Farmers for Climate Action

Submission to the “Independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008”

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About Farmers for Climate Action

Farmers for Climate Action (FCA) is a movement of more than 5,000 farmers, graziers, and agricultural industry leaders, focused on advancing climate solutions. Our rapidly growing network, drawn from diverse agricultural industries and all sides of politics, is united by a common goal: to ensure that farmers, who are on the frontline of climate change, are part of the solution. Our work is evidence based and non-partisan, drawing upon the best available science to inform advocacy in the agricultural sector.

Scope of Submission

Farmers for Climate Action thanks Jacobs and the Tasmanian Government for the opportunity to make a submission to the Independent Review of *the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*. We would like to particularly like to thank Jacobs for the work done in bringing together the discussion paper to frame the discussion.

Our submission relates to the following matters outlined in the Terms of Reference:

- *Evaluating the extent to which the objects of the Act are being achieved*
- *Consulting on options to revise Tasmania's emissions reduction target, based on the outcomes of the update to Tasmania's Emissions Pathway Review*
- *Assessing any additional legislative measures which may be necessary to achieve the targets set by the Act*
- *Examining whether the Act provides a sound foundation for action on climate change mitigation and adaptation by Tasmania's government, businesses and community*
- *Examining whether the Act provides a sound framework for consideration of climate-related risks and opportunities.*

Recommendations at a glance

That Jacobs urges the Tasmanian Government to:

1. Develop a roadmap to sustainably maintain - and where environmentally appropriate, further reduce - Tasmania's net emissions below zero.
2. Support Tasmanian agriculture to work towards transitioning to net zero emissions into the future and set a net zero emissions target for agriculture by 2030. This will require a roadmap and plan for achieving this goal, including:
    a. Investing in research, development and extension (RD&E) that will allow the livestock sector to reduce its emissions, the major contributor to agriculture's sectoral emissions.
    b. Develop a state-based carbon sequestration program that encourages farmers to build soil carbon and improve biodiversity while providing new revenue streams.
3. Develop sectoral adaptation plans to ensure sectors and communities are not left behind. Including specifically for agriculture encourage ground up communities and peer to peer learning through grants programs that fund knowledge sharing amongst climate active groups.

Introduction

Tasmania is leading Australia in emissions reduction and renewable energy. Sitting currently at negative emissions and 100% renewable energy, Tasmania is well placed to continue to lead Australia into a low carbon world. By capitalising on the systems put in place by previous governments, the state can maintain their image of clean and green, while also taking little hit to the economy as many other jurisdictions fear.

Tasmania is already experiencing climate change. Tasmanian farmers will have to continue to find ways to adapt to the rapidly changing climate. Some of the direct impacts predicted are:

- A significant change in rainfall patterns;
- Rising average temperature, predicted to reach almost 3°C by 2100;
- In the near future, a rising risk of extreme events, including longer fire seasons and more days at the highest range of fire danger.[1]

For Tasmania's agri-food sector—worth $2.7 billion in 2017–18[2]—climate change risks eroding not only $1.6 billion worth of food and fibre production, but also the state's growing food export and agri-tourism industries, and the health and wellbeing of the people who depend on them. The future of Tasmania's clean and green brand is thrown into doubt unless action is taken at all levels.

Success of the Act thus far

Neither the legislation nor the regulations are sufficient to combat the magnitude of climate change. Nor are they sufficient to achieve the objects set out in s 4 of the Act. Tasmania is poised to lead the world in being a low carbon economy, but is failing to capitalise on the substantial work that has already been completed. As the world looks towards COP26 in November, ambitious targets are needed to ensure we are not left behind the global push towards net zero emissions.

[1] Department of Premier and Cabinet, "Impacts of Climate Change," Tasmanian Government, accessed December 10, 2020, http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/climatechange/climate_change_in_tasmania/impacts_of_climate_change.

[2] Dept of State Growth, Agri-Tourism Strategy (Hobart: State of Tasmania, 2019), https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/217472/Agri-tourism_Strategy_2019.pdf

Recommendations in detail

1. Maintain negative emission

Tasmania is in an enviable position, as the latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory places the state at -1.68Mt CO_2-e.[3] Point Advisory's advised projections for the state show an increase up to 2030.[4] This is not acceptable. As the world fights to lower its emissions, Tasmania needs to acknowledge that a significant proportion has already been completed for the state. Increases in emissions are avoidable and more can be done to offset those emissions that cannot be avoided. The 'Low BAU emissions' scenario set out in the briefing paper will ensure Tasmania is well placed to deal with the potential climatic, economic and social ramifications of climate change.

Section 5 of the Act must be amended to reflect an ambitious target that guides Tasmania through the coming decades, rather than a target that allows regression on the state's current position. Farmers for Climate Action recommends that Section 5 be amended to set a target of sustained net zero emissions or less into the future.

2. Agricultural net zero targets

Emissions from livestock are a high proportion of Tasmania's emissions, and are expected to rise over the coming decade as demand for agricultural products increases. In the most recent State and Territory GHG Inventory, agriculture accounted for 2.40 Mt CO_2-e.[5]

Farmers for Climate Action recommends that in addition to maintaining emissions below zero, Tasmania sets sectoral roadmaps for achieving net zero. This would include a roadmap for Tasmanian Agriculture transitioning to net zero by 2030.

Farmers for Climate Action respectfully thanks Point Advisory for the work done in preparing the 'best-fit' emissions reduction opportunities for Tasmania. However, the significant opportunities available to the sector have been excluded from the plan.

Farmers for Climate Action urges the following two core areas be woven into a sectoral emissions reduction plan for agriculture:

a. Investment in research, development and extension (RD&E) to reduce livestock emissions;
b. Develop a carbon sequestration program that encourages Tasmania's farmers to try to build soil carbon, increase biodiversity and offset remaining livestock emissions.

These solutions are discussed in further detail below.

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[3] Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, "State and territory greenhouse gas inventories: 2019 emissions" (Canberra, 2021).
[4] Point Advisory, "Net Zero Emissions Pathway Options for Tasmania" (Tasmania, 2021).
[5] Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, "State and territory greenhouse gas inventories: 2019 emissions" (Canberra, 2021).

a. Investment in research, development and extension (RD&E) of livestock emissions reduction technologies

There are already significant advancements occurring in the livestock emissions space and within Tasmania. The red meat sector has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, and the dairy industry has also just released its climate change strategy.[6] By investing in RD&E for the livestock sector, Tasmania can ensure that its red meat and dairy producers are not left behind. Within Tasmania, significant advances have been made in the development and commercialisation of Asparagopsis.

By investing in RD&E for the livestock sector, Tasmania would be able to cut the largest source of agricultural emissions while also developing research that can assist the world in reducing global GHG emissions.

b. Develop a state-wide carbon sequestration program

Tasmania is in its current enviable position as a result of negative LULUCF emissions largely from forestry. If Tasmania is to maintain this negative emissions position, it needs to invest in other potential ways to offset those unavoidable GHG emissions. As actual GHG emissions trend towards zero, Tasmania will have abundant offsets that can be used as an alternative income stream for farmers and landholders.

States including Victoria and Queensland have invested in programs to encourage farmers and landholders to engage in carbon farming, increase biodiversity and land conservation. Queensland's Land Restoration Fund assists farmers and landholders to engage in carbon sequestration projects. Victoria has also committed $15 million to a carbon farming program and approximately $77 million to develop a revegetation pilot that will deliver both sequestration and biodiversity benefits.

Farmers for Climate Action recommends that the Tasmanian government develop its own program to support farmers and landholders who wish to engage in sequestration programs, as part of an overarching sectoral mitigation plan.

3. Sectoral adaptation plans

Section 4(h) explicitly states that one of the objects of the Act is to "to identify, promote and support measures to help Tasmania deal with and adapt to the expected consequences of climate change…". However, to date, there are non legislative mechanisms in place to support the community to engage in climate adaptation.

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[6] Meat & Livestock Australia, "The Australian Red Meat Industry's Carbon Neutral by 2030 Roadmap" (Sydney, 2020), https://www.mla.com.au/contentassets/e501cd2919064183b57372897a0e1954/2689-mla-cn30-roadmap_d7.pdf; "Dairy Australia launches Climate Change Strategy", Dairy News Australia, https://www.dairynewsaustralia.com.au/news/2021/03/22/3995916/dairy-australia-launches-climate-change-strategy (22 March 2021)

Farmers for Climate Action recommends that sectoral adaptation plans be developed to assist communities and sectors to adequately prepare for the dramatic changes that are set to occur. Farmers for Climate Action recommends that the Tasmanian Government adopts a similar system to the Victorian Government, requiring ministers to develop and report on their sector every 5 years. This would provide greater certainty for communities and sectors to deal with the risks as they arise and be prepared to respond accordingly.

Conclusion

Tasmania is currently a world leader in achieving net zero emissions. But without strong targets, mitigation plans and adaptation plans, the projections show that Tasmania could regress in its net emissions. To ensure farmers, communities and the wider agricultural industry are not unduly burdened by a failure to set appropriate mechanisms in place now, Farmers for Climate Action urges the Tasmanian government to take this opportunity to provide strong leadership in the development of ambitious climate action targets.