Ministers snubbed methane advice

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TOO MUCH: By setting excessive emissions reduction targets New Zealand is letting other countries off the hook, Beef + Lamb chief executive Sam McIvor says.

CONFLICTING advice on methane reduction targets the Government should adopt is being blamed by Climate Change Minister James Shaw on differences over how to restrict global warming to less than 1.5C.

It has emerged Shaw ignored advice from Ministry for Primary Industries officials, the Climate Change Executives Board and Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton who advocated for 2050 methane reduction targets of between 10% and 35%.

The variation is dependent on the global response.

MPI recommended a cut of 25% be included in the proposed Zero Carbon Bill but Shaw chose a range of 24% to 47% to apply from 2030 to 2050.

In a joint statement Beef + Lamb, DairyNZ and Federated Farmers criticised the Government for its chosen target, saying it is beyond what scientists say is needed for New Zealand to meet its 1.5C Paris Agreement commitment.

They labelled it purely a political decision made in Cabinet, based on selective references from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

B+LNZ chief executive Sam McIvor says the decision also ignores the IPCC's caveat that global targets should not be imposed on individual countries.

"The combined effect of the excessive methane targets and net zero target for nitrous oxide, which go beyond the IPCC's advice for this gas, means that NZ is effectively aiming to go below 1.5C and, by doing so, letting other countries off the hook," McIvor says.

But Shaw disagrees.

"The upper targets that they suggested do not meet that 1.5C limit that the IPCC says we need to stay within to avoid catastrophic impacts of climate change.

"And maintaining biological methane at levels that contribute no additional warming would also not keep the world within that 1.5C threshold."

> *"It's purely a political decision made in Cabinet."*
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> **B+LNZ, DairyNZ, Federated Farmers**

Shaw said the Zero Carbon Bill includes a 2024 review of the 2030-2050 methane target range to take account of progress on emissions reductions along with economic and other factors.

DairyNZ chief executive Tim Mackle says the chosen target range is proof agriculture is being asked to do more than is required than what is being asked of other sectors.

In a briefing paper to Shaw last November released under the Official Information Act, MPI recommended a 2050 target of a 25% reduction in methane below 2016 levels, consistent with the objectives of the Paris Accord to limit global warming to below 1.5C.

The paper says it is also realistic and can be achieved with known technology.

"The Paris Agreement does not specify that emissions of biogenic methane need to be offset to zero," Mackle said.

The officials recommend it be regularly reviewed by the Climate Commission.

The briefing paper reveals the Climate Change Chief Executives Board, a committee of heads of Government departments, suggested a potential methane reduction range for 2050 of 22-35% below 2016 levels, saying it is also consistent with temperature control objectives of the Paris Accord.

MPI says that target range is also achievable with existing technology.

Officials note the IPCC says methane emissions need to fall by between 24% and 47% from 2010 levels by 2050 then stabilise to restrict warming to less than 1.5C.

But the IPCC also noted there is no requirement for methane and nitrous oxide to reach zero and MPI says a 25% target would achieve the IPCC's goals.

"Based on the range above we recommend that if a target for biological emissions is set in the Climate Change Bill that the target be 25% below 2016 levels by 2050."

"We consider that this would be consistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to below 1.5C and would represent a realistic emissions reduction that can be achieved with currently known technologies and avoiding significant land use change."

MPI said reductions above the 22% to 35% range are possible only if there is a significant breakthrough in mitigation technology or land use changes from pastoral agriculture.