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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**SPS COMMITTEE THEMATIC SESSION ON VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE AS
PART OF NATIONAL SPS CONTROL SYSTEMS
MARCH 2020
WTO, GENEVA**

SUBMISSION FROM BELIZE

The following communication, received on 18 October 2019, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of [Belize](#).

INTRODUCTION

Members may recall that at the 75th Meeting of the SPS Committee, it was agreed that a thematic session on Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes would be held in March 2020. The main objectives of the thematic session include:

- to receive updates from the International Standard Setting Bodies on relevant work being undertaken on guidelines for the use of voluntary third-party assurance by competent authorities;
- to facilitate an exchange of information among Members on the use of voluntary third-party assurance as part of national sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) control systems. This will include the different approaches taken by some competent authorities, experiences, benefits, challenges and lessons learnt;
- to obtain the perspectives and experiences of the private sector on the use of voluntary third-party assurance by competent authorities; and
- to be apprised of the capacity building initiatives, along with potential presentations on pilot projects and other work being undertaken in the area of voluntary third-party assurance as part of national SPS control systems.

The proposed draft agenda is being circulated for consideration by Members.

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 other available guidance from the IPPC and the OIE.

Speakers: International Standard Setting Bodies

Followed by Q & A session and discussion

2 MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE IN RECOGNIZING VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES FOR USE AS PART OF NATIONAL SPS CONTROL SYSTEMS

Importing and Exporting Members' experiences with their own use, and other Members' use, of these programmes as part of national SPS control systems to facilitate trade. (What changes, if any, had to be made at the national level to enable the use of these programmes?)

Speakers: TBD

Followed by Q & A session and discussion

3 SHARING OF MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES (EXPORTING AND IMPORTING) ON THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES (CONTINUED)

Experiences of both exporting and importing Members on the application/use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes. (Any cost savings which enable extra resources to be channelled to other needed areas? If yes, what are some of the other benefits? Any challenges?)

Speakers: TBD

Followed by Q & A session and discussion

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

Private sector (Global Food Safety Initiative and other private sector representatives) experiences with government use of voluntary third-party assurance schemes as a means to facilitate safe trade. Any benefits? Challenges?

Speakers: TBD

Followed by Q & A session and discussion

5 CAPACITY BUILDING EFFORTS

Presentations on capacity-building efforts regarding use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes as part of national SPS control systems, potentially including presentations on relevant STDF pilot projects and any other relevant work.

Speakers: TBD

Followed by Q & A session and discussion
