

**Submission**

Of the

**Otago University Students’ Association**

on the

**Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations Bill**

To the

**Environment Committee**

Prepared by

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| To: | Environment Committee |
| From: | Otago University Students’ Association (OUSA) |
| Date | 28/07/2024 |
| Subject | Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill |

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill before the Environmental Select Committee.

The Otago University Students’ Association represents over 19,000 tauira across the motu pursuing tertiary education at the University of Otago. Our association is deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on our future and believes that strong and effective measures are necessary to mitigate the impacts of the impending environmental catastrophe.

We acknowledge that agriculture comprises a significant part of the primary sector in New Zealand and is a key part of the Kiwi identity. However, agriculture is not without its challenges. Half of New Zealand’s greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture, particularly methane and nitrous oxide. While New Zealand farmers are known for their environmentally friendly practices, emissions from transport, processing and land clearing reduce our global farming sustainability rankings. Farming in New Zealand simply is not sustainable enough in the face of the coming climate crisis that threatens all New Zealanders.

Allowing the agriculture sector exemption from the Emissions Trading Scheme underestimates the ability of Kiwi farmers to adapt, innovate and remain competitive in a more complex and demanding global marketplace. Kiwi farmers have demonstrated an ability to set the standard of sustainable agricultural practices. Further, exempting agriculture from the system entirely seems unfair to other sectors of the economy that are being encouraged to innovate to reduce their emissions when agriculture receives a pass.

We worry that allowing agriculture as a sector to be excluded sets a dangerous precedent, allowing select parts of the economy to withdraw environmental regulations. The logic of the Emissions Trading Scheme is that every emission is caught and offset. Allowing certain industries to be exempt from this system is simply ludicrous. Removing agriculture from the Emissions Trading Scheme severly compromises its ability to externalize New Zealand’s carbon emissions. Further, this Bill offers a more serious challenge to the authority of the Emissions Trading Scheme as lawmakers can simply choose which industries they deem exempt from the principle of the Scheme.

We recognize that the motivation for this bill is principally economic. However, this bill still presents serious long-term economic consequences. By not pursuing sustainable practices now, we as a nation will face far greater costs in the future as the consequences of our strained environment come to bear. These consequences are most importantly the loss of biodiversity, water quality and soil health that affords Aotearoa natural beauty and agricultural productivity.

For these reasons, the Otago University Students’ Association cannot support the removal of agriculture from the Emissions Trading Scheme. We believe the environmental impact of this decision is too great to be reasonably considered by this Committee.

We Recommend:

1. That agriculture remains in the Emissions Trading Scheme to maintain New Zealand’s internal and international commitments to emissions reductions, retain the authority and integrity of the Emissions Trading Scheme and attempt to minimize the significant future cost of climate inaction.
2. Further support be given to the agricultural sector to support the transition to a more sustainable agricultural sector. Such support could include financial incentives, access to sustainable technologies and greater education of leading sustainable practices to farmers.

To broaden the scope of our submission, it might be useful for OUSA to speak on behalf of young people more widely. There is a common generational understanding that the natural environment is not ours to exploit for our short-term gain, but rather ours to nurture and protect so that future generations can enjoy as we have. We cannot backtrack on major progress on sustainability for short-term economic gain. I simply ask this Committee to consider what kind of world it hopes to leave for its future generation, and what its members can say they did to protect them.

Sincerely,

Liam Patrick White

Political Representative

Otago University Students’ Association