



SPECIFICATION 78

Remote audits

(Approved 2025, published 2026)

Title

Annex *Remote audits* (2023-031) to ISPM 47 (*Audit in the phytosanitary context*).

Reason for the annex to the standard

An audit in the phytosanitary context is a documented, systematic review of a phytosanitary system or procedure to evaluate the level of control, ensure that it conforms with the requirements set by the auditing national plant protection organization (NPPO), and evaluate whether the system or procedure is achieving the expected phytosanitary objectives. New technological advancements have allowed contracting parties to conduct remote audits when in-person audits are not possible or practical because of challenges such as travel restrictions, emergency situations, financial constraints or availability of experts. Although remote auditing presents some challenges, it can offer significant benefits to contracting parties while still providing an appropriate level of oversight. For example, remote audits can ensure continuity of audit-related activities (e.g. implementation of corrective actions to address nonconformities), provide a flexible framework within which to achieve audit objectives, and allow additional experts to participate. However, ISPM 47 (*Audit in the phytosanitary context*) provides no guidance specifically on conducting remote audits. This annex is being developed to outline minimum requirements for remote audits and should be read in conjunction with ISPM 47.

Scope

The annex should provide guidance for defining and conducting various remote audits (hybrid, fully remote, desk, etc.) in the context of ISPM 47. It should also cover remote audits conducted by entities that have been authorized by an NPPO to conduct audits on its behalf.

Purpose

The annex aims to support a common approach to conducting remote audits. The annex is not intended to replace in-person audits, especially in contexts where physical verification is deemed essential, thereby increasing trust and understanding among importing and exporting countries.

Tasks

The expert working group (EWG) should undertake the following tasks:

- (1) Define and describe what a remote audit is and the types of remote audits, clearly distinguishing fully remote audits from desk audits and hybrid audits.
- (2) Define and describe when remote audits may be used and when they should not be used.
- (3) Provide guidance to allow NPPOs to identify and agree which activities are most suitable to be audited remotely.

- (4) Review current best practices, examples and approaches for remote audits, including how other international organizations approach remote audits (e.g. Codex Alimentarius Commission, International Accreditation Forum, International Standards Organization).
- (5) Identify the advantages, limitations and risks of using remote-audit technologies.
- (6) Describe techniques and technologies that can be used in the implementation of remote audits.
- (7) Describe the requirements for conducting remote audits appropriately (e.g. internet connectivity, personnel) and outline options that countries may consider if these are not available.
- (8) Describe and list the requirements for infrastructure and expertise in digital technology, cybersecurity and the handling of data privacy, and how to address situations where these are not available or possible.
- (9) List the specific responsibilities of the auditor and auditee for remote audits.
- (10) Consider implementation of the annex by contracting parties and identify potential operational and technical implementation issues. Provide information and possible recommendations on these issues to the Standards Committee.

Provision of resources

Funding for the meeting may be provided from sources other than the regular programme of the IPPC (FAO). As recommended by ICPM-2 (1999), whenever possible, those participating in standard setting activities voluntarily fund their travel and subsistence to attend meetings. Participants may request financial assistance, with the understanding that resources are limited and the priority for financial assistance is given to developing country participants. Please refer to the *Criteria used for prioritizing participants to receive travel assistance to attend meetings organized by the IPPC Secretariat* posted on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) (see <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities>).

Collaborator

To be determined.

Steward

Please refer to the *List of topics for IPPC standards* posted on the IPP (see <https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/list-topics-ippc-standards>).

Expertise

Members with collective knowledge of, and experience in:

- auditing phytosanitary systems or procedures within the provisions of the IPPC; and
- conducting or receiving remote phytosanitary audits, including the specific needs and limitations of the process.

Participants

Five to seven members.

A member of the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) should also be invited to attend as an invited expert or as an IC representative.

In addition, a representative from an organization experienced in the development of remote-audit guidance (e.g. Codex Alimentarius Commission or Secretariat, International Organization for Standardization) should be invited to share their experience of remote audits with the EWG by giving a presentation as an invited expert.

Bibliography

The IPPC, relevant ISPMs and other national, regional and international standards and agreements as may be applicable to the tasks, and discussion papers submitted in relation to this work.

References

ISPM 47. 2022. *Audit in the phytosanitary context.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91185/>

Further reading

FAO & World Health Organization. 2023. *Principles and guidelines on the use of remote audit and inspection in regulatory frameworks.* CXG 102-2023. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome. 5 pp. <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/codex-texts/guidelines/en/>

IAF (International Accreditation Forum). 2025. *IAF mandatory document for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for conformity assessment purposes,* Issue 3. IAF MD 4:2025. 9 pp. https://iaf.nu/iaf_system/uploads/documents/IAF_MD_4_Issue_3_30012025.pdf

ISO. 2018. Additional guidance for auditors planning and conducting audits. Annex A in: *Guidelines for auditing management systems,* 3rd edn. ISO 19011:2018. Geneva. <https://www.iso.org/standard/70017.html>

ISO (International Standards Organization) & IAF. 2020. *Guidance on remote audits,* 1st edn. ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group, ISO & IAF. 12 pp. https://committee.iso.org/files/live/sites/tc176/files/PDF%20APG%20New%20Disclaimer%201-2-2023/ISO-TC%20176-TF_APG-Remote_Audits.pdf

ISO & International Electrotechnical Commission. 2024. *Conformity assessment: guidelines for the use of remote auditing methods in auditing management systems.* ISO/IEC TS 17012:2024. Geneva. <https://www.iso.org/standard/84718.html>

ISPM 45. 2021. *Requirements for national plant protection organizations if authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/89734/>

Discussion papers

Participants and interested parties are encouraged to submit discussion papers to the IPPC Secretariat (ippc@fao.org) for consideration by the EWG.

Publication history

This is not an official part of the specification

2024-04 CPM-18 added topic Annex *Remote audits* (2023-031) to ISPM 47 (*Audit in the phytosanitary context*).

2025-05 Standards Committee (SC) revised and approved for consultation.

2025-07 Consultation.

2025-11 SC revised and approved the specification.

Specification 78. 2026. *Remote audits.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO.

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