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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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## **UPDATE ON OECD ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE SPS COMMITTEE**

### COMMUNICATION FROM THE OECD

The following communication, received on 16 June 2023, is being circulated at the request of the OECD.

#### **1 COSTS, BENEFITS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF REMOTE AUDITS FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY**

1.1. Remote audits enabled international food trade to continue despite the severe COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, but what is their role in the future? Based on case studies and an OECD survey, this report examines the cost, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits. The analysis reveals that key benefits include lower travel expenses, reduced emissions footprints, more flexible use of time, and opportunities to train and involve more staff. There were nevertheless major drawbacks, including limitations to gather audit evidence, a heavy additional burden of preparation time, internet connectivity issues, and the lack of interpersonal engagement. In general, most stakeholders consider remote audits to be less effective than on-site audits, particularly for those of regulatory systems or for the physical auditing of establishments. This report highlights the need to harmonize the terminology in this area of work, and to develop practical guidelines on how and when to conduct remote audits.

- Deuss, A. and S. Honey (2023), "Costs, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits for international food safety", OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No. 196, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fe97106-en>.

Contact:

Annelies Deuss (E-mail: [annelies.deuss@oecd.org](mailto:annelies.deuss@oecd.org))