

Inquiry into climate adaptation and managed retreat

Central government | November 2023

What is the Inquiry into climate adaptation and managed retreat?

Parliament’s Environment Committee launched this inquiry to gather views on funding mechanisms and decision-making frameworks to support climate adaptation planning. The Resource Management Act (RMA), which governs all planning in New Zealand, is in the process of being replaced by a suite of three laws – the Natural and Built Environment Act, the Spatial Planning Act, and the Climate Adaptation Act. The first two were already passed in 2023, and this inquiry was designed to inform the development of the third.

Summary of HortNZ submission

HortNZ cautioned policymakers not to apply an urban risk assessment framework to rural areas, which have different activities and population density. We called for a science-based approach to risk assessment that considers the magnitude of the risk, the consequences of a disaster hitting an activity and the land user’s tolerance for that risk.

We also advised that horticulture, along with its supporting activities, should be allowed to continue in areas too risky for housing, to ensure that we are using productive land to its fullest potential. Rather than calling for retreat of all activities from all risky areas, planning should use a full-catchment approach to reduce the impact of upstream activities on essential activities downstream. We sought prioritised flood protection for food production for the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

When it comes to disaster relief, the government needs to do more proactive planning before the next adverse weather event, so that expectations around recovery funding are well known and emergency planning rules can be enacted quickly.

All of these policies will support a resilient national food system in which there is geographic variation in growing areas and support for climate adaptive growing systems.

Risks from adaptation and retreat policy to horticulture

Risks associated with this policy to horticulture	Mitigations for risks from this policy to horticulture
Horticulture will be forced to retreat from highly productive land, reducing fresh fruit and vegetable supply and not optimising our use of soil resources.	Exclude horticulture from managed retreat requirements.

<p>Risk assessment methodology designed for urban areas or pastoral farming will be used for horticulture, resulting in an inappropriate risk determination.</p>	<p>Risk assessment methodology should consider the different design-life of horticultural structures and the varied human risk involved in different activities on flood-prone land.</p>
<p>Horticulture, an efficient and low-emissions land use, will have to bear the adaptation costs for higher-emissions/more environmentally detrimental uses when horticultural land is flooded.</p>	<p>Adopt a catchment-scale risk approach that considers the impacts of upstream land uses (erosion, woody debris) on downstream activities, especially on highly productive land.</p>
<p>Activities necessary to enable horticulture will be relocated, leaving remaining horticultural businesses without key infrastructure to operate.</p>	<p>Allow ancillary activities to remain in or adjacent to high-risk horticultural areas with stronger adaptation measures.</p>

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Environment Committee webpage](#)
- [Ministry for the Environment website](#)
- [Keep an eye on HortNZ's website](#) and read our other submissions on managed retreat and climate adaptation