

26 July 2024

Submission to the Committee Secretariat of the Primary Production Committee on the ***Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill***.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland raises awareness by advocating and promoting Catholic Social Teaching (CST) on social justice issues on behalf of the Catholic Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Auckland.

Our submission addresses the CST of care of creation, stewardship, co-responsibility and universal fraternity in our commitment and responsibility toward environmental protection and developing a more sustainable country, world and future.¹

The Justice and Peace Commission strongly opposes the Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill on the grounds that the proposed amendments effectively remove all agricultural obligations to the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

We question the logic behind the complete removal of the largest known greenhouse gas emitter in the country, the agricultural industry, from a scheme specifically designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions affect us all. Here in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland we are aware of the implications of high air and waterway pollution, the dire need to better manage agricultural waste (including urban agriculture) and land use to help reduce our carbon footprint.²

Removing agriculture from ETS obligations is counterproductive and counterintuitive. It may provide short-term economic relief to a minority, but it ignores the long-term detrimental effects of greenhouse gases toward climate change, especially in the anticipation of an increase in methane levels, the deceleration of emission reductions, or losing sight of our country's climate targets and international commitments to

¹ Pope Francis. (2015, May 24). *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home*. Vaticana.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html n. 228

² Our Auckland, Auckland Council. (2023, April 23). *Aucklanders carbon impact 15 per cent higher than fellow New Zealanders*. [Aucklanders carbon impact 15 per cent higher than fellow New Zealanders - OurAuckland \(aucklandcouncil.govt.nz\)](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/OurAuckland)

reducing emissions should this Bill come to pass. We must put the health and sustainability of our whenua, wai, moana and āngi before momentary economic gain. Furthermore, the argument that “New Zealand farmers are among the world's most carbon-efficient food producers”³ as a recommendation to remove agriculture from ETS is neither denied nor verified (there is insufficient evidence to prove either way).

Our question is why revert to a lower standard in emissions trading when a higher standard is achievable? If our food producers are already receiving supposed world-wide recognition for production efficiency, should we not improve this status if not strive for a higher standard? Why not aim to be the most carbon-efficient country in the world?

The coalition Government’s commitment to “keep agriculture out of NZ ETS” is myopic at best and provisional at worse. You cannot “keep out” a sector that has an over 50% contribution to a country’s greenhouse gas emissions total. Agriculture is mid-deep in the issue whether it intends to be or not.

The use of modal verbs such as “may” and “could” do not incite confidence in the explanatory note of the Bill Amendments. Furthermore, if evidence-based results cannot be sourced or supplied to support the Bill’s claims, funding should be redirected to climate change research and impact.

We, as a human race, are all responsible and accountable for the change in average surface temperatures as the direct result of an increase in greenhouse gases through unchecked human intervention.⁴ Every effort should be made to reduce our carbon footprint in all sectors, the larger sectors such as agriculture, should be held more accountable and responsible, not removed entirely from obligatory accountability.

Please do not fulfil the prophecy that “climate crisis is not exactly a matter that interests the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the shortest amount of time.”⁵

We make this submission through our efforts to promote the common good: to strive to protect, restore, improve and defend the environment, whether natural or urban, and enhance the quality of life in this common home that God has entrusted to us.⁶

³ Wannan, O. (2023, January 11). *The Whole Truth: Are New Zealand farms the world's greenest?* Stuff. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/the-whole-truth/130789439/the-whole-truth-are-new-zealand-farms-the-worlds-greenest>

⁴ Pope Francis. (2023, October 4). *Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum of the Holy Father Francis To All People of Good Will on the Climate Crisis*. Vaticana. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html n.14

⁵ Pope Francis. *Laudate Deum*. n.13

⁶ Pope Francis. *Laudato Si'*. n. 232