



Ministry of Food and  
Drug Safety



# The COVID-19 Pandemic, Pre-emptive Response with Remote Inspection

SPS Committee Thematic session  
June 21, 2022



# Safety Control Policy for Imported Foods in Korea

## ✍ Special Act on Imported Food Safety Control(in 2015)

- Established to strictly secure the safety of imported food and tighten the control of it
- Enhancing the safety control by transitioning the focus on from the control on customs stage to the one on the production stage.

## ✍ Imported Food Safety Policy Bureau(in 2017)

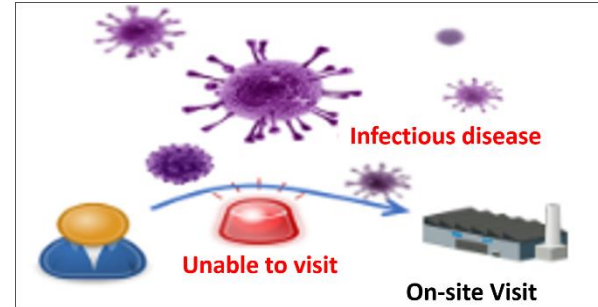
- Triple system of imported food safety
  - (In exporting country) Production Stage
  - (On the border) Customs Stage
  - (In Korea) Distribution Stage



# The COVID-19 Pandemic

## ✍ Unable to Conduct On-site Inspection

- The COVID-19 preventive measures caused movement restriction in the countries.
- Border protection and quarantine measures prohibited foreigners from entering the countries.
- The risk of infection from the virus remains among inspectors.



## ✍ Need an Alternative to Continuously Control of Steps Prior to Importation


- (Document Inspection) Assessment of a checklist and supporting documents(including documents and photos)
- (Video Inspection) Inspections of the sanitary control of working areas' environment in real time by utilizing telecommunication equipment



# Preparing for Transition of Control of Steps Prior to Importation

## ✍ Effectiveness Study on Document Inspection

- Conducted document inspection pilot program
- The comprehensive guide with illustrations elaborating documents and photos

Required File <sup>o)</sup>	Description <sup>o)</sup>	Example (Image) <sup>o)</sup>
Photo(s) of hand-washing facilities <sup>o)</sup>	Photo(s) to verify a hand-washing facility/sanitation facility in the food production area <sup>o)</sup> <sup>o)</sup> e.g. photo of entire hand-washing/sanitation facility <sup>o)</sup>	

## ✍ Checking ICT in countries for Video Inspection

- Internet speed(upload and download) in 175 countries, bitrate for live-streaming
- Environment for remote inspection (communication environment, communication equipment, etc.), Infrastructure for virtual meeting(security, platform, etc.), devices for remote inspection(camera, wearable devices, etc.)



## ✍ Research on Remote inspection of countries

- Research remote-inspection cases and related regulations
- Preparation of legal basis amendments and detailed procedures for remote inspection

## Legal Ground of Remote inspection (on Aug, 2021)

### Article 9 (2) of the Special Act on Imported Food Safety Control

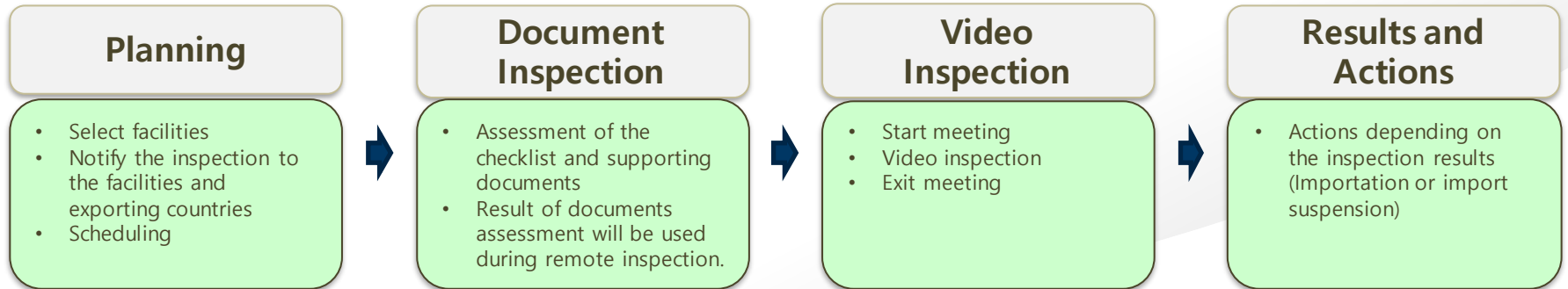
- A remote inspection using ICT such as computers and video communication can be conducted when on-site inspection is deemed difficult due to natural disasters or infectious diseases, or require efficient and prompt inspection.
- If the facility refuses, interferes with or evades(including cases where it fails to respond without good cause) a remote inspection, this may cause the import suspension.

# SOP for Remote inspection (on Sep, 2021)

## ✍ Security Measures for Remote Inspection

- Utilize a virtual meeting platform with the end-to-end encryption.
- Use secure connection with dedicated visual equipment for platform or solution.
- Receive the 'Personal Information Consent Form' from facilities and 'Self-checklist for remote inspection'.
- Receive documents, photos, recorded inspection video and etc. through the secured "*Imported Food Management System*."

## ✍ Steps of Remote Inspection

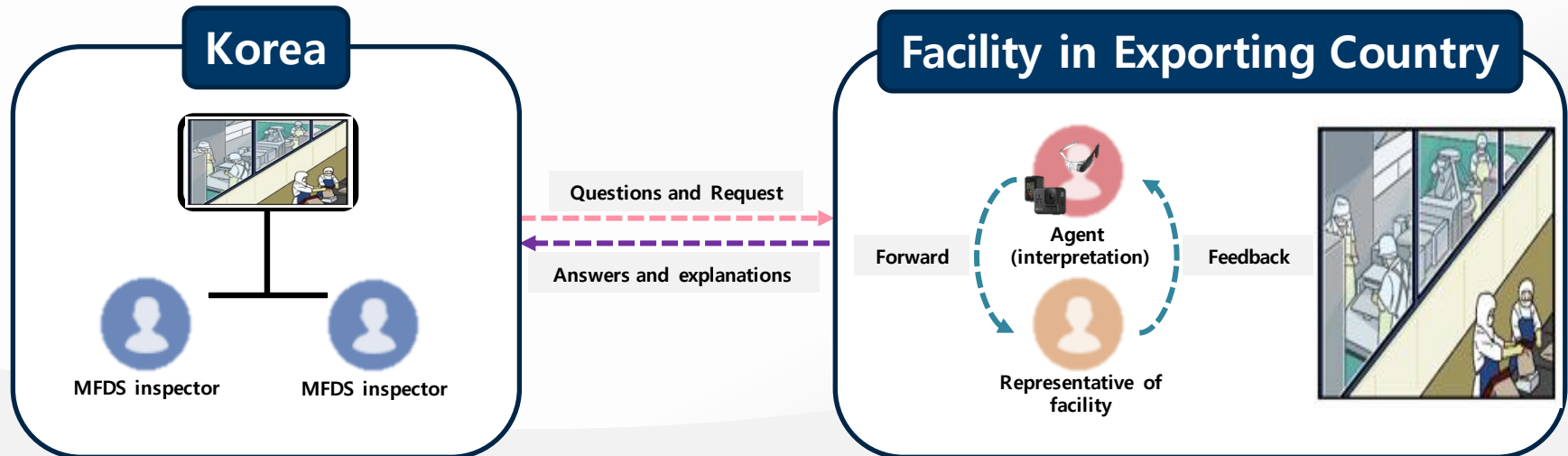


\* SOP : Standard Operating Procedure

# How to Conduct Remote Inspection in Practice

## ✍ Remote Inspection Supported by Selected Agent

- The agent has visual equipment (such as smart glasses) and offers interpretation services.
- We provide pre-training in remote inspection.
- The agent visits the facility in advance and checks internet connections. They follow the requirement from inspectors during the inspection.



# Results and Implications

## Results

- (Benefits) continuing control of step prior to importations, saving time and budget, lowering the risk of COVID-19
- (Challenges) disruption in digital communication, limits on communication, facility's security policy, limits on comprehensive judgments using five senses

## Implications

- The remote inspection can be utilized as one of assessment tools, not a substitute for on-site inspection.
- The appropriate facility should be chosen in order to achieve the effect of remote inspection.
- Continued discussions and communications from experienced countries are required to address challenges.



# Thank you for your attention



Eun Ju Choi  
choie5@korea.kr

