



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**SPS COMMITTEE THEMATIC SESSION ON VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE
AS PART OF NATIONAL SPS CONTROL SYSTEMS**

TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2020

WTO, CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD, GENEVA

PROGRAMME

Revision

In the context of the Fifth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures* (SPS Agreement), Belize submitted a proposal for the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) to consider holding a thematic session on voluntary third-party assurance programmes.¹ At the July 2019 meeting, the SPS Committee agreed to the proposal and to hold the thematic session in March 2020. After its suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SPS Committee agreed to hold the thematic session in November 2020.

The session will cover voluntary third-party assurance as part of national SPS control systems, with the main objectives to: receive updates from the international standard-setting bodies on their work in the area; facilitate an exchange of information among Members on their use of voluntary third-party assurance as part of national SPS control systems; obtain the perspectives and experiences of the private sector; and learn about capacity-building initiatives in this area.

Further to Belize's proposal, Members were invited to submit any inputs on the programme and speakers by 29 November 2019. This programme is based on the structure suggested by Belize.²

The thematic session will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, starting at 10:00, and continuing in the afternoon at 15:00, as necessary. The thematic session will take place at the WTO and can also be attended virtually through the Interprefy platform.

Chairperson: Mr. Gregory MacDonald

1 RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Update from the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) on the "Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance", and presentations on the development of relevant standards from IPPC and OIE.

Speakers:

- **Mrs. Gracia Brisco**, Codex Secretariat.

¹ [G/SPS/W/316](#). This original proposal referred to "a thematic session or workshop", however in the July 2019 SPS Committee meeting, Belize informed the Committee that the four areas indicated in its proposal would be best covered in a one-day thematic session, as opposed to a two-day workshop.

² [G/SPS/W/320](#).

- **Mr. Steve Wearne**, Vice-Chair Codex Alimentarius Commission and Director, Global Affairs, Food Standards Agency, United Kingdom.
- **Mr. Brent Larson**, Implementation and Facilitation Unit Leader, IPPC Secretariat.
- **Dr. Gillian Mylrea**, Head of the Standards Department, OIE.

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

2 MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES WITH VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES AS PART OF NATIONAL SPS CONTROL SYSTEMS

Experiences of both exporting and importing Members with the use or application of these programmes as part of national SPS control systems to facilitate trade. (Some of the questions speakers may address are: What changes, if any, had to be made at the national level to enable the use of these programmes? Are there any cost savings which enable extra resources to be channelled to other needed areas? If yes, what are some of the other benefits? What are the challenges faced?)

Speakers:

- **Mrs. Delilah Cabb**, Coordinator, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Enquiry Point, Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Belize.
- **Mrs. Miriam Bueno**, Subdirectora General de la Subdirección General de Inocuidad Agroalimentaria, Honduras.
- **Prof. Hussein Mansour**, Chairman, National Food Safety Authority, Egypt.
- **Mrs. Emma Pagotto**, Acting Senior Trade Policy Analyst, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada.
- **Mrs. Jennifer Thomas**, Senior Advisor, US Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, United States.
- **Dr. Peter Wend**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety Department, Food Safety Unit, Monitoring Strategy and Coordination, Germany. *Inclusion of private assurance schemes in the official controls - various approaches in Europe.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

3 PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERIENCES REGARDING VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES USED AS PART OF NATIONAL SPS CONTROL SYSTEMS

Private sector experiences with government use of voluntary third-party assurance schemes as a means to facilitate safe trade – benefits and challenges.

Speakers:

- **Ms. Anne Gerardi**, Senior Manager, Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI): *GFSI Benchmarking.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

4 CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

Presentations on capacity-building efforts regarding use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes as part of national SPS control systems.

Speakers:

- **Mrs. Marlynn Hopper**, Deputy Head, Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF): STDF Pilot projects and other relevant work.
- **Mr. Ali Badarneh**, Chief, Food Systems and Nutrition Division, Department of Agri-Business, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

- **Dr. Mukayi Musarurwa**, SPS Expert, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- **Dr. Andrew Edewa**, Director, Standards & SPS Measures Trademark East Africa. *Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Schemes – The Case of Eastern Africa.*
- **Ms. Anne Gerardi**, Senior Manager, GFSI: *GFSI Global Markets Programme.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

5 CLOSING

Roundtable

Discussion on some overarching themes such as:

- Based on the discussions throughout the thematic session, in Member's views, what are aspects of voluntary third-party assurance programmes that enable the facilitation of international trade?
- What are the key challenges of third-party assurance programmes faced by industry and by importing and exporting countries that Members should seek to address?
- As a next step, how can capacity-building efforts better address the challenges faced in this area?

Speakers: TBC
