



MAF Sees the Wood for the Trees with Electronic Biosecurity Clearance Solution

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry develops Biosecurity Clearance Solution.

The background

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAF BNZ) is New Zealand’s first line of defence against invasion by pests and diseases which could devastate the agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors. MAF BNZ Clearance Services identify and manage any potential biosecurity risks at the border and provide domestic and offshore technical inspection and clearance services. New Zealand’s Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has always relied on a paper based process to manage import biosecurity clearance applications. But with pressure from the industry and Government mounting, MAF needed to migrate to an electronic solution to decrease the clearance turnaround time and improve customer service.

There was a significant opportunity for MAF to reinvigorate its way of working and increase its reputation in the marketplace by providing the level of service expected from industry. The organisation turned to a tried and trusted partner, Fronde, to deliver the electronic interface and completely transform the clearance process.

Features of the MAF solution:

The Inbound Messaging solution was built on the Microsoft server stack, including Windows Server 2003, BizTalk 2006 and SQL Server 2005, and the .NET 3 framework. Features include:

- + Inbound messaging solution including file attachments
- + Electronic Commerce Network to ensure different message formats can be received
- + Web based viewer continuously queues and displays incoming applications
- + Receipt number issued to customers agent to acknowledge when application was received.

“A big factor in the successful outcome of this project was the synergy of the project team, which was made up of Fronde consultants who had worked with MAF before, our own Information Management professionals and a team of eight subject matter experts. The demo environment used to build the Inbound Messaging system meant that each member of the team felt involved in bringing the solution to life from the start and instilled a fantastic sense of ownership and pride in what we’d achieved” Howard Webber, Project Manager, Strategy and Transformation, MAF Biosecurity New Zealand.

Benefits

“The increase in the turnaround speed of applications submitted through the electronic clearance process has upped our productivity and we expect time savings of over 7440 hours per annum going forward. More importantly, it has improved the overall customer experience in dealing with MAF. With Fronde’s help we are now able to deliver what the industry expects from us and more.”

Howard Webber, MAF

For the Ministry

- + Faster clearance of applications and increased productivity
- + Better customer experience

For Custom Agencies

- + Immediate time and costs savings
- + Better service to their customers

The solution

With Inbound Messaging, rather than sending a fax, the customs agent now submits a clearance application electronically to MAF Biosecurity via the Electronic Commerce Network Group (ECN). ECN provides a link between the various software applications used by the industry and the MAF IT systems, ensuring that the different electronic documentation formats and messages are able to be received and processed by MAF.

The Inbound Messaging solution accepts these XML messages including file attachments in a standardised way and routes them internally to the appropriate backend systems. A web based viewer continuously queues and displays incoming clearance applications on screen, which allows MAF inspectors to clear goods on the spot or transfer potential risk good into their workflow stream with a few clicks of the mouse. The customs agent receives an electronic message and receipt number to acknowledge that the application has been received by MAF and should further information be required, inspectors are able to send a message to ask for more information.

“With Inbound Messaging, the work queue is visible from all of our offices,” says Webber. “Staff can deal with an application from anywhere in the country which means that we can be more flexible with our resourcing. At the same time, customs agents can ask for their application to be risk screened at their local port by screeners with local knowledge. The Inbound Messaging queue system also helps us to monitor the turnaround time on each application and work towards consistently meeting and improving our service delivery targets.

Success

Already the difference is considerable FedEx comments: “When we heard about the Inbound Messaging project, we were excited to get on board as quickly as possible. With much of our freight requiring biosecurity clearance, we realised the great potential time and cost savings for our company and the difference that this would make to the service we provide our customers. And the time savings have been even better than we expected – a process that used to take two hours, now takes one person only twenty minutes. With the number of clearances we submit per year, the overall savings are exceptional.”

Electronic clearance applications take only a fraction of the time of the manual process, MAF employees can now dedicate more time to biosecurity risk screening leading to improved detection of risk goods and the volume of faxes is slowly starting to reduce. Visibility of the end-to-end clearance process is increasing, with the ability to track and monitor a clearance application from start to finish.

With biosecurity clearances being issued more quickly, more freight is ready for inspection sooner and having extra staff in this area will further speed up the end-to-end process for customers.

Looking to the future, New Zealand is in the process of designing its response to the worldwide Trade Single Window initiative which will allow supply chain participants to submit regulatory information like customs and biosecurity clearance documents once to a single location to increase efficiency. MAF has taken a forward-thinking approach to design the Inbound Messaging solution as a step towards working within this global trade initiative, and is looking forward to the benefits that this will bring to all in the import/export industry.

Fronde

Fronde is a Kiwi IT services company that is best known for delivering great software solutions to major blue-chip organisations in the government, utilities and finance sectors.

Fronde teams are committed. The dedication, experience and sector knowledge of our people sets us apart. Our longest serving team has been with their client for over 10 years.

We are trusted to build complex, high quality software systems that get the job done for some of New Zealand’s most mission critical services. We built and continue to support - the largest non-bank lending system in the country. One of the security systems we have built processes over 1 billion requests per day (or 10,000 per second). We integrated the New Zealand wholesale electricity market system. And New Zealand’s most successful mobile commerce service was created by us.