JGAP Remote Audit Guidelines
(Agricultural Products)

Ver. 1.1

JGF
Japan GAP Foundation

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Objective

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These guidelines stipulate points of remote audits under the JGAP certification program (fruits and vegetables, grain, and tea) operated by Japan GAP Foundation ("Foundation") in accordance with IAF MD4:2018: IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes and JGAP General Rules. It is backed by the advancement of audit and certification methods using ICT devices and avoidance of the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

1. Definitions and explanations of terms

(1) Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Use of technology for collecting, saving, reading, processing, analyzing, and transmitting information. Examples of ICT include smartphones, mobile terminals, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable device technology, artificial intelligence, and other software and hardware (source: IAF MD4:2018).

(2) Remote audit

Audit of farms from places other than farms by auditors using ICT devices. It is essentially required that a certification body and a farm can communicate smoothly via a web conferencing system or the like, that is, the environment should allow the voice and image of participants to be conveyed immediately and mutually, and should allow the parties concerned to express opinions accurately, mutually and sufficiently in a timely manner.

(3) On-site audit

Face-to-face audit with an auditor, a farmer, and the group administration involved. It is to be implemented at the field and/or facilities related to audit.

2. Requirements

2.1 Conditions for remote auditing

A remote audit is to be considered if any of the following applies:

(1) An audit is enabled reliably, even partially, using ICT without requiring visits at farm or group.

(2) The government restricts travel and requests voluntary restraint on movement due to COVID-19.

(3) An audit/certification body judges a remote audit to be appropriate because of a farmer's preference and risk of infection of an auditor due to COVID-19.

2.2 Period of operation

The operation of remote audits will commence on October 7, 2020.

2.3 Environment

As one of the requirements, the environment should allow the voice and image of participants to be conveyed immediately and mutually, and should allow the parties concerned to express opinions accurately, mutually and sufficiently in a timely manner.

Accordingly, if a remote audit is not permitted due to the malfunction of equipment in the audit process, an additional on-site audit will be required.

In addition, images (photos) should be sent and received as well as image-based communications, and it is necessary to secure the sufficient precision of audit using images and sound.

3. Scope

3.1 Scope

The guidelines are applicable to remote audits for individual and group of JGAP (fruits and vegetables, grains, and tea). All audits are not to be performed remotely, but on-site audits are to be implemented for the control points. However, if 2.1 (2) or 2.1 (3) applies, all audits may be remotely performed.

Fruits and vegetables: 2016 4.11 / 5.5 / 10.2 / 13.3.1 / 13.3.2 / 14.1 / 14.4 / 16.1.3 / 16.1.4 / 16.3 / 17.1 / 17.2 / 17.4 / 18.1 / 18.3 / 18.4 / 19.1 / 20.1 / 20.3 / 21.1 / 22.1.1 / 24.2.3 / 24.3.2 / 24.3.3 / 24.3.5 / 24.4 / 24.5 / 25.1.3 / 25.3 / (for sprouts only) 13.2.1 / 15.1.2 / 16.1.1.1 / 17.5.1 / 18.8 / 23.1.1 / 23.1.2 / (for mushrooms only) 15.1.4 / 17.6.1 / 23.1.3

Grains: 2016 4.11 / 5.5 / 10.2 / 13.3.1 / 13.3.2 / 14.1 / 14.4 / 16.3 / 17.1 / 17.2 / 17.4 / 18.1 / 18.3 / 18.4 / 19.1 / 20.1 / 20.3 / 21.1 / 24.2.3 / 24.3.2 / 24.3.3 / 24.3.5 / 24.4 / 24.5 / 25.1.3 / 25.3 / (for polished rice only) 8.2.2 / 17.5

Tea: 2016 4.11 / 5.5 / 10.2 / 10.3 / 13.3.1 / 13.3.2 / 14.1 / 14.4 / 16.1.3 / 16.3 / 17.1 / 17.1.1 / 17.2 / 17.4 / 17.5 / 18.1 / 18.3 / 18.4 / 19.1 / 20.1 / 20.3 / 21.1 / 24.2.3 / 24.3.2 / 24.3.3 / 24.3.5 / 24.4 / 24.5 / 25.1.3 / 25.3 / (for finished tea only) 10.1.3.2 / 17.6

3.2 Exclusion criteria

Remote audits are not applicable if any of the following applies to a farm. In the case of emergency, application conditions may be defined separately.

(1) Initial audit for a farm

(2) If a farm was required to make corrections on essential/important items at 10% or more in the last audit

4. Audit/certification bodies and auditors

Audit/certification bodies should document the proceedings of assessing auditors' capabilities related to remote audits and judge whether audits can be performed remotely.

Auditors are required to have the following capabilities:

- ICT devices can be fully used for remote auditing.

- Auditors have been fully trained for remote auditing, being capable of performing remote audits, and having an understanding of the risk in the precision of information collected through remote audits.

- Auditors understand the risk related to security associated with remote auditing.

5. Timing, duration, and period of audit

5.1 Timing of audit

Requirements for timing of audit are shown in General Rules.

5.2 During audit

If the duration of audit is shorter than the standard duration of audit as the total of a remote audit and an on-site audit, an audit/certification body should justify why the duration is shortened.

5.3 Interval between connection test and audit

A remote audit is to be performed within four weeks after a connection test. A remote audit should take place prior to an on-site audit.

6. Security

6.1 Ensuring security

Audit/certification bodies should take measures to ensure information confidentiality throughout an audit, including planning, reporting, and follow-up.

6.2 Agreement on security

An audit/certification body and a farm should agree on the measures to protect the information relating to audit such as security, data, sound recordings, and screenshots, and where responsibility lies prior to audit.

An audit/certification body and a farm should agree on scope, purposes of use, and time of discarding records if they use the video/sound recording function of a remote audit tool.

An agreement on security should be executed in writing, and a written agreement should be retained. Without a written agreement on security, remote auditing will not be permitted.

7. Implementation procedures

7.1 Application for audit

Fill in an audit application form by providing the following information.

(1) Equipment, platform, and others used for remote auditing

(2) Participants in audit

(3) Frequency of online meetings

(4) State of use of ICT, such as the cloud system used for GAP registration

7.2 Materials to be submitted

Farmers should submit the following to audit/certification bodies in advance.

(1) Lists of fields and facilities

(2) Maps of fields and facilities

(3) Layout diagram of facilities handling agricultural products (blueprinting) (if all audits are implemented remotely)

(4) Results of risk assessment for the harvesting process and the agricultural product handling process

(5) Results of self-inspections and results of improvements of items judged non-conforming in self-inspections

7.3 Checking of documents and identification of items for careful auditing

Audit/certification bodies should check submitted documents and materials.

Audit/certification bodies should identify the risk that can affect remote auditing and the risk of use of ICT based on results of prior check of farms and submitted materials, understand the items for careful auditing (including the items to be checked at an on-site audit), and keep records.

7.4 Connection test

The same auditor should implement a connection test, a remote audit, and an on-site audit.

Auditors should check the communication environment, images, and precision of images by checking documents and the actual site.

7.5 Determining whether remote auditing is permitted

Audit/certification bodies should assess risks of remote auditing from the following viewpoints with reference to information about remote auditing obtained from 7.1 audit application form, 7.2 submitted materials, and 7.4 connection test, and judge whether remote auditing is permitted. They should interview farmers on risk assessment if necessary. They should record risk assessment results and judgement results in a series of remote auditing.

(1) Request for corrections in the last audit

(2) ICT devices to be used and communication environment (baud rate and noise)

(3) The capability of using ICT devices and communication environment of the auditor and the farmer

(4) Ensuring of information security and confidentiality

7.6 Formulation of audit plans

Audit/certification bodies should decide how ICT should be used in remote and on-site auditing and formulate an audit plan.

An audit plan should reflect results of identification of the items for careful auditing as stated in 7.3.

7.7 Performance of remote audit

7.7.1 Participating staff on a farm

At least two persons from the farm should participate in a remote audit as a rule.

(One of them shall check the safety of the person who shoots the site with an ICT device and assist with document examination.)

7.7.2 Environment

A quiet spot should be chosen to facilitate transmission of sound and images.

A headset or external microphone is preferable (a microphone attached to a laptop is not recommended).

7.7.3　Performance of remote audit

A remote audit should be implemented (for example, starting, terminating, and reporting of audit results) in accordance with General Rules and follow a formulated plan as much as possible.

An audit report should state that an audit was implemented remotely, why an audit was implemented remotely, hours of starting/finishing an audit, and participants. It should include any technical issues.

7.7.4　Discontinuation of remote audit

A remote audit should be discontinued and records should be kept if it cannot be continued due to hindrances including the communication situation.

Records should include causes of discontinuation, control points and results that are checked by a remote audit until discontinuation.

7.8　On-site audit

An on-site audit should be implemented according to an audit plan and performed for the control points that have been judged necessary to be checked onsite in a remote audit.

8.　Activities after audit

Auditors should discard records obtained via the video/sound recording function of the remote audit tool after judgment of an audit is terminated.

9.　Registration

Audit/certification bodies should report auditing information to the foundation as remote audits, and the foundation shall record certified farms/groups as remote audits.

＊Supplementary provision:

This guideline will be invalid when new process for "remote audit" is established.