

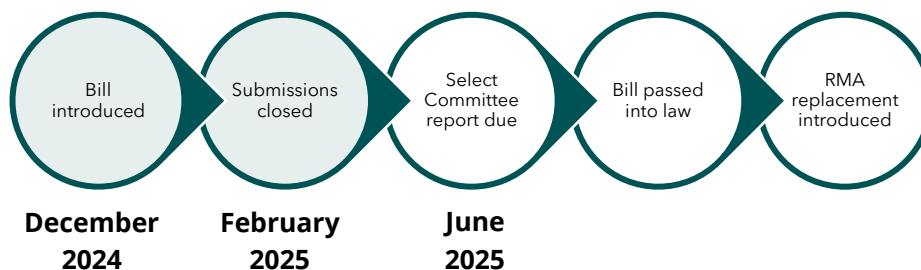
# Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill

Central government | February 2025

## What is the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill?

The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill was part of the Government's second phase of reform to the resource management system. The Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 governs how resource use is balanced with protection for the environment.

The Amendment Bill proposed a range of RMA amendments across the main themes of infrastructure and energy, housing growth, farming and the primary sector, natural hazards and emergencies and system improvements.



## Wins for horticulture in the Bill

HortNZ supported the Bill, especially the changes that allow industry assurance programmes like GAP to deliver freshwater farm plans across the country. This is a win after significant advocacy by HortNZ, NZGAP, Zespri and other industry stakeholders.

In practical terms, this means that GAP programmes will have the opportunity to apply to the Minister to have their ability to deliver freshwater farm plans recognised. All regional councils will then have to accept certification and audit of freshwater farm plans through these approved industry assurance organisations.

The Bill also introduced amendments to Section 70 of the RMA, which relate to a permitted activity status for discharges in catchments experiencing significant adverse effects on aquatic life. This amendment means that, with standards that contribute to environmental improvements over time, activities that discharge can still operate as permitted activities despite a recent Environment Court decision in Southland that would have meant otherwise.

## What did HortNZ ask for?

### **1. Make “enabling the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables” a matter that RMA practitioners must have regard to under Section 7.**

This amendment is needed to balance the protection of New Zealand’s domestic food production areas with other policy priorities. This is important due to the national importance of fresh produce for human health and as a high-value, low-emissions primary production activity. The amendment will provide regional and district councils with justification and direction to enable horticulture in their resource management plans.

### **2. Make the protection of highly productive land a matter of national importance under Section 6 of the RMA.**

HortNZ understands that the Government intends to change the definition of highly productive land in upcoming amendments to the NPS-HPL. HortNZ understands the need for those changes, particularly because land that has been fragmented or surrounded by housing is unlikely to support productive horticultural businesses.

If the definition of highly productive land does change, the use of the remaining highly productive land for primary production must be fully enabled. Highly productive land can only truly be productive if it is protected from reverse sensitivity effects and land users can abstract and discharge water to support growing.

### **3. Make commercial vegetable production a permitted activity**

HortNZ sought to make commercial vegetable production a permitted activity with an audited freshwater farm plan through RMA amendments. This is urgent, given upcoming Environment Court decisions on unworkable regional rules.

### **4. Further improve consenting processes.**

HortNZ supported the Bill’s amendments to the RMA to direct councils not to ask for unnecessary information to process consent applications. HortNZ also sought that consent processing timeframes should not be delayed without genuine special circumstances.

### **5. Oppose cost recovery on permitted activities.**

HortNZ opposed the part of the Bill seeking to impose cost recovery on permitted activity users. In particular, if permitted horticultural activities are going to be audited through freshwater farm plans, further council cost recovery for monitoring would be unreasonable. HortNZ does not support cost recovery on permitted activities in general because activities are permitted when they have low anticipated risks to the environment and often because they serve a wider public good, like the production of food.

### **6. Other amendments**

HortNZ supported other amendments to the RMA, including extending port permits to provide certainty for exporters and provisions to better manage emergency response. HortNZ sought recognition of biosecurity incursions as emergencies requiring response under the RMA through earthworks and vegetation clearance and burning.

## WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Read the [full HortNZ submission](#)
- [New Zealand Parliament website](#)
- Keep an eye on [HortNZ's website](#)