CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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Agenda item 3   **CX/FICS 23/26/3 Add.2**

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION
AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS (CCFICS)**

Twenty-Sixth Session

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

1 – 5 May 2023

**INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCFICS**

(Information from WOAH and OECD)

A.   ACTIVITIES OF WOAH RELEVANT TO CCFICS

1.   The World Organisation for Animal Health (founded as OIE) thanks the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) for the opportunity to contribute to its standards development process.

2.   The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the Codex Alimentarius regularly participate in each other's standard-setting activities to ensure an integrated approach to standard setting for the entire food chain. A collaborative approach to standard-setting on key topics is important to ensure harmonisation of our respective standards and recommendations, when relevant, while avoiding duplication of effort, overlap and gaps.

3.   WOAH wishes to highlight a couple of items of relevance to the CCFICS.

Electronic veterinary certification

4.   During the September 2022 meetings of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commissions, both Commissions discussed the need to revise Chapter 5.2, Certification procedures, of the *Terrestrial Code* and the *Aquatic Code*, respectively, to address e veterinary certification in more detail, and to align, as relevant, with the revised Codex *Guidelines for design, production, issuance and use of generic official certificates* (CXG 38-2011), specifically related to transitioning to paperless certification. The two Commissions recognised that the implementation of electronic veterinary certification can contribute to facilitating international trade, lowering administrative costs, minimising human errors when certifying, and also minimising the risk of trade fraud, and it was therefore important to ensure that the relevant standards provide appropriate guidance to Members on this topic. In addition, given that in practice a single veterinary certificate may contain information relevant to food safety and animal health for products of animal origin, the Commissions considered that it was important to develop similar guidance to that of Codex to ensure alignment of standards for e-certification.

5.   The two Commissions agreed to include the revision of Chapter 5.2. in their respective work programmes, and to undertake this work in collaboration, to ensure alignment between the two Codes.

6.   In addition, the Commission was informed that WOAH would also develop reference data models for the WOAH model certificates for international trade in live animals and animal products, to complement the reference data models for food products that are included in the Codex Guidelines. The reference data models will organise the data elements of the WOAH model certificates and can be used by Members to facilitate the development of electronic veterinary certification systems.

Monitoring implementation of WOAH international standards – WOAH Observatory

7.   The WOAH Observatory published its first Annual report of the WOAH Observatory in January 2023.

8.   The report provides insights into the implementation of a range of WOAH standards and includes more than 100 indicators grouped into twelve sections. Each section focuses on a different topic and area of interest.

One section is dedicate to WTO notifications, disputes and regionalisation relevant to WOAH standards.

9.   Findings presented in the report outline for the first time a global perspective of WOAH Members' implementation of standards. The report raises awareness of some of the current gaps in implementation and suggests how they could be filled by improving practices at the national level. Attention is also raised regarding the importance of submitting quality data and information.

10.   In addition to the main report, each section of the WOAH Observatory Annual Report is accompanied by:

   a.   Interactive dashboards that provide an array of options for dynamic information analysis for a desired region, disease, group of diseases or time period. The figures presented in the body of the report are static snapshots of these dashboards that use examples to illustrate specific ideas or indicators. Therefore, it is recommended to use the dashboards to access all available information; and

   b.   Executive summaries for each section/topic that presents infographics of the main findings.

11.   The 2023 Annual Report will build on the work carried out in the 2022 report as well as feedback and lessons learned from the first report. It is expected to be published in January 2024.

12.   The Observatory is also working on the development of at least one thematic study in the course of 2023. As opposed to the annual report, where a broad overview of the implementation of WOAH standards is carried out, the thematic studies will dwell on a specific subject. The Observatory has will develop its first thematic study on the implementation of the standards related to regionalisation and their recognition by international trade partners.

B.   ACTIVITIES OF OECD RELEVANT TO CCFICS

Information on recent OECD work on SPS electronic sanitary certificates, SPS approval procedures, SPS remote auditing for food safety and future work on SPS electronic certification

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

Introduction

1.   The Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division of the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate has recently published the following SPS research papers relevant to the work of CCFICS.

-       Electronic sanitary certificates for trade in animal products: Opportunities and Challenges

-       Sanitary and phytosanitary approval procedures: Key issues, their impact on trade, and ways to address them

2.   Furthermore, by July 2023 a research paper entitled *"Costs, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits for international food safety"* will be published which might be of interest to Codex Members given the linkages with the *Agenda Item 7 - Proposed draft Principles and Guidelines on the Use of Remote Audit and Verification in Regulatory Frameworks CX/FICS 23/26/7.*

3.   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.

4.   Over the period 2023-24, the Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division of the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate will undertake new research on **SPS electronic certification**. The research will be published in early 2025.

Current and future OECD work relevant to the work of CCFICS.

5.   Electronic sanitary certificates for trade in animal products: Opportunities and Challenges

6.   Following on from research the OECD published in 2021 on "Digital opportunities for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Systems and the trade facilitation effects of SPS Electronic Certification**"** over the period 2021-22 work programme the OECD undertook work focused on the **use of electronic certification for the trade in animals and animal products**.

Key findings from this research are the following:

7.   While progress has been made in the adoption of e-certificates for international trade in plants and plant-based products (ePhyto), the adoption of electronic sanitary certificates (e-sanitary) for trade in animal products has been more complex and challenging. This is due in part to the different approaches to e-certification being taken by the internationally-recognised SPS standards setting bodies. But also relates to the diverse risks associated with this trade which means that multiple government authorities are involved in overseeing trade in food products of animal origin to manage and assure animal and public health outcomes. Recent revisions of the Codex Guidelines CXG 38-2001 on paperless exchange of official certificates are extremely helpful for harmonisation and WOAH should align the relevant chapter of the Codes with these Guidelines.

8.   A handful of countries have been very active in establishing e-sanitary exchanges with trading partners, but not all countries are offered the opportunity to participate in bilateral pilots. Countries need to keep in mind the constraints faced by developing and least developed countries related to e-certification including the digital divide in capacity and capability to adopt these technologies. Capacity building should be offered to assist adoption of e-certification.

Sanitary and phytosanitary approval procedures: Key issues, their impact on trade, and ways to address them

9.   Key findings from this research are the following:

a. Approval procedures are critical to SPS systems as they uphold countries' commitments to facilitate safe trade. However, they can create significant costs and act as non-tariff barriers if not properly administered. Costs and opportunities that are associated with seven of the most pressing issues related to the administration of approval procedures are examined including: undue delays; inconsistency and discrimination between domestic and imported products; lack of transparency; excessive information-gathering and administrative requirements; excessive fees; lack of trust in country or product equivalence; application of approval procedures in excess of objective scientific risk assessment.

b. Analysis reveals that countries have increasingly raised specific trade concerns (STCs) to the WTO about issues related to approval procedures. Furthermore, gravity analysis demonstrates that trading

partners dealing with STCs related to approval procedures trade 26% less on average than those not dealing with any STC. An OECD survey specifically designed to evaluate how issues related to approval procedures can be addressed indicates that multiple solutions exist to enhance efficiencies in agro-food trade, such as digitalizing SPS systems, relying on international standards or simplifying SPS measures.

Costs, benefits and effectiveness of remote audits for international food safety

10.   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).

11.   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.

This paper will be published as part of the [OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers Series](#) in July 2023.

Future work on SPS electronic certification

13.   Over the period 2023-24 the Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division of the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate will be undertaking new research on **SPS electronic certification**. Part of the research will update quantitative modelling on the impact of e-certification on trade volumes using the latest trade data and updates from countries on their use of e-certification.

The proposed timeline for this research is as follows:

   a. **May 2023:** A scoping paper about the research will be presented at the OECD Joint Working Party on Agriculture and Trade (JWPAT). At this meeting OECD countries with SPS e-certification systems are requested to signal their interest in being involved in the project and to nominate experts for the Secretariat to contact.

      Should Codex CCFICS delegates from OECD Member countries wish to establish contact with their country's delegate attending the OECD JWPAT meeting to be part of this research please email annelies.deuss@oecd.org and edith.laget@oecd.org who can assist in making these connections.

   b. **November 2023:** A first draft report will be presented at the JWPAT for discussion. OECD Members will have the chance to provide detailed comments on this draft.

   c. **May 2024:** A revised draft report will be presented at the JWPAT for discussion. OECD Members will have the chance to provide detailed comments on this draft.

   d. **November 2024:** A final draft report will be presented at the JWPAT for declassification.

   e. **Early 2025:** Following declassification, this research will be published as part of the [OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers Series](#).

14.   The OECD can also provide an update on the work to the 2024 meeting of the CCFICS, subject to the interest of Codex Members.

OECD Contact

For further information about this research please email annelies.deuss@oecd.org and edith.laget@oecd.org