



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**SPS COMMITTEE THEMATIC SESSION ON THE USE OF REMOTE (VIRTUAL) AUDIT
AND VERIFICATION IN REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS**

**TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022
WTO, CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD, GENEVA**

PROGRAMME¹

Revision

The SPS Committee agreed, at its November 2021 meeting, to hold a thematic session on the Use of Remote (Virtual) Audit and Verification in Regulatory Frameworks in the margins of its June 2022 Committee meeting, based on proposals submitted by Australia.²

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use and development of methods to conduct remote assessments, such as audits and inspections, in agricultural and food supply chains. Drawing on the experiences of Members and industry, this thematic session will explore the benefits and implications associated with the use of remote assessments, including the effectiveness, reliability, and accessibility of such approaches. With international guidance emerging in this area, the thematic session will provide insight on the consistency of application of remote assessment tools across countries and the ongoing work of international organizations and standard-setting bodies such as the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). Overall, the thematic session will provide an opportunity to share experiences on remote assessment methods, discuss how such approaches may assist Members with meeting obligations under Annex C of the SPS Agreement, and take a closer look at the relevance and scope for future use.

The thematic session will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday, 21 June 2022, beginning at 10:00 (CET), and continuing in the afternoon at 15:00 (CET). The thematic session can be attended in person or virtually through the Interpretrefy platform. Interpretation will be provided in English, French, and Spanish.

¹ This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

² [G/SPS/GEN/1949](#) and [G/SPS/GEN/1949/Rev.1](#).

Chairperson: Mr Juteau Déadjoufo Toussé

1 RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Speaker:

- **Mr Rolando Alcalá**, WTO Secretariat.

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

2 FORMS OF REMOTE ASSESSMENT

This session will provide insights into various forms of remote assessments such as the review of documentation and video inspection, including those used during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the link with regulatory frameworks.

Speakers:

- **Mr Jean Felipe Celestino Gouhie**, Head of International Audits Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Brazil. *Remote Audits: Brazilian Experience.*
- **Ms Yelin Wong**, Director, Risk Management and Surveillance Department, Joint Operations Division, Singapore Food Agency, Singapore. *Singapore's experience in remote audits.*
- **Dr John McEvoy**, Head of Unit F4, European Commission Directorate General Health and Food Safety, European Union. *Remote auditing of the operation of official control systems in the SPS domain – Experience of the European Commission's Health and food, audits and analysis Directorate.*
- **Dr Gabor Molnar**, Associate Industrial Development Expert, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). *Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)/UNIDO Project Preparation Grant on "Remote Inspection Practices in Food Safety for Improved Trade".*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

3 RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND OTHER INITIATIVES

This session will provide an update on relevant international standards, guidelines and/or recommendations and other ongoing work relating to remote audit and other forms of remote assessment.

Speakers:

- **Ms Nicola Hinder**, Chair of CCFICS and First Assistant Secretary, Exports and Veterinary Services Division, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australia. *Codex – Developing guidance on the use of remote audit and verification in regulatory frameworks.*
- **Dr Annelies Deuss**, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Ongoing work on remote audit at the OECD.*
- **Ms Anne Gerardi**, Senior Manager; and **Mr Howard Popoola**, Steering Committee Co-chair, Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). *GFSI and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the food safety supply chain for third party audits: learnings and challenges.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

4 ROUNDTABLE - PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES ON THE USE OF REMOTE AUDIT

In this roundtable discussion, Members and industry representatives of the agri-food sector will exchange experiences and discuss the benefits of using remote assessment methods such as remote (virtual) audit to facilitate international trade. The challenges associated with remote audit will also be discussed, including those related to privacy and security issues.

Moderator: Ms Nicola Hinder, Chair of CCFICS and First Assistant Secretary, Exports and Veterinary Services Division, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australia.

Speakers:

- **Dr Bill Jolly**, Chief Assurance Strategy Officer, Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand.
- **Dr Sibel Bas**, Veterinarian, Department of Border Control for Animal and Animal Products, Directorate General for Food and Control, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye.
- **Dr Ashok Mengi**, National Manager; and **Dr Aman Deep**, National Veterinary Specialist, Food Systems Evaluation, International Programs Directorate, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada.
- **Ms Clare Rapa-Marley**, Head of Global Supplier Standards and Audits, Tesco PLC, United Kingdom.

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

5 CASE STUDY EXAMPLES ON THE USE OF REMOTE AUDIT

Members and industry representatives of the agri-food sector will present case studies on the use of remote audit. Those case studies will be the occasion to shed light on the benefits and challenges of remote audit in practice.

Speakers:

- **Mr Hector Escobar**, Head of the Sub-Directorate of Food Safety and Certification, National Fisheries and Aquaculture Service; and **Mr Álvaro Díaz Gallmetzer**, Food Safety and Certification Department, Livestock Protection Division, Agriculture and Livestock Service, Chile. *Chile's experience with remote audits in animal and plant products processing establishments.*
- **Ms Choi Eun Ju**, Deputy Director, On-site Inspection Division, Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, Republic of Korea. *The COVID-19 pandemic, pre-emptive response with remote inspection.*
- **Mr Jim Moseley**, CEO of Red Tractor, United Kingdom. *Use of remote audit by a UK voluntary third party assurance (vTPA) scheme, approach and lessons learned.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

6 PANEL DISCUSSION - THE FUTURE FOR REMOTE AUDIT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Panellists will discuss the opportunities and challenges regarding the future use of remote audit. Questions from the floor would be welcome during the discussion.

Moderator: Ms Nicola Hinder, Chair of CCFICS and First Assistant Secretary, Exports and Veterinary Services Division, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australia.

Panellists:

- **Mr Jean Felipe Celestino Gouhie**, Head of International Audits Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Brazil.

- **Dr John McEvoy**, Head of Unit F4, European Commission Directorate General Health and Food Safety, European Union.
- **Mr Carlos Navarro**, Head of the Department of Animal Health, National Fisheries and Aquaculture Service; and **Mr Claudio Moore**, Department of Phytosanitary Regulation and Certification, Agricultural, Forestry and Seed Protection Division, Agriculture and Livestock Service, Chile.
- **Dr Annelies Deuss**, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

7 CLOSING REMARKS
