

**Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land  
Submission**

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Are you submitting on behalf of an organisation? No

I request that my personal details, apart from my name, are not included on the website.

**Introduction**

1. I was brought up on volcanic land near Pukekohe so have a personal knowledge and interest in this issue. I am also a resource management planner with experience of national policy statements and plans, as well as having 20 years experience as an orchardist. I seek that the NPS be strengthened, as otherwise it will not achieve its purpose. I do not have time to answer all the questions but focus on what the NPS should say.
  
2. I support the objectives but emphasize the need to be **more specific about avoiding irreversible loss**, and about what constitutes “inappropriate” use. This is because in my experience, applicants and decisionmakers inevitably stretch policy to get applications “over the line”. Discretion to decision makers should be limited as far as possible.
  
3. I recognise that there will be examples where there are existing pockets of highly productive soils within current urban boundaries. However using such land for housing or other built infrastructure should be avoided, so that future generations could use such land for urban food production whether by community groups or commercial enterprise, or at least be set aside for playing fields, golf courses or other open space. This would enable that land to be utilised in the future, if not immediately.

**Policy 1**

4. I support using LUC classes 1-3 (exclusive of land in existing indigenous vegetation, whether modified or not to avoid unintended consequences and have an integrated

approach) being included in the NPS as the interim identification with immediate effect until any further fine-grained identification is done. This is because the NPS can be operational immediately and avoid the current planning lag due to council capacity and other national direction also required at this time for urban planning and water management. This should also apply immediately to district plans.

5. I do not support the exclusion of lots under 4 ha, as viable horticultural enterprises can exist on smaller lots, depending on the crop and location, and small lots can be amalgamated. The NPS should include a mandatory rule to be inserted in district plans making amalgamation of lots on highly productive land a Controlled activity. I have experienced a situation where a council has only allowed for this for when one of the lots is 5000m<sup>2</sup> or less, which makes no sense. Where there are highly productive soils, the policy framework should incentivize amalgamation.
6. I disagree that land zoned for future urbanisation should be excluded. This NPS should have been in place a decade or more ago, and decisions have been made that are not efficient use of highly productive land. The pendulum has swung too far and a policy allowing for review of such areas should be included so they can be examined on a case by case basis.

## Policy 2

7. The intent is supported but it is too open. The use of the “consider” [giving greater protection to hubs] is weak. There should be direction to give priority to these areas and avoid activities that are not essential to productive use.
8. Inappropriate activities should be spelt out e.g. residential use except for the landowner.
9. Worker accommodation and rural industries including contractor’s depots should be discretionary activities. Only activities that have a functional need to locate on this land should be considered. These activities that are based on rural production (e.g. post harvest facilities) but not relying on the actual use of the productive capacity, should not be permitted as of right but may be considered where there are existing built facilities and dependent on proximity to urban areas where those activities could occur in an industrial or commercial zone, and not require additional commuting. This aspect therefore should be integrated with the goals of the Zero Carbon Bill, and rationalise transport links. What I am saying here, is that activities that are not directly using the productive capacity of the soil shouldn’t be given an easy road when seeking to establish on this land. There are some anomalies – greenhouses, tunnelhouses and other horticultural production that don’t actually utilise the soil e.g. hydroponics.
10. The only exception should be for multiple-Maori-owned land where the landowners cannot be expected to go elsewhere.

### Policy 3 Urban Development

11. I am opposed to urban development occurring on highly productive land. It is an irreversible type of development. Highly productive land is a finite resource that should be protected. The NPS UD should avoid (and I use that word in the context of the Supreme Court decisions) encroaching on to these areas – there has already been a huge incremental loss. Urban areas must intensify alongside public transport availability. We have to accept that people can no longer continue encroaching on productive land, in the same way that encroachment into biodiversity areas must be avoided. Such activity therefore must be designated as non-complying, if not prohibited activities. The NPS should specify activity status.

### Policy 4

12. I support this policy. (a) should be more specific that subdivision purely for residential/lifestyle use is prohibited on highly productive land. It should be worded to avoid schemes that were used in the past under the Town & Country Planning Act to get around such rules e.g. by a developer setting up 4 ha olive/lemon (or name your crop) blocks on lands patently unsuitable for such a crop and with no guarantee that the purchaser would do anything with that crop (subdivision in disguise). Similarly (c) should be more strongly worded – “avoid” lifestyle subdivisions on highly productive land.

### Policy 5 Reverse Sensitivity

13. These are sensible provisions but don't go far enough because they do not recognise the amenity of **existing residential** activity in rural areas where landowners do live on their land. (Having the landowner living on site is a good thing because we are now experiencing social difficulties in rural areas where the land is owned by corporates or persons who are absentee landowners).
14. The industrialisation of rural land that is currently occurring through the rapidly increasing trend of growing crops under cover, is failing to protect the amenity of those living in these areas e.g. by allowing plastic shelter adjacent to existing houses, by either having no setback, or a token 5m, and no requirement for amenity planting, which can readily achieve this with little cost compared to the value of the crops being grown. Therefore reverse sensitivity issues and protection of highly productive land should not be at the expense of amenity for rural residents.

### Policy 6 Private Plan changes

15. My view is that private plan changes that will be contrary to the objectives of this NPS should be avoided, and this should be a policy that is inserted directly into district plans. This would help to reduce efforts to undercut the NPS, especially while it is being bedded in. (See comments on “getting over the line” above).

## Policy 7

16. The NPS should insert a policy into district plans that subdivision of productive land for residential or urban development shall be a non-complying activity. Any such applications would be considered against the objectives and policies of this NPS.