

PLANT IMPORT SYSTEM REFORM

WORKSHOP 4

SUMMARY

28 MAY 2026 | AUCKLAND

Workshop 4 overview

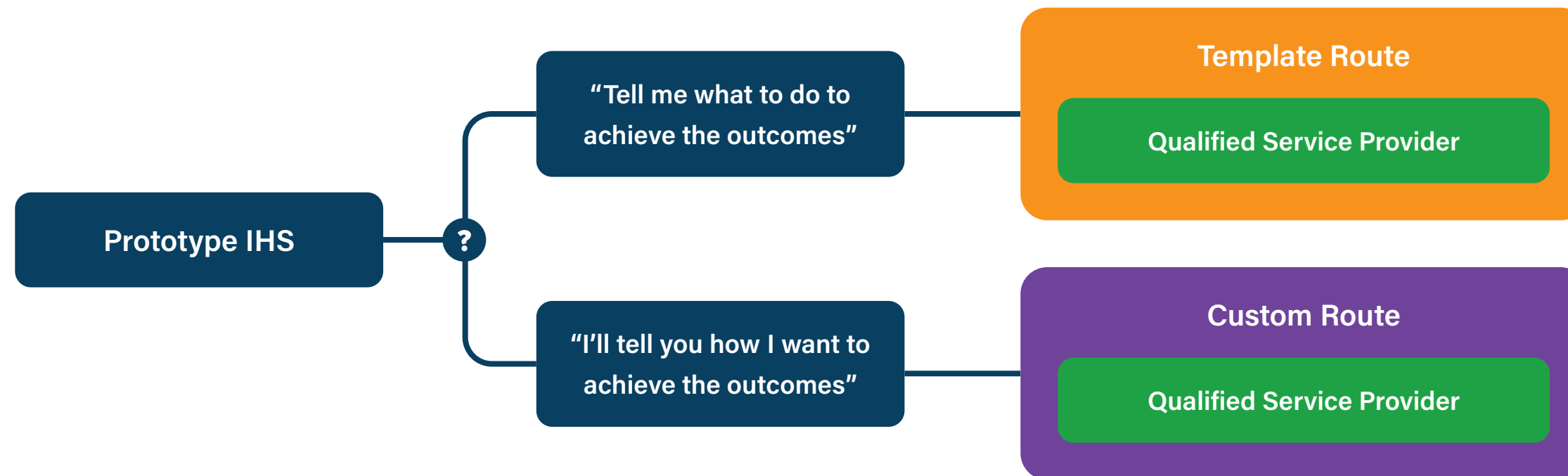
Following earlier workshops in Wellington, Napier, and Christchurch, we held our fourth in-person workshop for 2026 in Auckland on the 28th of May. Participants from across the food and fibre and greenlife sectors came together to continue shaping what the future plant import system should deliver for live plant import health standards.

Participants tested a refined prototype in both paper and digital formats. The prototypes explored more flexible ways to manage risk, alongside clearer guidance on the evidence needed to demonstrate that risks are being managed and biosecurity outcomes are being met.

Plant Import System Reform – Work completed in 2026



The prototype we tested in workshop 4



Workshop 4 prototype

This prototype, developed for Workshop 4, brings together the most desirable features identified from the initial IHS prototypes tested at the Christchurch workshop. From your feedback in previous workshops, we heard two clear needs: more flexible ways to manage risk, and clear guidance on the evidence required to demonstrate that risks have been managed and biosecurity outcomes have been met.

To respond to this, we've framed the prototype around two simple routes:

- Template Route: A "tell me what to do to achieve the outcomes" approach, where users follow a structured pathway with pre-evaluated risk management options.
- Custom Route: An "I'll tell you how I want to achieve the outcomes" approach, where users propose their own way to manage risk for MPI to review and approve.
- Qualified Service Providers (QSPs): Used in both routes. These are organisations, facilities, or systems recognised by MPI to carry out certain controls or provide assurance that biosecurity requirements are met.

Overview of the prototype structure

Overall participants supported having a template route, custom route and a QSP feature in the system.

Template Route overview

The Template Route is designed to be simple and easy to follow. Users work through a step-by-step pathway that clearly sets out the biosecurity outcomes they need to meet and provides practical options for how to meet them.

Users can choose from a range of risk management options, such as testing, area freedom, or post entry quarantine, along with the types of evidence needed to support those choices. This gives some flexibility while keeping the process clear and structured.

As options are selected, the system creates a consignment specific checklist. This outlines what needs to be done, who is responsible, and what evidence is required, helping coordinate activities across the pathway.

Because requirements are clearly set out in the template, import permits are not needed. At the border, MPI reviews the evidence provided to confirm all outcomes have been met and makes a clearance decision.

Custom Route overview

The Custom Route allows importers to design their own import pathway, showing how biosecurity outcomes will be met rather than following a set template.

Importers create a Pathway Plan and supporting Evidence Pack, outlining controls, checks, and responsibilities across the pathway, and submit these to MPI for approval. MPI reviews the proposal against required outcomes and may approve, decline, or request changes.

Organisations that provide key controls or assurance in the approved pathway may be recognised as QSPs.

Once approved, importers follow the Pathway Plan to prepare consignments and collect evidence. An Evidence Pack is submitted for each consignment, which MPI reviews to confirm requirements have been met.

The pathway is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure it continues to meet biosecurity outcomes. Based on performance, it can be refined, streamlined, suspended, or expanded over time.

QSP overview

The QSP feature makes better use of capable offshore and onshore providers to help achieve biosecurity outcomes. Importers can rely on MPI-recognised QSPs, which may be people, organisations, facilities, or systems that carry out specific controls or assurance activities.

QSPs can be used in both the Template and Custom Routes to manage risk more efficiently.

In the Template Route, QSPs are pre-recognised by MPI and listed on a public register, with clear information on what they cover. Importers can see which biosecurity outcomes are already met and use template options to address any gaps

In the Custom Route, QSP recognition is specific to the proposed import pathway.

THEMES AND INSIGHTS FROM WORKSHOP 4

From Workshop 4 discussions, we identified six key themes that reflect the main areas of feedback. There was continued support for the overall direction, with feedback highlighting what is working well, what needs to change, and where further clarity or refinement is needed to support practical application.

Themes:

1. Risk-proportionate requirements
2. Evidence, verification and assurance
3. Roles, accountability and trust
4. Route choice and Custom Route design
5. Usability and implementation readiness
6. Digital workflow, usability, reuse, and integration

From these themes, we developed a set of insights capturing the core needs and pain points raised by participants. You can read these in the next set of slides.

Theme 1: Risk-proportionate requirements

These insights are about making sure controls match the actual level of risk, rather than applying blanket or overly restrictive requirements.

Insight 1:

Scale sampling and inspection to risk

Sampling and inspection should be risk-based, not one-size-fits-all. Users questioned blanket requirements, such as full inspection for consignments under 600 units, where a proportionate sample may provide enough confidence that visually detectable pests are absent.

A clear decision framework is required for when full inspection is needed, when proportional sampling is enough, and how consignment size and pest characteristics affect that decision. This would support an efficient, evidence-led system and help users trust that requirements are not more burdensome than needed.

Insight 2:

Set PEQ levels and duration in proportion to pathway and pest risk

Users supported using onshore PEQ as a risk management option, but raised concerns that the Custom Route's default Plan B setting (L3A or L3B PEQ) is overly conservative. They questioned whether consignments failing Plan A due to insufficient or unreliable evidence should automatically move to this level, or if a more proportionate alternative should be considered.

Participants suggested Level 3B PEQ may not always be proportionate where the residual risk is lower or can be managed through targeted controls such as a defined period in Level 2 PEQ, or a modified Level 2-type setting.

The Custom Route should clarify the thresholds for when Plan B requires Level 3A or Level 3B PEQ, and when a lower or modified PEQ setting could provide equivalent protection. Risk-proportionate PEQ settings would support an evidence-led and efficient system.

Insight 3:

Show how each option in the Template Route provides enough risk management

Users need confidence that each option for meeting an outcome in the Template Route provides appropriate risk management. For example, users questioned when "post-clearance management within New Zealand" is enough to meet the "controlled production" outcome on its own, and when it may need to be combined with other measures.

The criteria used to judge whether an option provides enough risk management should be transparent. This would support fair, risk-proportionate requirements, build user confidence to take ownership of meeting outcomes.

Theme 2: Evidence, verification and assurance

This insight is about how users prove that outcomes have been met, how MPI checks this, and when MPI accepts assurance from others.

Insight 4: Make evidence, verification and auditing expectations clear

Users need to know what evidence is needed to show that each outcome has been met. The standard should make clear what evidence is acceptable, which documents are required, who checks the evidence, where checks happen, and what users need to provide.

It should also explain when auditing is needed and how much auditing is required. Auditing should match the level of risk, take account of past performance, and consider the cost placed on importers.

Clear evidence, verification and audit settings would build user confidence in meeting outcomes and reduce unnecessary cost and delays in the system.

Theme 3: Roles, accountability and trust

These insights are about who does what, who can be trusted to perform specific roles, and who is accountable when things go wrong.

Insight 5: Clarify when MPI will accept third-party assurance

Users are uncertain how assurance from third parties, such as NPPOs and offshore facilities, will be accepted by the system. They need to know what level of assurance is required, who can provide it, and how MPI will assess assurance from different sources.

The standard should explain how third-party assurance will be recognised, assessed and used across both template and custom routes. Clear assurance settings would support an evidence-led system and help users prepare import pathways with more confidence.

Insight 6: Clarify who can be a Qualified Service Provider (QSP), what they can do, and how they are checked

Users support QSPs playing a role in the system, but only with clear guardrails. MPI needs to define who can be a QSP, what they can do, how their work is checked, and how they are held accountable.

A QSP recognition and assurance framework should set criteria, approved scopes, audit settings, suspension triggers and accountability arrangement. This would empower users to manage risk while keeping the system evidence-led and trusted.

Insight 7: Make the “responsible person” role clear and accountable

Users want clearer guidance on how the “responsible person” required under Outcome 1 will be held accountable for managing and demonstrating that biosecurity outcomes are met for their consignment. The role needs to have substance - not just a name on a form.

Participants want clearer enforcement settings in the system. If obligations are not met, the system should be able to identify the responsible party, follow up with them, and apply consequences that are proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the failure. This matters because users are concerned that one importer’s poor risk management could otherwise create unfair consequences for compliant importers, or the wider industry.

Theme 4: Route choice and Custom Route design

These insights are about how users choose between routes, when the Custom Route is available, and whether it is practical and commercially fair to use.

Insight 8: **Make route choices easy to compare**

Users need clear guidance on when the Template Route + QSP and the Custom Route should be used and how MPI will avoid creating unintended advantages or disadvantages between routes.

This is important because if one route is perceived over another as being unfair, unclear, too risky or not worth using, users may lose confidence in the system or avoid that route.

Insight 9: **Clarify Custom Route entry rules**

Users cannot confidently choose the Custom Route unless the entry rules are clear. They need to know when the Custom Route can be used, what it can be used for, and where its limits are. For example, they wanted clarity on whether it can be used for one-off imports of a “requires assessment” species or a suspended pathway.

The rules should clearly define Custom Route eligibility, use cases and limits. Clear entry rules would help users manage risk, take ownership of bespoke pathways, and reduce uncertainty at the start of the process.

Insight 10: **Clarify ownership and reuse of Custom Route approvals**

Users may be less willing to invest in a Custom Route if others can benefit from that investment without sharing the cost. They need to know what becomes public, what stays confidential, who can reuse an approved route, how long settings last, and whether any first-mover benefit applies.

The rules should explain ownership, confidentiality, reuse and duration settings for Custom Route approvals. Clear rules would improve transparency, fairness and confidence in the system.

Theme 5: Usability and implementation readiness

These insights are about whether people can understand and apply the new system in practice.

Insight 11: Clarify Custom Route requirements, timeframes and assessment capacity

Users see the Custom Route as uncertain if evidence requirements, assessment criteria, costs, timeframes and MPI resourcing are unclear. They need to know what MPI expects in an application, how evidence should be presented, how it will be assessed, how long decisions may take, what costs may apply, and whether MPI has enough capacity to assess applications.

Users were concerned that the Custom Route could become a bottleneck if assessment demand is high or process settings are unclear. Clearer application and service expectations would help users decide whether the Custom Route is practical for them. This would support a more efficient and adaptable system.

Insight 12: Use clearly defined terms

Users need clear, shared definitions for key terms, especially where words are new, uncommon or have a specific biosecurity meaning. Examples include terms such as “pests that matter”, “direct clearance” and “initiation event”.

The standard should define key terms clearly enough for users to understand and apply them consistently, while still preserving the intended regulatory meaning. Clear definitions would make the standard easier to use and support more consistent decisions.

Insight 13: Support users and inspectors to make the new IHS model work in practice

Users questioned whether the system will have the right expertise, resources and support to make the proposed live plant IHS model work in practice. This is especially important during set-up, when new routes, roles and assessment processes may be unfamiliar.

Feasibility testing should identify what guidance, training and support are needed for users and MPI inspectors, especially for the Custom Route. Without enough support, the new model could be applied inconsistently and create operational pressure for MPI.

Theme 6: Digital workflow, usability, reuse, and integration

This insight is about users wanting the digital tool to actively support the import process, not simply reproduce the IHS on screen.

Insight 14:
Make the digital tool support the full import workflow

Users want the tool to help them choose routes, understand the overall process, save and reuse information, upload evidence, involve multiple users, see named providers or support paths, and connect to MPI systems and PEQ workflows.

Next steps



Refine prototype

We will refine the prototype to incorporate the feedback and insights from workshop 4.



Test and iterate further

We will plan targeted online engagements for further testing and refinement of features in the prototype.

A list of online workshops will be sent out on Wednesday 1 July with tentative dates.