



GROWING TOGETHER 2035

Aotearoa Horticulture
Action Plan

PIPELINE OF FUTURE PAN-SECTOR REQUIREMENTS (WEBSITE)

April 2026

PIPELINE OF FUTURE PAN-SECTOR REQUIREMENTS

Growers need to adopt new practices to meet regulator, retailer and consumer expectations. This AHAP project was undertaken to give a comprehensive picture of the requirements that may be coming down the pipeline for growers.

Growers increasingly need to incorporate new practices into their business at the request of regulators and retailers. Rapid industry-wide adoption of new requirements helps the horticulture sector to retain its social license. Extension support can make adoption of particularly complex or challenging new practices quicker and easier for growers.

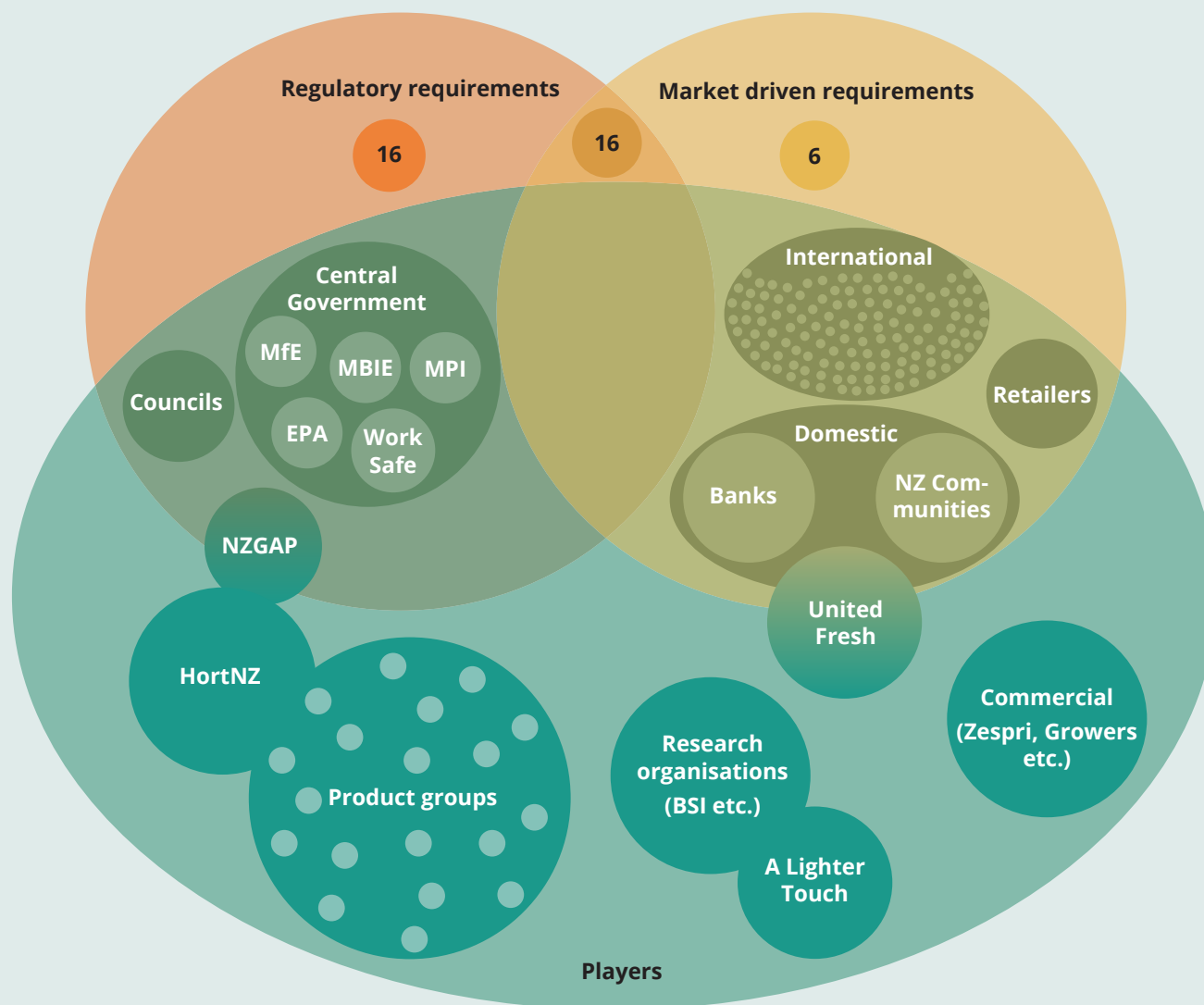
This project aimed to capture regulatory and market driven requirements anticipated for growers. These were gathered via a literature review, workshops and interviews with subject matter experts. The scope was limited to pan-sector topics, such as environment, biosecurity, food safety and social practice. Priority ratings were generated for each requirement by considering a) impact on growers, b) difficulty to meet, and c) how much is already being done.

What did we find?

- The process identified 38 requirements - 16 that growers must meet now, a further 10 that are in train, and 12 that are possibly on the horizon.
- Of these, 16 have a regulatory driver, and 6 are market driven. The remaining 16 are driven by both.
- The requirements the group deemed 'high priority' or lacking enough support for growers are listed below:

Requirements that are applicable now	Requirements that are in train	Requirements that are on the horizon	Signal only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microbial contaminants • Psychosocial risk management • Physical health and safety • Resistance management • Contracted labour/ workforce settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater farm plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicable diseases • High-risk crop food safety controls and tailored systems • On-farm allergen controls • Heavy metal contaminants • Management of emerging food safety risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer pays principle • Extended producer responsibility packaging fees

- Creating a pipeline was challenging due to the complexity of the horticulture landscape. There are many requirements, both current and future. They extend across domains and are not always mutually exclusive. The diagram below shows the players involved and the complexities within these groups.



The process allowed us to glean some interesting insights:

- When considered collectively rather than by domain (e.g. food safety, biosecurity), the quantity of requirements are significant. Depending on their operation, growers must meet most, if not all, requirements. Medium and small-scale horticulture businesses often don't have the resource for a dedicated compliance role.
- Some requirements may not come into force for years but require early preparation if they are to be met. This is particularly true when new technologies need to be developed, as was the case with home-compostable produce stickers. This presents a dilemma – when should industry start preparing for requirements that may or may not eventuate? Sometimes a requirement is introduced, only to be repealed or deadline extended before implementation begins. Those implementing new requirements need to give industry adequate lead in time and as much certainty as possible.
- Extension responsibilities cannot sit solely with industry. Other players (e.g. government agencies and private sector) need to support industry to achieve these requirements, especially given it is mostly government, regulatory bodies and retailers asking for the new requirements.

- Good Agricultural Practice industry assurance programmes (NZGAP and Global GAP) help to consolidate the requirements in one place. These schemes are a logical delivery mechanism for existing and new regulatory and market requirements.
- There was a cluster of requirements in the food safety space. These may be under-extended. A horticulture food safety network is being established. This could be a good vehicle for discussing the food safety requirements.
- The project identified legislation that is particularly relevant for horticulture businesses including, for example, the Food Act 2014, Holidays Act 2003, Minimum Wage Act 1983, and the Biosecurity Act 1993. Changes to these pieces of legislation must be communicated to growers in a timely manner.
- Europe seems to be leading the way with new requirements e.g. deforestation (EU), agrichemicals (EU), green deal (EU), packaging and packaging waste regulations (EU), extended producer responsibility packaging fees (UK), retailer certification requirements (UK). It's worth keeping an eye on the EU for early signals as their requirements may be replicated by other regions.

- Many of the requirements are well in hand and some of the coming requirements will be easy for growers to manage. Therefore, additional extension is not required for every requirement identified.

There are some caveats...

- The list of requirements generated should not be considered exhaustive.
- For the time horizons other than 'now' there is an element of guesswork and uncertainty. The requirements may or may not come to pass.
- Experts and organisations often had different perceptions, assumptions and beliefs about what the incoming requirements may be, and how urgent or impactful they could be.
- Extension can be more or less involved, ranging from raising awareness to sharing information/guidance or teaching skills/training. The support needed should not be a one size fits all approach.

What questions remain?

This piece of work is a starting point, and some significant questions remain. For example:

- Are there any vulnerabilities (e.g. particularly complex or challenging new requirements) that may benefit from additional extension support? If so, is pan-sector extension appropriate and how could this be delivered, likely within the landscape of existing extension providers?
- The research revealed gaps in the extension of some current requirements. How much focus should be on extending future requirements when we are not satisfying all of the current ones?
- Where new requirements are requested by New Zealand regulators or retailers, what is their responsibility to help horticulture businesses with adoption?

How will this project be used?

Signals about possible new requirements are tracked by various individuals and entities in the course of their work but there is no consistent process for sharing this information. This project has gathered insights in one place and provided the base analysis from which any industry vulnerabilities can now be identified.

Being aware of current and future requirements, acknowledging their potential impact on growers and creating ways to support growers is important to achieve sector-wide adoption and maintain social licence. The work will be shared with entities that develop guidance and/or provide extension services so that they can go through the requirements that sit in their wheelhouse and consider what (if anything) is required, when, and whether it should be done collaboratively. The options include raising awareness of the requirement, sharing information & guidance (this may include developing the guidance) or teaching skills/providing training.

The project supports sector **resilience** by encouraging forward planning and quick adoption of new requirements by horticulture businesses, which helps to maintain social license. It also supports **profitability** - businesses will need to meet any new assurance requirements if they are to continue supplying domestic or international markets.

This project contributes to two AHAP actions:

- Ensure extension and training programmes are in place to meet regional needs (Key Priority 1.2)
- Promote social practice initiatives in markets and embed these into horticulture business practices (Key Priority 5.3)

This project was made possible with funding from New Zealand Fruitgrowers Charitable Trust and Horticulture New Zealand.



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