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SIR - You described the estimated costs of mitigation in a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as "preposterous" for being too low ("Another week, another report", April 19th). But the cost of 0.06 percentage points of economic growth that you quoted is a reduction in the annual average consumption growth rate over the 21st century in stringent mitigation scenarios. This should not be compared with absolute reductions in economic output or consumption in a particular year. Indeed, the reductions in the rate of consumption growth correspond to median consumption losses of 1.7% by 2030 and 3.4% by 2050 relative to what would otherwise happen.

You argued that the "costs of emission measures have routinely proved much higher than expected". In the report the IPCC highlighted that cost estimates depend on a variety of assumptions including the availability of relevant technologies and co-ordinated international action. These can indeed increase the costs substantially, as documented in a comprehensive table.

The IPCC does not specify the feasibility of achieving a certain long-term climate policy goal, but identifies the technological, economic and institutional requirements for achieving alternative climate policy goals under different socioeconomic conditions from a large body of scientific literature. Technological development, breakthroughs and human ingenuity will change these assumptions over time. That is the reason why these models cannot be used as prediction machines, but as "living maps" drawn up by scientists with the most recent evidence available to help policymakers navigate safely through a widely unknown climate policy landscape along the path they have chosen.

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