



## Live Streaming Technology to be implemented for Gafta Standard Audits

Gafta and NSF International are using online communications technology for live streamed audits to enable new applicants for the Gafta Standards to be assessed, and current members to retain their status throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Gafta's key priority through the current crisis is to keep agricultural commodities, feedstuffs and general produce moving to ensure food security now and minimise any long term effects. Gafta Approved members are crucial to supporting the trade of these essential food and feedstuffs and those using the services of the Approved Registers need reassurance that standards are being upheld despite the considerable disruption we are all experiencing.

All physical on-site audits were stopped at the end of March as borders closed and overseas travel was halted. Gafta and NSF have been working together to develop a longer-term solution to allow audits to continue without the need for auditors to travel. Audit protocols have been reviewed, auditors trained (using online communications technology) and members have piloted the scheme.

Abigail MacCartney, Analyst member from LiveLab based in the UK was one of the pilot audits. Despite being sceptical about how an online audit might work, she was pleasantly surprised at how well the process went saying "I found the process remarkably easy. I took the opportunity to bring the auditor into the building as they would in person, allowing them to see the reception, security and sign in process and then we took a tour of the lab using the rear facing camera. It was very easy to guide the auditor around the lab showing them the instruments, all labelling, temperature monitoring and so on.

"The screen share facility was especially useful which allowed me to guide the auditor through our LIMS and all documentation as if he was sat beside me. The reality is that it was very similar to an audit in person except I couldn't offer the auditor a cup of tea!"

It is felt that this audit regime is sufficiently robust to replace on-site audits where physical presence is not possible and therefore provides a longer-term solution while the future remains uncertain. The cost of a remote audit is also reduced - £900 as compared to £1,900 for on-site – thus providing some financial relief for members at this difficult time. Whilst it is early days for Gafta audits, those who have trialled the approach in other schemes believe this could become another approach to auditing long after the impact of coronavirus, delivering financial and sustainability benefits.

### How will it work?

The audit will include 'live streaming' using technology such as BlueJeans, Skype, Zoom, Teams, Whatsapp or any other technology which works well for the member. A strong and consistent internet connection is required, however there are solutions for poor internet. The live stream will be used to include elements which are normally covered by an on-site visit such as a site tour, observing tasks being carried out or speaking to an employee about their training. If a member cannot complete a remote audit for any reason, discussions with Gafta and NSF will help to determine possible solutions.

Documentation will be shared securely both on the day and possibly ahead of the audit; members will be given clear instructions when their audit date is agreed. Video calls will be used to discuss findings and agree outcomes, in the same way as the auditor would discuss this in the members office on-site.

Full support will be available. Gafta has published Q&A on its website, while staff will be on hand to help.

Members who are preparing to proceed with audit to the Gafta Standards should apply by email to [ApprovedRegisters@gafta.com](mailto:ApprovedRegisters@gafta.com). Audits are normally arranged within 6-8 weeks of payment; however, we expect demand for audits to increase as we approach the deadline for compliance with the new requirements. Applying early will enable us to work within your timescales and meet your objectives.