



# Ongoing work on remote audit at the OECD

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*WTO SPS COMMITTEE - Thematic session on the use of remote audit and  
verification in regulatory frameworks*

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# Project outline

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Project is composed of three parts

1. Overview of concepts and definitions
2. Case studies (importers and exporters, public and private sector, preliminary cost benefit analysis)
3. Key findings

Approach

- Literature review
- Interviews (regulators/officials, businesses and other stakeholders)
- Questionnaire

Final report: December 2022

Today's presentation → focus on preliminary insights from interviews with regulators/officials





# Consistency issues

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- Issues around definitions
  - “Remote Audit”
  - “Hybrid”
- Not “one size fits all”
  - Different approaches across trading partners
  - Different approaches on export and import side
  - Distinctions between systems audits and audits of premises
  - Even within countries, systems and methods are evolving

“Communication is key – a successful remote audit requires openness and transparency”



# Benefits and advantages

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- Enabled trade to continue during pandemic restrictions
- Cost savings, particularly travel expenses
- Likely to become more efficient over time, with greater familiarity
- Useful approach for existing trading partners and previously audited establishments (where there is already a high level of confidence and trust)

“The time needed for the on-site part of the audit, and travel costs, are both much lower”

“Remote audits can be used to involve and help train staff – they can watch remotely”



# Costs and disadvantages

- Requires more preparation time and human resource commitment
- Can potentially generate significantly more documentation (and additional time required to examine this) – far more than needed
- Requires more specialised skills and technologies (may be costly)
- More limited in terms of what can be seen and verified
- Time zones and language could be problematic
- Only suitable for trading partners/premises where there is an established relationship and existing trust

“We are asking vets to become videographers”

“On a Zoom call, a puddle of water can look like a lake – it can be quite misleading”

“One audit involved 900 pages of documentation”

“If an auditor hasn’t fully understood something, if it’s in-person you can chat in the car to clarify things”



# Digital technologies

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- Use of existing standard digital platforms or tools
- Challenges of connectivity
- Modest focus on data protection, privacy and cybersecurity issues

“We have to test the signal and storyboard the audit ahead of time to make sure the camera is in the right place”

“The person filming needs a spotter to avoid all the hazards”

“You can’t get wifi in a cool store”

“There are risks to data – but you need the remote audit to continue trading”



## Next steps

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We would love your inputs

We would welcome additional interview candidates – officials, businesses and other stakeholders

Please contact: [Annelies.Deuss@oecd.org](mailto:Annelies.Deuss@oecd.org)



THANK YOU