



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.

Morning

Chairperson: Mr. Gregory MacDonald

1 RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Speakers:

- **Ms Gracia Brisco**, Codex Secretariat. *Relevant work of Codex on the use of voluntary third-party assurance.*

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. *A perspective from the UK and an update on the Codex "Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance"*.
- **Mr Brent Larson**, Implementation and Facilitation Unit Leader, IPPC Secretariat. *Relevant work of IPPC in the area.*

Followed by Q&A session and discussion.

2 EXPERIENCES WITH VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES

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

Experiences of exporting and importing Members with the use or application of these programmes as part of national SPS control systems to facilitate trade.

Speakers:

- **Ms Delilah Cabb**, Coordinator, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Enquiry Point, Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Belize. *Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes - Pilot Project in Belize.*
- **Mr Hussein Mansour**, Chairman, National Food Safety Authority, Egypt.
- **Ms Emma Pagotto**, Acting Senior Trade Policy Analyst, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada. *Canada's experiences with the consideration of voluntary third-party assurance programmes as part of our national food safety control systems.*
- **Dr Peter Wend**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety Department, Food Safety Unit, Monitoring Strategy and Coordination, Germany. *Consideration of private assurance schemes in official controls - various approaches in Europe.*
- **Ms Jennifer Thomas**, Senior Advisor, US Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, United States.

Followed by Q&A.

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

Private sector experiences with the 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.

Afternoon

3 CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

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

Speakers:

- **Ms Marlynn Hopper**, Deputy Head, Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). *STDF Pilot projects and other relevant work.*
- **Ms Miriam Bueno**, Deputy Director General of the Deputy Directorate General for Food Safety, Honduras. *Expectations, challenges and opportunities of Honduras for the STDF vTPA pilot project in Central America.*
- **Mr Ali Badarneh**, Chief of the Sustainable Food Systems Division, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). *Building capacities for national vTPA programmes.*
- **Dr Andrew Edewa**, Director, Standards & SPS Measures Trademark East Africa.
Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Schemes – The Case of Eastern Africa.
- **Dr Mukayi Musarurwa**, SPS Expert, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). *The Evolving vTPA Landscape in the COMESA Region: Regional Capacity Building Supportive Initiatives.*
- **Mr Jompie Burger**, Managing Director, Dairy Standard Agency, South Africa.
Ensuring legal compliance of dairy in South Africa – a collaborative initiative between local health authorities and the organised dairy industry.
- **Ms Anne Gerardi**, Senior Manager, GFSI: *GFSI Global Markets Programme.*

Followed by Q&A.

4 CLOSING

Panel Discussion

Discussion on 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?
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