



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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

TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2020

WTO, CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD, GENEVA

PROGRAMME

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.

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 draft programme is based on the structure suggested by Belize.² Members are further invited to submit written comments on this draft programme, including suggestions of additional speakers, to the Secretariat (spscommittee@wto.org) by **Friday, 24 January 2020**.

The thematic session will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday, 17 March 2020, starting at 10:00, and continuing in the afternoon at 15:00, as necessary.

Chairperson: Mr Daniel Arboleda

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.

Speakers:

- **Codex Alimentarius**
- **IPPC**

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

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](#).

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:

- **Canada**

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:

- **Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) - Benchmarking** (TBC)

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:

- **Belize**
- **Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF):** STDF Pilot projects and other relevant work
- **Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) – Global Markets Programme** (TBC)

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

5 CLOSING

Roundtable moderated by Belize

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
