



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

#### Twenty-seventh Session

Cairns, Australia

16 – 20 September 2024

### INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCFICS

(Report of UNIDO, WTO and STDF Secretariats, and OECD)

#### A. ACTIVITIES OF UNIDO RELEVANT TO CCFICS

1. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) continues to work to improve the food safety control systems and food safety management systems of food business operators (FBOs) in its member states. Last year in particular, UNIDO's work focused on developing tools to help countries implement the *Principles and Guidelines for the assessment and use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes* (CXG 93-2021) and *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969, Rev. in 2022). Also, UNIDO is seeking to enhance traceability, compliance, and safety standards globally, contributing to safer food systems and facilitating international trade through new initiatives, particularly Africa and Asia. This document serves as a report on the efforts and tools employed by UNIDO during 2023 in connection with the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export and Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

#### UNIDO work on voluntary third-party assurance programmes (vTPA)

2. As part of the activities of the project Piloting the use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes (vTPA) in West Africa, funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), a training in risk-based inspection took place in Dakar from November 13 to 15, 2023. The course was attended by 45 participants from Mali (5) and Senegal (40), including 22 inspectors, 16 members of the industry, 6 laboratory representatives, and 1 producer. The main aim of the training course was to improve inspection systems in the mango sector in Senegal and Mali, based on risk-based inspection tools.

3. As a result of mobilizing resources through the vTPA partnership platform established by UNIDO, and to continue to raise awareness of the available vTPAs, such as free trainings on schemes for producers, processors, members of government technical departments, representatives of various ministries, auditors and evaluators in Mali. A total of 63 participants, including 21 women, attended the training, which also included a visit to a mango farm to observe first-hand what an auditor would assess during an audit.

4. UNIDO organized, in partnership with other agencies, the inaugural meeting of the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF) in Cairo from October 11 to 13, 2023. Participants included regulators from 38 African countries, who showed great interest in modernizing food safety practices in different jurisdictions. The use of vTPA was identified as a modernized approach to food control. During the AFRAF, UNIDO's vTPA assessment tool, whose objective is to provide guidance for the implementation of Codex guidelines on the use of vTPA was launched. The tool is expected to greatly benefit pilot projects in Mali, Senegal, Rwanda and Uganda by supporting their competent authorities to decide whether the information / data generated by the respective vTPA may be used to better risk-profile sectors or even individual FBOs.

5. UNIDO has also developed a tool to perform a "vTPA Readiness Check" for the application of the Codex guideline on voluntary third-party assurance in regulatory decision-making. The diagnostic tool will help competent authorities quickly assess their ability to integrate information from industry's vTPA into regulatory decision-making, in line with CXG 93-2021.

6. In November 2023, an expert on food safety certification schemes provided a training on the ABCs of a food safety certification scheme for Arab regulators from the vTPA Working Group. Nine regulators from Lebanon, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Palestine and Morocco, joined the remote presentation and learned the fundamental principles of food safety certification schemes, including the importance of compliance with international standards and the role of third-party audits in ensuring food safety.

7. The 17th Dubai International Food Safety Conference 2023 (DIFSC) was held from December 11 to 13, 2023. It was organized by the Food Control Department of Dubai Municipality with support from the International Association for Food Protection and UNIDO. UNIDO participated in the Session on “Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) – Public Private Partnership to Improve Food Safety Outcomes”. The conference focused on effective implementation of the Codex Principles and Guidelines related to vTPA Programmes by regulatory authorities in the UAE and the wider region. Key discussions included utilizing audit data for informed decisions on domestic and import control, as well as deploying remote audit practices. The panel moderated by the Dubai Municipality and featured by Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) Foundation, UK Food Standards Agency, Standards and Trade Development Facility, and UNIDO. Topics covered lessons from STDF-funded initiatives, the FSSC 22000 vTPA programme, UK’s engagement with vTPA through public-private partnerships, and UNIDO’s contributions. Additionally, the Dubai Municipality explored learning from STDF partnerships and the benefits of UNIDO’s vTPA toolkit. Finally, the FSSC Foundation introduced new data-sharing methods for regulators’ easier access to shared data.

8. On June 27th and 28th UNIDO organized the Vienna Dialogue on Benchmarking of vTPA. The Dialogue brought together about 60 participants from industry, standard setters, certification and accreditation bodies, vTPA owners, international and multilateral organizations, international financial institutions, and other key stakeholders of the global quality infrastructure. This first Dialogue concluded with a consensus on the importance of harmonizing standards and practices to enhance global trade oversight. Stakeholders from various sectors acknowledged the complexities introduced by diverse approaches to vTPA programmes and emphasized the necessity of establishing a unified framework for benchmarking. This would ensure consistency, integrity, transparency and robust governance across different programmes. The participants agreed on the critical role of collaboration in achieving these goals, and several actionable outcomes were proposed.

#### **Remote audit and verification**

9. With the support of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of the Government of Australia, UNIDO organized a Workshop on Remote Audit in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 24th and 25th of October 2023. The objective of the workshop was to explore the remote practices and digital solutions that allowed regulatory control and certification to continue during COVID-19 lockdowns. Officials from competent authorities of the ASEAN region shared their relevant experiences, conclusions, and recommendations based on their experience conducting remote audit and inspection processes. The workshop also served to raise awareness on the Draft *Principles and Guidelines on the Use of Remote Audit and Inspection in Regulatory Frameworks*, which were finally adopted in November 2023. Ultimately, it facilitated discussions among stakeholders for a regional approach for remote audit and inspection following the recommendations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. In addition, a session was facilitated during the AFRAF, where the draft text was presented to regulators.

#### **Application of prerequisite programmes in UNIDO implemented initiatives**

10. UNIDO has been involved in the development and deployment of pre-requisite programmes (PRPs) in collaboration with regulators and the industry in different countries. These PRPs are necessary technical guides for FBOs, integrating the relevant requirements from Codex, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) standards. Such PRPs were developed in Bangladesh, Mongolia, and Pakistan.

## B. ACTIVITIES OF THE WTO SPS COMMITTEE, TBT COMMITTEE AND THE STDF

Report by the WTO and STDF secretariats<sup>1</sup>

This report to the 27th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) provides a summary of some of the recent relevant activities of the [WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures](#) (the SPS Committee). It covers the SPS Committee's workshops, thematic sessions, and specific trade concerns (STCs) discussed between March 2023 and March 2024. Additionally, the report provides information on the relevant work undertaken by the and the [WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade](#) (the TBT Committee) and the [Standards and Trade Development Facility](#) (STDF).

### 1 RELEVANT WORK OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

#### 1.1 Workshops and Thematic Sessions

1.1. The SPS Committee convenes three times annually, often preceded by workshops or thematic sessions. In November 2023, it hosted a [Thematic Session on Risk Communication, Misinformation, and Disinformation](#). This thematic session delved into the intricate landscape of information manipulation within the framework of the SPS Agreement. Speakers explored the evolution of misinformation and disinformation, their potential impact on policy decisions, and their role in discussions on agricultural food safety.<sup>2</sup> Highlights from the session include:

- a. Speakers highlighted concerns about misinformation in the food sector, citing cases like plastic rice and false information about expired foods. They emphasized the critical role of inspection in upholding food safety standards and effective communication strategies to counter misinformation. It was discussed how food misinformation can originate unexpectedly and how high-profile food safety incidents are often due to non-compliance with existing rules rather than inadequate legislation.
- b. The session included discussions on international standards and codes of practice from international standard setting bodies (ISSBs) such as Codex and IPPC, which regulate various aspects of food safety, including practices like irradiation. The aim was to clarify common misunderstandings about such practices and ensure adherence to globally recognized guidelines.
- c. Various speakers explored strategies for effectively communicating risks in food safety, highlighting transparency, clarity, and context as key principles in conveying risks to consumers. They underscored the importance of proactive consumer engagement and clear information about food safety measures and standards to build trust in regulatory bodies and industry practices.

1.2. The WTO SPS Secretariat organized a [Workshop on Transparency](#) on 18-19 March 2024. It aimed to enhance the implementation of SPS transparency provisions by facilitating technical discussions among officials. Participants shared their experiences using online transparency tools, including the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#).<sup>3</sup>

1.3. Following discussions at the March 2024 SPS Committee meeting and proposals submitted during the Sixth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures* (SPS Agreement), the SPS Committee held a [Thematic Session on Digital Tools](#) on 25 June 2024. The programme,<sup>4</sup> based on proposals from European Union, Norway, and the United States<sup>5</sup>, aimed to explore technological solutions in the SPS field. It focused on facilitating safe trade through improved transparency and efficiency. Key points from the session include:

- a. Members, Observers and industry representatives shared their insights and experiences with online tools, including e-certification platforms, websites to publish SPS legislation, and other digital resources. Various speakers highlighted the crucial role of e-certification since its increased adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the beneficial cost effects it has had on both public and private sectors.
- b. Future developments in digital tools were explored, showcasing ongoing projects and upcoming initiatives, including the application of advanced technologies. Speakers explored the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to trace illegal activities in the agri-food chain and the use of machine learning for

<sup>1</sup> This report has been prepared under the WTO Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of WTO Members or to their rights or obligations under the WTO. The same applies for the section on STDF.

<sup>2</sup> A summary report of this session is available in Annex B of document [G/SPS/R/111](#).

<sup>3</sup> The summary report of the workshop can be found in document [G/SPS/R/113](#).

<sup>4</sup> [G/SPS/GEN/2224/Rev.2](#)

<sup>5</sup> [G/SPS/W/359](#), [G/SPS/W/366](#), and [G/SPS/W/363](#), respectively.

the digitalisation of food product imports. Industry representatives also discussed how the digitization of SPS requirements can enhance trade flows.

1.4. A recording of the session and links to all the presentations are available on the [WTO SPS gateway](#).

## 1.2 Specific Trade Concerns

1.5. The SPS Committee dedicates a significant portion of each regular meeting to considering Specific Trade Concerns (STCs). Any WTO Member can raise STCs regarding the food safety, plant health, or animal health requirements imposed by another WTO Member. These concerns generally arise from the notification of new or revised measures or the experiences of exporters. It is common for multiple countries to share similar concerns. During SPS Committee meetings, Members usually agree to exchange information and engage in bilateral consultations to resolve the identified issues.

1.6. The WTO Secretariat compiles an annual summary of the STCs discussed in SPS Committee meetings<sup>6</sup>. Since the establishment of the WTO in 1995 (up to March 2024), Members have raised a total of 579 STCs. Notably, 192 (33%) of these concerns primarily relate to food safety, with 182 involving control, inspection, or approval procedures<sup>7</sup>.

1.7. Throughout the 2023 and March 2024 SPS Committee meetings, a total of 71 STCs were discussed, 38 of which are related to control, inspection, and approval procedures. Several of these STCs addressed authorization for enterprises and products, delays in import authorization for foodstuffs, precautionary measures for imported foodstuffs, import restrictions due to diseases and contaminants, non-application of regionalization, and health certificate requirements.

1.8. Table 1 provides a summary of the 18 STCs specifically relevant to food safety, focusing on control, inspection, and approval procedures. Of these, four were newly raised issues<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 1: Specific trade concerns related to food safety & control, inspection, and approval procedures (March 2023-2024)**

STC ID	Title	Member(s) Responding to Trade Concern	Member(s) raising Trade Concern	Member(s) supporting to Trade Concern
<a href="#">382</a>	EU legislation on endocrine disruptors (ID 382)	European Union	Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Argentina; Guatemala; India; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; United States; China	Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Argentina; The Gambia; Ghana; Guatemala; Guinea; Honduras; India; Indonesia; Israel; Jamaica; Kenya; Republic of Korea; Madagascar; Malaysia; Australia; Mexico; Mozambique; New Zealand; Nigeria; Pakistan; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Russian Federation; Senegal; Sierra Leone; South Africa; The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand; Togo; United States; Benin; Uruguay; Viet Nam; Zambia; Brazil; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Canada; Central African Republic; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Certain Members
<a href="#">442</a>	EU Commission Decision 2002/994/EC on animal products (ID 442)	European Union	China	

<sup>6</sup> The latest version of this summary can be found in document [G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.24](#).

<sup>7</sup> Information on STCs can be easily extracted from the [ePing SPS&TBT platform](#) or the [WTO Trade Concerns database](#).

<sup>8</sup> STC ID: [559](#), [560](#), [574](#) and [576](#).

<u>446</u>	EU review of legislation on veterinary medicinal products (ID 446)	European Union	Argentina; United States	Argentina; Japan; Australia; Norway; Paraguay; Uruguay; Brazil; Canada; Chile; Colombia
<u>448</u>	EU MRLs for alpha-cypermethrin, buprofezin, chlorothalonil, chlorpyrifos, chlorpyrifos-methyl, cypermethrin, diflubenzuron, ethoxysulfuron, glufosinate, imazalil, ioxynil, iprodione, mancozeb, molinate, picoxystrobin and tepraloxydim (ID 448 - See also related STCs ID 453, 454, 457, 474, 475, 517)	European Union	Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Guatemala; India; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; United States; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire	Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Argentina; Guatemala; Honduras; Indonesia; Japan; Kenya; Malaysia; Australia; Nicaragua; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Russian Federation; Türkiye; United States; Uruguay; Brazil; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Certain Members
<u>498</u>	Ecuador's import restrictions on grapes and onions (ID 498)	Ecuador	Peru	
<u>501</u>	India's requirement for certificate for non-GM origin and GM-free status (ID 501)	India	European Union; United States; China	European Union; Argentina; Japan; Australia; New Zealand; Paraguay; Russian Federation; Thailand; Türkiye; Uruguay; Brazil; Canada; Chile
<u>503</u>	EU restrictions on exports of chocolate and cocoa products due to the application of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 488/2014 of 12 May 2014 amending Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of cadmium in foodstuff (ID 503)	European Union	Peru	Ecuador; Indonesia; Malaysia; Colombia
<u>518</u>	EU classification of 'anthraquinone' as a pesticide and the MRL for imported tea (ID 518)	European Union	India	
<u>529</u>	Qatar's new import rules for dairy products (ID 529)	Qatar	European Union	New Zealand
<u>533</u>	EU restrictions on spice imports and other food products due to European Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2246 of 15 December 2021 (ID 533)	European Union	India	
<u>550</u>	EU Commission proposal for reduction of the current MRL for "nicotine" for imported tea from India (G/SPS/N/EU/581) (ID 550)	European Union	India	

<u>552</u>	EU increased sampling frequency for inspection of farmed shrimps and newly listed fishery establishments not permitted to export aquaculture products (ID 552)	European Union	India	
<u>553</u>	India's Draft Food Safety and Standards (Import) Amendment Regulation (ID 553)	India	European Union	Japan; New Zealand; United States; Canada
<u>554</u>	India's Order related to requirement of health certificate accompanied with imported food consignment of milk, pork, fish and related products (ID 554)	India	European Union	Japan; Australia; New Zealand; Norway; Switzerland; United States; Canada; Chile
<u>559</u>	Australia's MRLs stricter than Codex standards in products of interest to India – request to share risk assessments (G/SPS/N/AUS/555) (ID 559)	Australia	India	
<u>560</u>	New Zealand's amendment of MRLs for cyantraniliprole, tetracyclines and trichlorfon (G/SPS/N/NZL/695) (ID 560)	New Zealand	India	
<u>574</u>	China; Hong Kong, China; Macao, China; Russian Federation – Import restrictions on aquatic products after the discharge of ALPS treated water (ID 574)	Hong Kong, China; Macao, China; Russian Federation; China	Japan	
<u>576</u>	Qatar's precautionary requirements/measures for some imported foodstuffs (ID 576)	Qatar	Republic of Korea	Philippines

### 1.3 Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement

#### 1.3.1 Operation of Transparency Provisions

1.9. During the SPS Committee meetings, Members may raise any questions or concerns regarding the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement. Under this agenda item, Brazil highlighted its proactive approach with over 220 SPS notifications in 2022, promoting adherence to ISSB standards and scientific evidence while raising awareness among producers.

1.10. In March 2024, while no Member updates were shared, the Committee noted a significant increase in SPS notifications, nearing 2,000 in 2023, indicating strong adherence to transparency obligations. Since 2023

(up to March 2024), a total number of 2,534 SPS notification were submitted of which 1,660 were specifically related to Food Safety as the objective.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3.2 Control, Inspection and Approval Procedures

1.11. During the Fifth Review, Members recognized the need to add *Control, Inspection and Approval Procedures* as an agenda item for the SPS Committee. This addition was prompted by the fact that over 50% of the STCs discussed in 2023 were related to these issues. The new agenda item allows Members to share experiences, raise questions, and address concerns regarding the implementation of Annex C of the SPS Agreement.

1.12. Under this agenda item, Brazil informed Members about its ongoing efforts to protect poultry production from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) during the November 2023 and March 2024 SPS Committee meetings. Recognizing the global challenges in combating HPAI outbreaks, Brazil outlined its contingency plan, which strictly follows the protocol established by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). The plan includes provisions for diagnosing any suspected cases and also encompasses Newcastle Disease. Rapid detection of disease cases enables prompt emergency response, control, and eradication of outbreaks. Brazil reiterated that HPAI has not yet occurred in commercial poultry. Following WOAH guidelines and recommendations, Brazil has developed a model to minimize the risk of disease introduction and spread. Brazil encouraged Members to visit dedicated websites for updated data and the HPAI Monitoring Map and expressed a willingness to share further information to build confidence in its system and collaborate on addressing these diseases jointly.

1.13. Additionally, as discussed in the report to the 26th Session of CCFICS, the Working Group on Approval Procedures circulated a comprehensive summary of its work.<sup>10</sup> Two documents, "Working Group on Approval Procedures: The Collection of Available Tools and Resources in Relation to SPS Approval Procedures" ([G/SPS/W/337](#)) and "Recommendations in Relation to SPS Approval Procedures" ([G/SPS/W/338](#)), were put up for adoption and subsequently approved by the SPS Committee during the March 2023 SPS Committee meeting.<sup>11</sup> These approved recommendations acknowledged that the topic is a work in progress, requiring further exploration through various channels, including the Sixth Review.

1.14. Furthermore, in March 2024 the SPS Secretariat presented on the synergies between Trade Facilitation and SPS Agreements concerning control, inspection, and approval procedures. This presentation was circulated as [RD/SPS/262](#).

## 2 RELEVANT WORK OF THE TBT COMMITTEE

2.1. The work of the TBT Committee is captured in its annual reviews; the most recent one was issued in March of this year and is contained in G/TBT/53.<sup>12</sup> One recent development which may be of particular interest to the Codex, is the adoption, in March 2024, of new guidelines on conformity assessment procedures.<sup>13</sup> These guidelines are aimed at assisting regulators in developing appropriate and proportionate methods to ensure that products meet technical regulations and standards without creating unnecessary trade barriers. The guidelines are non-prescriptive and emphasize the importance of balancing trade facilitation with regulatory objectives like safety, health, and environmental protection. Key considerations include risk assessment, market surveillance, use of international standards, ensuring transparency and stakeholder consultation, and supporting the needs of developing countries. These guidelines may provide useful insights for the implementation of Annex C of the WTO SPS Agreement, which focuses on the control, inspection, and approval procedures to ensure that sanitary and phytosanitary measures do not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade.

## 3 RELEVANT STDF WORK

3.1. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) is a global multi-stakeholder partnership that promotes improved food safety, animal and plant health capacity in developing countries and helps imports and exports to meet SPS requirements for trade, based on international standards. It operates as a funding mechanism and knowledge platform for dialogue and learning on SPS capacity development. The Codex Secretariat participates actively in STDF's work.

3.2. The STDF promotes the use of Good Regulatory Practices (GRPs) to ensure SPS measures are fit for purpose and do not lead to unjustified barriers to trade. It has published a [GRP Guide](#) to help SPS regulators

<sup>9</sup> Information on notifications can be easily extracted from the [ePing SPS&TBT platform](#).

<sup>10</sup> [G/SPS/GEN/2097](#).

<sup>11</sup> The Collection of Available Tools and Resources in Relation to SPS Approval Procedures and the Recommendations in Relation to SPS Approval Procedures were subsequently circulated as [G/SPS/67](#) and [G/SPS/68](#), respectively.

<sup>12</sup> For a snapshot, see the Executive Summary on p.4 of G/TBT/53.

<sup>13</sup> These are in G/TBT/54, circulated on 19 March 2024.



in developing countries navigating and using GRPs when designing, developing, and reviewing SPS measures. In June 2024, the STDF approved a new project to improve clarity, predictability, and coordination on SPS/TBT regulations affecting trade through enhancement of the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) ("ePing"). This project, which benefits from co-funding from the European Union, will also aim to increase the uptake of ePing in developing countries.

3.3. The STDF also promotes the use of [public private partnerships](#) to strengthen SPS capacity and facilitate trade. This includes a focus on the use of voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programmes to improve food safety, based on the Codex *Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of vTPA programmes*. Three STDF projects piloting the use of vTPAs in specific sectors and products, in [Mali & Senegal](#), in [Rwanda & Uganda](#), and in [Belize & Honduras](#), respectively, will be completed by the end of 2024. In 2023, UNIDO and the STDF issued a vTPA programme assessment tool, which can be accessed [here](#). Further experiences and lessons on how vTPA approaches can be used in a developing country context will be documented and shared, including through the [vTPA Partnership Platform](#), established by UNIDO, and possibly in a workshop to be organized by the SPS Committee on this topic in November 2024.

3.4. The STDF has provided seed funding to a small project to identify current practices applied by regulators regarding the conduct of [remote inspections](#) of food business operators. This work is implemented by UNIDO, which is collaborating with regulators actively participating in CCFICS. This work may lead to a bigger STDF project benefiting a pilot country (or countries) in Asia where best practices in applying remote inspection practices could be introduced or further improved. A project proposal is expected to be submitted to the STDF later this year.

3.5. The STDF continues to promote the use of electronic SPS certification ([SPS eCert](#)) and continues to share experiences and lessons, including through its community of practice on SPS eCert. The STDF organized a session on SPS eCert at the WTO Global Aid for Review in June 2024, during which it also hosted the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group. An [external evaluation](#), conducted in 2023, illustrated the continued relevance and huge impact of STDF's innovative ePhyto project. In 2024, the STDF initiated a new project, in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) on exchanging electronic veterinary certificates ("[eVet](#)") in Latin America.

3.6. CCFICS delegates are encouraged to visit the [STDF website](#) to become familiar with STDF's work and subscribe to STDF's monthly newsletter [here](#). The website also includes information on how to apply for project and project preparation grants.



### C. INFORMATION FROM OECD ON RECENT OECD WORK ON SPS DIGITAL TOOLS

Prepared by the OECD Agro-Food Markets and Trade Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate

#### Latest OECD publication relevant to the work of CCFICS

The Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division of the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate has published the following SPS research paper in June 2023 relevant to the work of CCFICS.

- [Costs, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits for international food safety](#)

This report seeks to assess the costs and benefits of remote audit, as well as its effectiveness, the practices that countries have found most useful, and viewpoints to continued or broader adoption in future. Given the importance of cross-border food safety, it focuses on audits and inspections undertaken in the context of international trade. Using a case study approach and a survey, it examines the experiences of competent authorities but also offers insights into the perspectives of other stakeholders, including certification bodies and food business organisations (FBOs).

For the case studies, interviews were conducted between May and November 2022 with competent authorities in ten countries and with five other stakeholders in food safety audits. To complement the literature review and case studies, a short anonymous survey was developed. This survey aimed to explore the views of a wider group of stakeholders in comparing the costs, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits to those on-site. Responses were solicited from the public and private sector, and from auditors and auditees. A total of 163 respondents completed the survey, which was disseminated in English, French and Spanish between mid-October and early December 2022.

**Thematic session “Enhancing Trade and Traceability in Agri-Food supply Chain through SPS Electronic Certification” during the UNCTAD eweek “Shaping the future of the digital economy”, December 4-8, 2023.**

The OECD, in collaboration with the International Seed Federation and the Standards and Trade Development Facility, hosted a thematic session highlighting the pivotal role of SPS e-certificates in risk management. This session focused on their critical relevance and advantages, particularly in addressing challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Advancements in computing have revolutionized data storage, analysis, and digitalization within plant product supply chains. The panel deliberated on how SPS e-certificates impact traceability across agri-food supply chains, considering sector-specific nuances and practical implications.

#### Ongoing OECD work relevant to the work of CCFICS

Over the period 2023-24 the Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division of the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate has been undertaking new research on SPS electronic certification entitled “Sanitary and Phytosanitary electronic certificates: Current practices and benefits”.

The paper will provide insights on the current use of SPS electronic certificates and explanation for the observed variations in the number of exchanged e-certificates as provided by in-country experts to the OECD Secretariat. Data on the use of SPS e-certificates are matched to trade flows to examine the impact of these digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper will also provide a basis for discussion of the importance of traceability in the SPS context.

Codex Members who are also OECD Member countries have had the opportunity to contribute to this research and have provided comments on drafts presented at OECD meetings.

The timeline for this research is as follows:

- **May 2023:** A scoping paper was presented at the OECD Joint Working Party on Agriculture and Trade (JWPAT).
- **November 2023:** A first draft report was presented at the JWPAT for discussion.
- **May 2024:** A revised draft report was presented at the JWPAT for discussion.
- **November 2024:** A final draft report will be presented at the JWPAT for declassification.
- **Early 2025:** Following declassification, this research will be published as part of the [OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers Series](#).

#### OECD Contact

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