

Mitigation measures undersold: study

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The Federal Government should increase its climate change mitigation target to account for cheap land-based carbon offsets, according to the author of a new report from The Australian National University.

The report by Andrew Macintosh, Associate Director of the ANU Centre for Climate Law and Policy, found the potential for land-based offsets exceeds Australia's total abatement target of 5 per cent and that, to date, this potential has not been properly factored into the Government's position in international negotiations.

“In the international climate negotiations, Australia has argued for a less stringent mitigation target than other developed countries because it will incur relatively high economic costs in cutting its emissions,” said Mr. Macintosh. “To support its case, the Australian Government has relied on economic modelling by Treasury which downplays Australia’s potential to generate cheap land-based offsets.

“If the true potential for land-based offsets is taken into account, the cost of meeting Australia’s targets will fall considerably and, if the rationale behind Australia’s negotiating position is followed, the reduction in expected costs should lead to an increase in Australia’s mitigation pledge,” he said.

The report, *LULUCF Offsets and Australia’s 2020 Abatement Task*, which was supported by a grant from Greenpeace, finds that the maximum theoretical land-based offset the country could achieve is significantly beyond its total abatement task.

“While not all of this potential is achievable, the research suggests that land-based offsets are likely to far exceed the Government’s estimates and that a significant proportion of these offsets will come at zero or low cost,” said Mr. Macintosh.

“In particular, [Australia](#) will be able to claim around 12 million tonnes of offsets each year as a result of the Regional Forest Agreement process of the 1990s, and over 100 million tonnes of offsets as a result of falling deforestation rates in Queensland, much of which will require no additional economic effort.”

He added that the government was overlooking these cheap sources of abatement to support its claims for a concessional mitigation target in international negotiations.

“The Australian Government needs to update its economic modelling to account for the potential for cheap land-based offsets and improve the transparency of its greenhouse accounting framework,” said Mr. Macintosh.

More information:

law.anu.edu.au/cclp/Webdocuments/LULUCFOffsets_17%20Feb%202011.pdf

Provided by Australian National University

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