

National Social Monitor 2016

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Chart 1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections to 2020

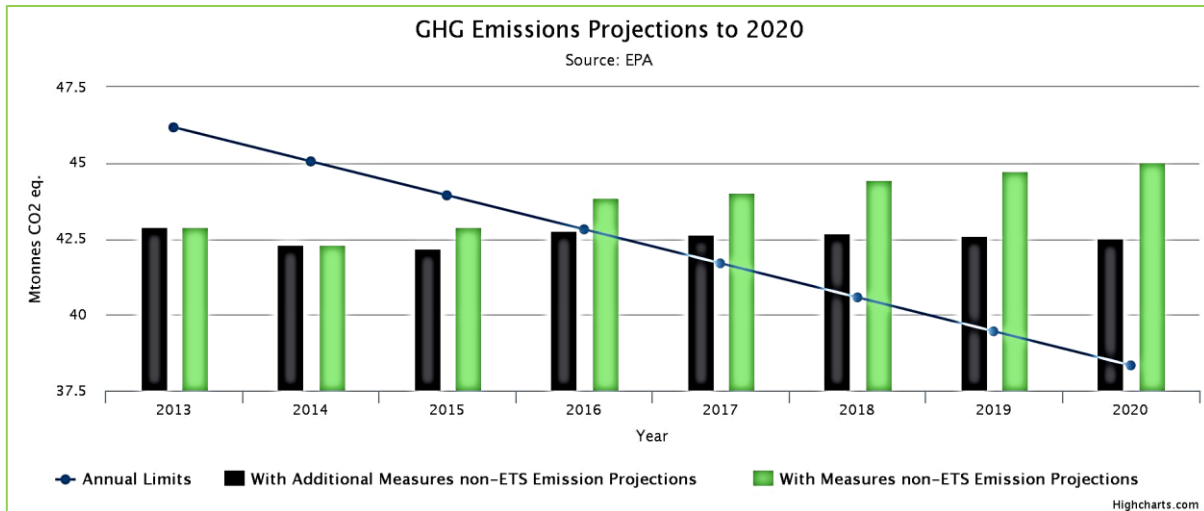
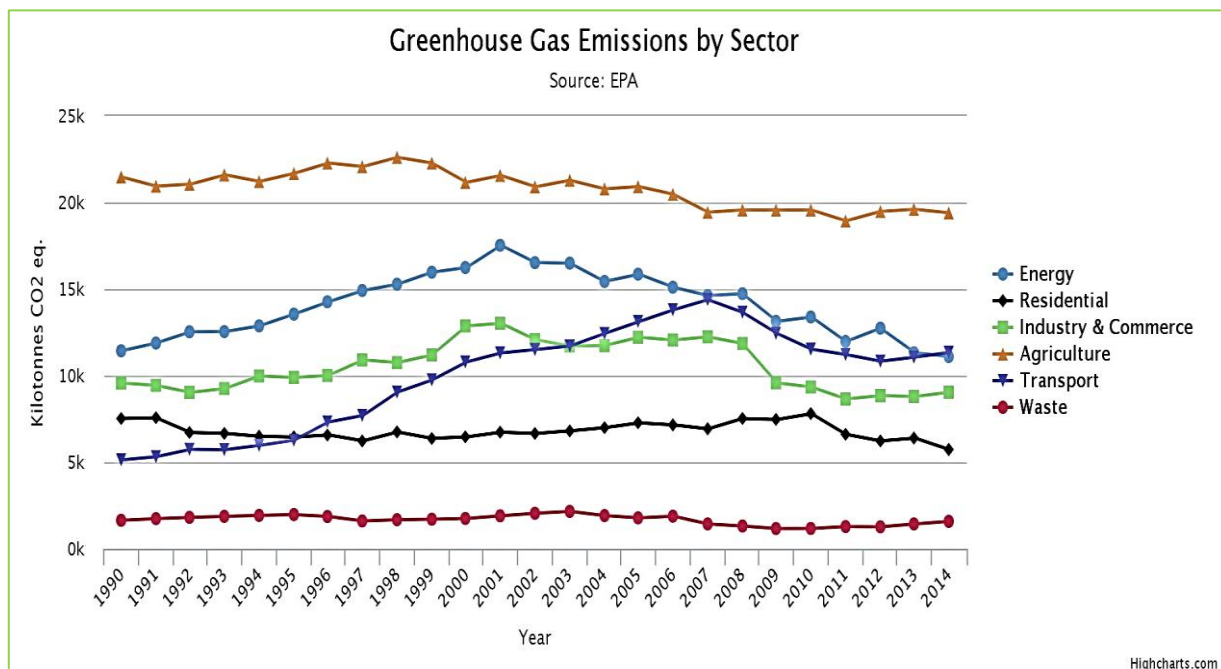


Chart 2: Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector 2014



Source (Chart 1&2): EPA, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2014-2035 and Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections to 2020 - An Update.

Introduction

Careful stewardship of Ireland's natural resources is required to ensure the long term health and sustainability of our environment. Unsustainable use of natural resources is one of the greatest long-term threats to humankind. It is crucial therefore, that Ireland meets the challenges of responding to climate change and

protecting our natural resources and biodiversity with policies that are based on scientific evidence and protecting the common good.

A key challenge for Ireland is to ensure that the economy and key sectors develop in a sustainable way and that economic growth is decoupled from environmental pressures. This

National Social Monitor 2016

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



would require environmental considerations being placed at the centre of policy and decision making at national, regional and local levels

Climate change

The immediate challenge for Irish climate policy is to meet the EU 2020 targets for the domestic sector, which is a reduction of at least 20% on the 2005 emission levels by 2020. This is a significant challenge for Government and will require major changes if the targets are to be met.

Ireland is projected to exceed its annual binding limits in 2016 and 2017 (chart.1). Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emissions Trading Scheme¹ (non-ETS) sector emissions on 2005 levels. Non-ETS sectors are those which are excluded from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and include agriculture, transport, residential, commercial, non-energy intensive industry, and waste. The latest projections estimate that by 2020 non-ETS emissions will at best be 11% below 2005 levels compared to the 20% reduction target.

Ireland's emissions profile is dominated by emissions from the energy supply, transport and agriculture sectors (chart 2). Transport and agriculture represent the most intractable sectors re carbon offsets and emissions mitigations. **Ireland must produce more ambitious adaptation and mitigation plans in order to meet our international commitments.** Environmental policy cannot be pursued in isolation from transport or agriculture policy; they should be integrated and developed together.

Progress towards changing farm practices has been limited and incentives to reduce on-farm greenhouse emissions have not been delivered on a wide scale. Support for sustainable

agricultural practice is important to ensure the long-term viability of the sector and consideration must also be given to how the projected increase in agricultural emissions can be offset. The agriculture and food sector must build on its scientific and technical knowledge base to meet the emissions challenge. Recognition of the 'limited' mitigation potential of the sector must not reduce efforts to reduce agricultural emissions and meet international targets and obligations.

A national sustainable transport network would represent a major step towards a low carbon, resource efficient economy. Capital investment will be required in sustainable transport infrastructure projects to ensure the reduction of transport emissions.

Ireland will face steep challenges post-2020 unless further policies and measures are put in place over and above those envisaged between now and 2020. The EPA point out that further policies are essential in order to position Ireland on a pathway towards a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy, in line with the national objective of the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Act 2015.

Policy Priorities

- Set ambitious emissions reduction targets for 2030 and ensure sufficient resources to support implementation of these targets.
- Ensure our climate mitigation plans support implementation of ambitious emissions reduction targets.
- Develop and promote sustainable transport and agriculture practices to reduce Ireland's emissions.
- Climate policy must be integrated into transport policy and agriculture policy.
- New measurements of progress must be adopted that include social, environmental and economic indicators.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets/faq_en.htm

Social Justice Ireland is an independent think tank and justice advocacy organisation that advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole. Further information on this and other issues is available on our website www.socialjustice.ie