

# Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

Submission by Climate Justice Taranaki, 10 October 2019

## Introduction

Climate Justice Taranaki Inc. (CJT) is a community group committed to justice, action and true solutions to our climate crisis. Our core members include scientists, anthropologists, health professionals, market gardeners, farmers, teachers, writers, musicians, artists, community organisers and researchers. Several of our members and supporters are tangata whenua. We raise awareness on social justice issues around climate change which impact disproportionately heavily on the under-privileged and on future generations. We advocate for policies and decisions that alleviate the impacts and empower communities. We support communities in building climate resilience.

## Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land. Our submission will be brief.

1. We emphasize the need to protect land that is currently producing food or has potential to produce food, thereby contributing to food security in the long-term, especially in view of problems associated with climate disruptions and extremes.
2. We seek clarifications and potentially revision of the definition of 'highly productive land' based on the landuse capability classification and the application of such a classification.
3. We acknowledge the pressure of urban expansion and rural lifestyle development on some productive land.
4. However, food production is not entirely excluded from urban and lifestyle development, with the emerging growth of urban farming and backyard food production. The current heavy reliance on large-scaled industrial food production, whether it is horticulture or animal agriculture, which focus on export, consumes a huge amount of fossil fuels and chemicals, with inevitable damage and degradation to soil, water quality and our biosphere more generally. One very pertinent case in point is the dramatic continuing loss of insects from pesticides<sup>1</sup> and climatic extremes. We need to move away from export-focused, industrial food production to organic, regenerative, small-scaled, diverse local food production to increase communities' food security, climate resilience and wellbeing.
5. We request that an additional objective be included in the proposed NPS to **"Protect all productive land from mineral and petroleum mining."** Such extractive and polluting industries have no place in Aotearoa New Zealand any further when we are in a climate emergency and are overshooting our planetary boundaries<sup>2</sup>. Taranaki farmland has been seriously damaged by many decades of oil and gas drilling, fracking and associated toxic waste disposal<sup>3</sup>. Notably landfarming has contaminated our soil and waterways as petroleum wastes are spread onto farms, livestock are returned for grazing and production. The recent approval by the government allowing OceanaGold<sup>4,5</sup> to purchase 180 hectares of farmland in Coromandel for gold mine tailing ponds is another case in point.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/insect-apocalypse-under-way-toxic-pesticides-agriculture/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://climatejusticetaranaki.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/ccheung-cjt-slides-for-dowse-25mar18-v2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/news/116402268/oceanagold-gets-approval-to-buy-land-for-tailings-ponds-near-waihi-gold-mine>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/2018716867/government-u-turn-allowed-for-expansion-of-waihi-gold-mine>