's total emissions.

We will:

- Co-ordinate with other agricultural nations to push the IPCC to report on short-lived greenhouse gases, drawing on the latest science.

4. We will refocus spending and research on adapting to a changing climate. We will repeal and replace the Climate Change Response Act 2002.

New Zealand has already made significant investment into climate mitigation science. Technology will develop over time and be adopted when it is fit-for-purpose.

We will invest in building resilient infrastructure to protect our existing investment of billions in infrastructure and property from severe weather events and natural disasters.

We will withdraw New Zealand from the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Globally, we are seeing businesses find their own solutions to reduce emissions. With many households struggling with rising costs, emissions pricing would continue to drive up living costs further in future.

We will:

- Prioritise research and spending into climate adaptation to reduce impacts on communities, farms and businesses.
- Repeal the Climate Change Response Act 2002 and subsequent amendments and replace it with a Climate Adaptation Act.
- Withdraw New Zealand from the Emissions Trading Scheme and focus on voluntary efforts to reduce emissions.

5. We will stop carbon credits for forestry in order to reduce carbon farming and associated rural job losses, and protect food-producing land.

The dramatic expansion of carbon farming is destroying food-producing land and replacing it with a sea of pine trees, which does not benefit rural communities or the economy. This will further increase the cost of food and living.

DemocracyNZ will withdraw from the ETS, which would stop all carbon credit payments for forestry plantations and shift land use away from carbon farming.

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Carbon credits are effectively a subsidy for tree planting – and [this policy would mean no subsidies are provided for tree planting on productive land.](#)

We will:

- Stop tree plantations from receiving carbon credits.

6. We will require climate research that informs policy decisions to apply a scientific method, to ensure decisions are robust and evidence based.

Climate science has shifted away from using the traditional scientific method and relied more on scientific opinion, and flawed modelling. The scientific method involves testing a theory with observational data or experiment. It requires transparency which allows others to replicate results.

We need hard facts and complete data to make informed policy decisions for our future.

We will:

- Require climate research that informs policy decisions to apply a scientific method, to ensure decisions are robust and evidence based.
- Encourage transparent public and scientific debate on climate policy and decisions.

We stand with our farmers and rural New Zealand

Our ag policy positions:

- 1. We will veto any new taxes on farming to keep food affordable, support our rural economy, and support work to improve emissions efficiency.**
- 2. We will focus on improving environmental outcomes through locally targeted actions rather than regulation.**
- 3. Methane is a short-lived gas, so we will promote adopting a more accurate measurement methodology, based on the latest science.**
- 4. We will refocus spending and research on adapting to a changing climate. We will repeal and replace the Climate Change Response Act 2002.**
- 5. We will stop carbon credits for forestry in order to reduce carbon farming and associated rural job losses, and protect food-producing land.**
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