

Update on the Natural and Built Environment and Spatial Planning Bills

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What are the Natural and Built Environment and Spatial Planning Bills?

The Government is undertaking reform that will replace the Resource Management Act (RMA) with three new pieces of legislation. The first is the Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA), which is the main replacement for the RMA and calls for the development of a National Planning Framework (NPF) that will inform 15 new Natural and Built Environment (NBE) plans that replace over 100 current regional and district plans. The second is the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), which will require the development of long-term regional spatial strategies.

The NBA and SPA were introduced in Parliament on 15 November 2022. Submissions were due 5 February 2023, but HortNZ received an extension until 19 February 2023. From this date, the Environment Select Committee, made up of MPs, will prepare a report on the bill with recommended changes. Then, the House will debate the report and vote on the bill. Horticulture New Zealand has been involved throughout the process, telling the horticulture story and promoting outcomes that enable growing.



What did HortNZ ask for?

While HortNZ supports the need for RMA reform, the timeline for public engagement was just too short for such sweeping changes, so we requested that the legislation go through another round of Select Committee to give more time for feedback. In terms of specific changes to the bills, we asked for:

- **A definition of human health needs** that would ensure the physiological needs of people related to resource use (including safe drinking water, nutritious food, and protection from exposure to contamination that poses an unacceptable risk) are considered.
- **An amendment of the outcome for urban and rural areas to provide for food production and supply for New Zealand**, as was recommended by the Select Committee in their first report.
- **The inclusion of national food production and supply as a matter the National Planning Framework must address.**
- **A resource consent timeline that rewards activities that meet the Bill's outcomes** (like climate change resilience and greenhouse gas emissions reductions) with longer consents.
- **Amendments to align the Freshwater Farm Plan framework with international best practice and existing industry assurance processes.**

What were our arguments?

We focused on horticulture as low-emissions food production, the need for a resilient domestic food system in the face of changing weather and global supply chain shocks, and the need for nutritious food for human health. We also asked the Select Committee to consider how the urban form can enable food production through integrated planning and how to best protect highly productive land from inappropriate development.