

Alliance Trade Policy

Trade That Serves Aotearoa New Zealand

The Alliance believes international trade should serve the interests of people, communities, and the Aotearoa New Zealand economy rather than placing the interests of multinational corporations above democratic decision-making.

Aotearoa New Zealand must retain the sovereign right to determine its own economic, social, environmental, and employment policies.

The Alliance does not oppose international trade. Our country is a small country at the end of a long supply line, and roughly a quarter of our economic activity currently depends on selling to the world. What we oppose is a trade policy that treats market access as worth any price, including the right to govern ourselves.

1. Economic Sovereignty

Political independence requires economic independence.

The Alliance will oppose international trade agreements and institutions where they restrict the ability of democratically elected governments to:

- regulate the country's economy;
- protect workers and employment;
- protect the environment;
- regulate corporations;
- maintain public ownership;
- provide essential public services.

We must retain democratic control over essential services and strategic assets, including:

- water;
- electricity;
- transport;
- telecommunications;
- health and other public services.

Trade agreements must never be allowed to force the privatisation or foreign ownership of essential public services.

2. Trade That Protects Jobs and Living Standards

Trade policy will be designed to support decent employment and a productive domestic economy.

The Alliance will use trade policy to:

- protect decent employment;
- support local manufacturing;
- encourage value-added domestic production;
- support regional economic development;
- protect health and safety standards;
- protect environmental standards;
- prevent exploitation of workers.

We must retain the ability to use **tariffs and other trade measures** to protect strategic industries, domestic employment, and economic resilience.

Tariffs are a measure to be used sparingly, due to the impact on the price of goods and the risk of retaliation against local exporters. They still have a role to play in protecting local manufacturing and industry from the global race to the bottom.

Particular consideration will be given to industries vulnerable to unfair competition based on exploitative wages and working conditions overseas.

3. No Race to the Bottom

International competition must not become a mechanism for driving down wages, working conditions, or environmental standards.

The Alliance will oppose trade arrangements that encourage businesses to move production to countries where workers can be paid poverty wages or where environmental protections are inadequate.

Imported products should be required to meet appropriate labour, environmental, health-and-safety standards comparable to those we require of our own producers.

Aotearoa New Zealand should have the right to determine those standards democratically and to enforce them effectively.

International trade should raise living standards rather than drive a race to the bottom in wages, working conditions, and environmental protection.

4. Protecting Democratic Government

Trade agreements must not give multinational corporations rights that override the decisions of elected governments.

The Alliance will oppose trade arrangements that:

- undermine New Zealand's ability to regulate corporations;

- restrict legitimate public-interest legislation;
- prevent governments from protecting workers;
- undermine environmental regulation;
- limit public ownership;
- allow private commercial interests to challenge legitimate democratic decisions.

No trade agreement should place corporate rights above democratic rights. The Alliance will not sign an agreement containing investor–state dispute settlement, and will seek to remove it from those we are already party to. Aotearoa New Zealand has already negotiated side letters curbing compulsory ISDS with five CPTPP partners, which shows this can be done without leaving an agreement.

5. Supporting New Zealand Production

Trade policy must form part of a broader economic development strategy.

The Alliance will use appropriate trade and economic measures to strengthen New Zealand's productive capacity, including support for:

- manufacturing;
- agriculture and food production;
- locally owned businesses;
- cooperatives;
- regional industries;
- technology and innovation;
- value-added exports.

The objective is not simply to export more commodities. It is a **productive, diversified, and resilient economy** that creates good jobs and retains more economic value within the country. Our farmers, growers, and food producers need reliable access to overseas markets, and securing that access is a core function of trade policy. What we will not do is trade away the right to regulate in exchange for it.

6. Fair and Managed Trade

The Alliance supports **managed and fair international trade**, rather than the ideological pursuit of unrestricted free trade.

Trade policy should be negotiated according to New Zealand's national interests and democratic priorities.

International agreements must be assessed against their effects on:

- employment;
- wages;
- public services;
- economic sovereignty;

- environmental protection;
- regional development;
- domestic industry;
- consumer interests.

New Zealand should be free to withdraw from or renegotiate trade arrangements that substantially undermine these interests.

In government, the Alliance would commission a public review of New Zealand's existing agreements, including the CPTPP and RCEP, against the tests set out above, with the findings published and debated in parliament rather than settled in cabinet.

7. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Trade Agreements

Every New Zealand free trade agreement since 2001 has included a Treaty of Waitangi exception clause, intended to preserve the Crown's ability to meet its obligations to Māori.

The adequacy of that clause has been contested, including in hearings brought to the Waitangi Tribunal. It has never been tested in a dispute, it was drafted by the Crown without Māori at the table, and it protects the Crown's freedom to act rather than Māori rights themselves.

The Alliance will not negotiate trade agreements affecting Māori interests without Māori participation in the negotiation itself, and will review any exception clause with Māori to ensure it upholds the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

8. Buying Local and Government Procurement

Alliance policy commits the state to preferring local materials and local labour in public construction, and to rebuilding domestic industrial capability.

New Zealand's procurement commitments under the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Government Procurement, and under the free trade agreements that build on it, do not prevent this.

Those commitments apply to a defined schedule of entities: the public service departments, New Zealand Police, the Defence Force, and ten named Crown agents. Sub-central government is not covered at all. Procurement by state-owned enterprises, by KiwiRail, and by regional and local government sits outside the agreements entirely, as do public health, education, welfare, and research services. Coverage begins at roughly \$260,000 for goods and services and roughly \$10 million for construction.

Kāinga Ora is not a covered entity. Neither is any new public construction agency established outside the public service. The state can therefore prefer New Zealand materials and New Zealand labour across the great majority of the building

programme set out in Alliance housing policy without breaching any agreement New Zealand has signed.

Domestic preference is already government policy in a limited form. The Government Procurement Rules require agencies to seek economic benefit to New Zealand above \$100,000 for goods and services and \$9 million for new construction and expect contracts below those thresholds to go to capable New Zealand businesses. The Alliance will strengthen and extend that requirement rather than invent it.

Where coverage does bite, on major departmental contracts above thresholds, we will pursue the carve-outs needed to apply domestic preference.

Our Trade Vision

The Alliance believes New Zealand should be **open to the world without being owned by the world.**

We will support international trade that creates jobs, raises living standards, develops productive industries, and strengthens relationships with other countries.

We will reject trade arrangements that require New Zealand to surrender democratic control over our economy, public services, environment, or working conditions.

Trade should be a means to build a stronger country, not an end in itself.