Sectoral Emissions Ceilings

Q4: What do you view as the key actions required to ensure the emission reduction targets set out in the Sectoral Emission Ceilings are met?

Individual 3:

1. Raising awareness: Each sector requires targeting with sector-specific information regarding its contributions to total national GHG emissions. Moreover, all sectors need to be presented with absolutely clear information regarding the probable consequences of inaction and failure to meet emissions reductions targets: what 2°C to 3°C by 2075-2100 means for their children and grandchildren. There is enough evidence produced by the scientific community to make this very clear. Avoiding catastrophe has to be the key message.

2. Education and guidance. Unless actors in each sector are steered toward taking action, then actions will be too little, too late. Time is of the essence.

3. Incentives. Ensuring emission reduction targets are met requires a system of incentives (the 'carrot') to be put in place.

4. Enforcement. Unless there is a 'stick' - some form of negative consequence for refusing or failing to achieve targets, compliance will likely be lower and the overall effort likely less effective.

Q5: What do you view as the main challenges/obstacles to the Sectoral Emission Ceilings being met?

Individual 3:

1. In general, a short-term view of costs vs benefits (to individual actors and groups, including businesses and sectoral communities of practice) in which impacts on incomes are perceived as negative rather than positive investments in the future of actors and, especially, the children or future business of actors.

2. Lack of actors' buy-in to the challenge due to a misplaced notion that climate change is a ""future"" problem rather than direct threat to individuals, groups, businesses now, in the coming decade and later this century. Linked with short-termism above.

3. Regarding the Electricity Sector: the slow pace of roll-out (implementation) of renewables projects, plus the associated obstacle of planning permissions and licensing.

4. Regarding Transport: the slow pace of electrification of vehicle fleets (both private and public) and associated price. Without some form of Government subsidy for rural and low-income households to purchase electric vehicles, it is hard to see how rural Ireland will cope with (survive) the transition to EVs.

5. Buildings (Residential): the slow pace of retrofitting housing, redesigning housing stock and building new housing, including social housing, to meet sustainability standards (passive, net zero etc).

6. Buildings (Commercial and Public): the absence of solar panel infrastructure. Every commercial and public building in Ireland ought to be required to have solar panels on all available roof space plus exterior walls where appropriate. In South-West Ireland (West Cork for example) there is an almost total absence of solar PV across residential, commercial and public buildings (and space).

7. Agriculture. From my experience and observations from living in a rural area in West Cork, there is almost zero interest in reducing GHG emissions among the farming community. Quite the opposite: they see it as a threat from central government and 'greens'. In general, farming folk do not understand where the emissions come from or what they contribute to. Talk of climate change is seen as a threat to their lifestyles and livelihoods; emissions reductions are perceived as a threat to income and viability of farms. Among farming folk there is a signifcant amount of misinformation circulating; judging by social media, there are climate deniers in the farming community who willingly spread the deliberate disinformation of climate deniers from right-wing political sources from outside the State. 'Fear of the unknown' is a factor. There is potential for growing and organised opposition to climate actions in the sector. Farmers' organisations and agricultural industry lobbyists have a constituency that is ripe for manipulation.

Carbon Pricing & Cross-Cutting Policies

Q6: Are there any unintended barriers within the planning system that should be addressed at national policy level in order to deliver our climate ambitions?

Individual 3:

Yes. The planning and licensing systems regarding onshore and offshore wind farms, onshore solar farms and other renewables is not fit for purpose: slow, cumbersome and expensive for actors engaged in attempts to develop renewables projects. This must be addressed ASAP: fast-tracking planning applications and consents, while fully protecting biodiversity (according to national, EU and international obligations) AND involving wider and deeper stakeholder consultation in order to fend-off and circumvent objections. A system of Emergency Planning is required: the kind of approach one might reasonably expect during (hypothetical) wartime.

Q7: What further opportunities exist within our taxation system, beyond measures already implemented and planned, to promote emissions reductions, either on an economy-wide basis, or in specific sectors?

Individual 3:

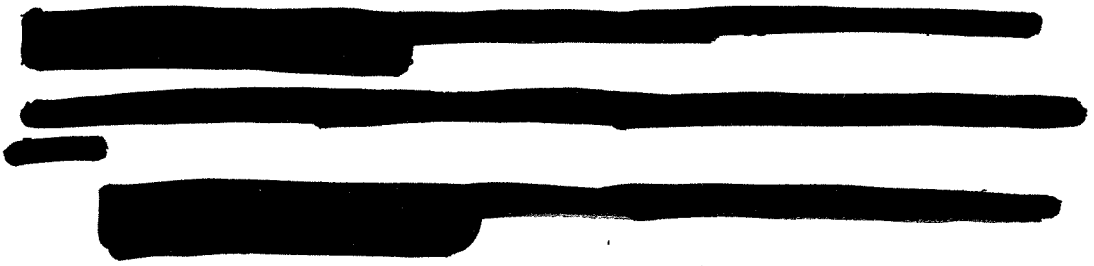
As part of system of incentives, there needs to be a system of tax benefits (credits at least) for actions and behaviours that redice emissions. Extra benefits for achieving individual and collective targets. It would be worthwhile seeing how other countries incentivise changes in and good behaviour.

Public Sector

Q73: What opportunities exist for the public sector to step up its climate ambition?

Individual 3:

Regarding the Defence Forces: you will find some ideas in this..



Renewable Gases

Q13: What role does renewable gas have in the power generation sector?

Individual 3:

None. It's still pedominantly methane: a greenhouse gas with 84 times more global warming potential than carbon dioxide over 20 years (IPCC AR5). It leaks from source, during production, storage and distribution just like natural gas from fossil reservoirs.

Electricity

Q11: What options are available to increase the penetration of renewable electricity beyond the up to 80% committed to in Climate Action Plan 2023?

Individual 3:

I live in West Cork, overlooking Sheep's Head peninsula and Bantry Bay. There are no wind turbines on either the skyline or in the bay.* There is the resource (wind) and the space. So why are there not any turbines? There is no hint of a roll-out programme in the area. It needs localised public information and consultation (because there will be objections, automatically). It needs explanation

of the benefits - and there need to be benefits, such as a 5% discount on electricty bills for those in the vicinity of a wind or solar farm. Locals will be in favour of renewables if they receive some financial benefit from projects. Planning permissions and licensing need to be streamlined and sped up. Stakeholders must be consulted early and often, with full transparency. Where fishers and farmers are impacted, then some form of compensation should be considered.

* If I look from the northside of Beara peninsula, I see the same: a wasted wind resource.

Similar applies to solar farms: much of the land in West Cork can accommodate plenty of networked solar farms. If farmers are paid a regular, dependable income for renting their land to site solar farms.. Also, the potential for dual land-use agrophotovoltaics is large here. Scale this across Ireland and we should, in theory, generate an excess (requiring storage or available for export via interconnector).

Incentivise. If rural farming and fishing folk feel they benefit locally from local wind and solar energy, then they are much more likely to want it and support development.

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Q14: What role could carbon, capture and storage have in decarbonising our power sector?

Individual 3:

Very little. Planned projects globally will only deal with a minor amount of carbon emissions from processes and are unlikely to contribute significantly to global decarbonisation of the atmosphere.

However, long-term natural, i.e. forestry, carbon capture and storage (sequestration) ambitions need to be increased as part of plans to switch to wood as a construction material (to reduce steel and cement production, despite efforts to use hydrogen and renewable energy instead of gas and other fossil fuels).

Q15: What other opportunities exist to support the decarbonisation of the electricity sector?

Individual 3:

Geothermal. There is a largely untapped potential for tapping this enewable resource. Plus using near-surface geological formations for heat storage batteries (converting spare capacity electricity production for wind, solar and other renewables).

Transport

Q43: What changes should be considered in relation to the management of Ireland's road network (e.g. reducing speed limits, parking policy, road user/congestion charging) to reduce congestion and support the priorisation of more sustainable modes?

Individual 3:

A vehicle width tax: the width of cars has increased. They are not suitable for rural roads. They tend to be SUV type cars. Of course, that includes hybrid and EVs.

Q44: What additional measures should be considered to improve the quality or attractiveness or active mobility solutions as an alternative to private car use (e.g. dedicated lanes, secure bike parking, rest areas).

Individual 3:

Rural areas require more, small-scale public transport on more routes, with more frequency. Incentivise its use by making it virtually free to use. Everyone knows a car is expensive to run. But no one is going to get rid of their car without a good network of small buses at the right times of day.

Q57: What infrastructure or further measures are required to help improve the safety of rural roads and further incentivise the use of walking and cycling for shorter journeys in rural areas?

Individual 3:

Footpaths and road-widening, particularly where locals identify dangerous stretches and corners. Ask the local people! We all have a list of the bits of roads that put us off walking and/or cycling them.

Built Environment

Q30: What immediate actions can we take to address the skills shortage in the construction sector, to facilitate meeting our annual retrofitting targets?

Individual 3:

Recruitment campaign abroad. There are plenty of skilled people, including specialists working in the solar panel and wind turbine installation sectors, around the world. They can be persuaded to relocate to Ireland if the salaries are competitive (even subsidised by the state). Not only Irish diaspora, from UK, Australia, US, Canada and elsewhere, but also EU and non-EU citizens. This would fill the immediate gap and buy time while training up a cadre of Irish domestic skilled workers.

Q41: What is the next step for geothermal energy application to the built environment?

Individual 3:

Actually doing it! I am not aware of any geothermal energy project in Ireland. I know that the GSI have a basic map, but that's about it.

Q93: Are there important areas of research and innovation, where Ireland currently does not have sufficient capability, that need to be developed? If so, what are these areas?

Individual 3:

Research and innovation regarding defence-related technologies aimed at carbon neutrality/net zero is woefully neglected. The Defence Forces and associated academics have a wealth of ideas that continue to go untapped. Suggest more contact with the Defence Forces and Ireland's security & defence sector.