

# Your submission to Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

Andy Barratt, **Our Food Network Dunedin**

[REDACTED]  
Otago

New Zealand  
[REDACTED]

**Reference no:** 50

**Clause**

What are the values and benefits associated with existing food growing hubs and how can these be maximised?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What are the values and benefits associated with highly productive land?

**Notes**

As identified in the discussion document

**Clause**

Does the RMA framework provide sufficient clarity and direction on how highly productive land should be managed? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Does the RMA framework provide sufficient clarity on how highly productive land should be considered alongside competing uses? Why/why not?

**Notes**

In my experience, no. Cases have been decided on lawyers (1) arguing about the definition of high-class soils; (2) Requiring the court to interpret district plans which lack clarity about prioritizing categories of land use. Our local council has bemoaned the absence of a National Policy Statement to provide guidance.

**Clause**

How are values and wider benefits of highly productive land being considered in planning and consenting processes?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

How is highly productive land currently considered when providing urban expansion? Can you provide examples?

**Notes**

The current situation here in Dunedin appears somewhat ad hoc to those who have been involved in consenting/RMA processes. Large housing developments on the Taieri Plain (main site of highly-productive land locally) have allowed such land to be lost.

**Clause**

How should highly productive land be considered when planning for future urban expansion?

**Notes**

It should be given the highest possible protection (i.e. allowed for urban expansion only if there are no other alternatives - which could mean declaring certain urban centres "fully developed" in terms of geographical expansion).

**Clause**

How is highly productive land currently considered when providing for rural-lifestyle development? Can you provide examples?

**Notes**

For a brief period, the Dunedin City Council changed its minimum block size in the rural zone from 20ha to 6ha. Immediately, a number of farms on the Taieri Plain were subdivided for lifestyle blocks. The change was challenged in the Environment Court and overturned. In its 2nd Generation District Plan the Council has increased minimum block size rules.

**Clause**

How should highly productive land be considered when providing for rural-lifestyle development?

**Notes**

Although it can be argued that rural lifestyle blocks on such land can remain productive (and even intensified), the evidence from around New Zealand is that lifestyle developments (a) increase land values and hence place them out of the reckoning for (especially young) people wanting to use the land productively; and (b) provide no guarantee that the land will remain in production with subsequent change of ownership. This would support a move to, at the very least, restrict rural-lifestyle development of highly productive land.

**Clause**

How should the tensions between primary production activities and potentially incompatible activities best be managed?

**Notes**

Primary production must have priority. That said, primary producers should not see this as a "free pass" to take no care of neighbours' concerns, especially where they can easily mitigate the effects causing concern.

**Clause**

How can reverse sensitivity issues at the rural-urban interface best be managed?

**Notes**

See above. It might also be possible in some (if not many) cases, to create buffer zones (as part of the Billion Trees initiative) which could be included in farm management plans and compensated for under Zero Carbon provisions.

**Clause**

Do you agree that there is a problem? Has it been accurately reflected in this document?

**Notes**

Yes

**Clause**

Are you aware of other problems facing highly productive land?

**Notes**

Yes. Past and current use of highly productive lands has led to contamination with toxic residues and degradation and loss of soil due to management practices. These problems, although acknowledged in a series MfE documents, are not mentioned here (too controversial, perhaps?).

**Clause**

Which option do you think would be the most effective to address the problems identified in Chapter Three? Why?

**Notes**

National Policy Statement. All local and regional governments need the clarity and security of a national statement to provide the "bedrock" for their planning documents.

**Clause**

Are there other pros and cons of a National Policy Statement that should be considered?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Are there other options not identified in this chapter that could be more effective?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the focus of the National Policy Statement be on versatile soils or highly productive land more broadly? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the focus of the National Policy Statement be on primary production generally or on certain types of food production activities? Why/why not?

**Notes**

The focus should be general, although it should recognize that primary production does not just mean large scale food production. Home gardeners, community gardeners, allotment holders, urban and peri-urban market gardens are all primary producers. As we move towards a low-carbon economy, these groups provide surplus capacity for food production and could become increasingly important in the coming transition.

**Clause**

Do you support the scope of the proposal to focus on land use planning issues affecting highly productive land? Why/why not?

**Notes**

Yes. But note the comment on contamination/degradation above.

**Clause**

What matters, if any, should be added to or excluded from the scope of the National Policy Statement? Why?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should future urban zones and future urban areas be excluded from the scope of the National Policy Statement? What are the potential benefits and costs?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the National Policy Statement apply nationally or target areas where the pressures on highly productive land are greater?

**Notes**

Nationally.

**Clause**

What would an ideal outcome be for the management of highly productive land for current and future generations?

**Notes**

1. We will sustain the base for feeding the nation. 2. We will secure the additional economic benefits from trading in agricultural products.

**Clause**

If highly productive land is to be identified, how should this be done and by whom?

**Notes**

No comment. This is for the experts to resolve.

**Clause**

Are the proposed criteria all relevant and important considerations for identifying highly productive land? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What are the pros and cons associated with prioritising highly productive land for primary production?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Do you think there are potential areas of tension or confusion between this proposed National Policy Statement and other national direction (either proposed or existing)?

**Notes**

Yes. The statement on p.43 refers to making "room for cities to grow up and out". Upward growth provides no potential area for tension. But outward growth most certainly does. This is where the protection of highly productive land becomes essential. The statement also talks of "strategic integrated planning". This should also include consideration of productive (and especially highly productive) land. Our cities need to preserve the spaces for as much food production as possible within city limits.

**Clause**

How can the proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land and the proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development best work alongside each other to achieve housing objectives and better management of the highly productive land resource?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

How should highly productive land be considered when identifying areas for urban expansion?

**Notes**

It should be given the highest priority for protection.

**Clause**

How should the National Policy Statement direct the management of rural subdivision and fragmentation on highly productive land?

**Notes**

Rural subdivision should be discouraged on highly productive land unless "foolproof" rules can be devised for keeping it in productive use. Local authorities should be encouraged to display flexibility on marginal or "low quality" land.

**Clause**

How should the National Policy Statement direct the management of reverse sensitivity effects on and adjacent to highly productive land?

**Notes**

See above

**Clause**

How should the National Policy Statement guide decision-making on private plan changes to rezone highly productive land for urban or rural lifestyle use?

**Notes**

It should be highly restrictive.

**Clause**

How should the National Policy Statement guide decision-making on resource consent applications for subdivision and urban expansion on highly productive land?

**Notes**

It should be highly restrictive

**Clause**

What guidance would be useful to support the implementation of the National Policy Statement?

**Notes**

1. Clear definition of highly productive soil; 2. Accurate, high definition soil maps.

**Clause**

How should the National Policy Statement best influence plan preparation and decision-making on resource consents and private plan changes?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the National Policy Statement include policies that must be inserted into policy statements and plans without going through the Schedule 1 process? What are the potential benefits and risks?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What areas of land, if any, should be excluded from the scope of the proposed National Policy Statement? Why?

**Notes**

Not sure. But small parcels of land should not be excluded purely on the criterion of size (see comments on local food production above).

**Clause**

What level of direction versus flexibility should the objectives provide to maintain the availability of highly productive land for primary production?

**Notes**

Err on the side of direction.

**Clause**

Should the objectives provide more or less guidance on what is "inappropriate subdivision, use and development" on highly productive land? Why/why not?

**Notes**

More direction, so as to make local planning and decision making as straightforward as possible.

**Clause**

What are the pros and cons of requiring highly productive land to be spatially identified?

**Notes**

Pros: without this, the policy will be ineffective. Cons: it will be quite expensive.

**Clause**

Is the identification of highly productive land best done at the regional or district level? Why?

**Notes**

Locally. But with clear definitions to work from.

**Clause**

What are the likely costs and effort involved in identifying highly productive land in your region?

**Notes**

This will require a lot of work and will be quite costly. But it is essential that it is done properly.

**Clause**

What guidance and technical assistance do you think will be beneficial to help councils identify highly productive land?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should there be a default definition of highly productive land based on the LUC until councils identify this? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What are the key considerations to consider when identifying highly productive land? What factors should be mandatory or optional to consider?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What are the benefits and risks associated with allowing councils to consider the current and future availability of water when identifying highly productive land? How should this be aligned with the Essential Freshwater Programme?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should there be a tiered approach to identify and protect highly productive land based on the LUC class (e.g. higher levels of protection to LUC 1 and 2 land compared to LUC 3 land)? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

How can this policy best encourage proactive and transparent consideration of highly productive land when identifying areas for new urban development and growth?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

How can the proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land best align and complement the requirements of the proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the National Policy Statement provide greater direction on how to manage subdivision on highly productive land (e.g. setting minimum lot size standards for subdivisions)? If so, how can this best be done?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the proposed National Policy Statement encourage incentives and mechanisms to increase the productive capacity of highly productive land (e.g. amalgamation of small titles)? Why/why not?

**Notes**

Not sure. The productive capacity of land will not necessarily be increased by the amalgamation of small titles. The trend towards larger farm units is part of an industrial model which is likely to come under pressure as we move towards a low carbon economy.

**Clause**

How can the National Policy Statement best manage reverse sensitivity effects within and adjacent to highly productive land?

**Notes**

No further comment

**Clause**

Should these policies be directly inserted into plans without going through the Schedule 1 process (i.e. as a transitional policy until each council gives effect to the National Policy Statement)? What are the potential benefits and risks?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

How can these policies best assist decision-makers consider trade-offs, benefits, costs and alternatives when urban development and subdivision is proposed on highly productive land?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should the policies extend beyond rural lifestyle subdivision and urban development to large scale rural industries operations on highly productive land? Why/why not?

**Notes**

Yes. Industrial development should not impair the productive capacity of highly productive land.

**Clause**

Do any of the draft definitions in the National Policy Statement need further clarification? If so, how?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Are there other key terms in the National Policy Statement that should be defined? If so, how?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

Should there be minimum threshold for highly productive land (i.e. as a percentage of site or minimum hectares)? Why/why not?

**Notes**

No. See comments above

**Clause**

Do you think a planning standard is needed to support the consistent implementation of some proposals in this document?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

If yes, what specific provisions do you consider are effectively delivered via a planning standard tool?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What is the most appropriate and workable approach for highly productive land to be identified by councils? Should this be sequenced as proposed?

**Notes**

No comment

**Clause**

What is an appropriate and workable timeframe to allow councils to identify highly productive land and amend their policy statements and plans to identify that land?

**Notes**

No comment