

JGAP Remote Audit Guidelines (Agricultural Products)

Ver. 3



Date of Issue: January 10, 2024
Date of Operation: May 10, 2024

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Purpose

These guidelines stipulate points of remote audit under the JGAP certification program (fruits and vegetables, grains, and tea) operated by Japan GAP Foundation (JGF) in accordance with : IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes (IAF MD4: 2023) 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 of Terms

(1) Information Communication Technology (ICT)

ICT is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. (quoted from IAF MD4:2023).

(2) Remote audit

Full remote audit or partly remote audit from places other than farms by auditors using ICT devices. It is essentially required that a certification body (CB) and a farm can communicate smoothly via a web conference 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

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 defect 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

The guidelines are applicable to all remote audit for individuals and groups of JGAP (fruits and vegetables, grains, and tea).

However, 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
- (2) If a farm was required to make corrections on essential items at 10% or more in the last audit
- (3) If a farm had been conducted remote audit in the last audit

4. Certification Bodies and Auditors

CBs 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:

- (1) ICT devices can be fully used for remote audit.
- (2) Auditors have been fully trained for remote audit, being capable of performing remote audit, and having an understanding of the risk in the precision of information collected through remote audit.
- (3) Auditors understand the risk related to security associated with remote audit.

Furthermore, the auditor conducting the remote audit should be the same auditor who conducted the last audit if possible.

5. Timing, man-hour, and period of audit

5.1 Timing of audit

Requirements for timing of audit are shown in JGAP General Rules.

5.2 Man-hour of audit

If the duration of audit is shorter than the standard man-hour of audit as the total of a remote audit and an on-site audit, a CB 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. In the case of partly remote audit, a remote audit should take place prior to an on-site audit.

6. Security

6.1 Ensuring Security

CBs should take measures to ensure information confidentiality throughout an audit, including planning, reporting, and follow-up.

6.2 Agreement on Security

CBs and farms 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.

CBs and farms 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 audit 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 audits
- (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 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 of the audits are implemented remotely)
- (4) Results of risk assessment for the harvesting process and the agricultural product handling process
- (5) Results of self-assessment and results of improvements of items judged non-conforming in self-assessment

7.3 Checking of documents and identification of items for careful auditing

CBs should check submitted documents and materials.

CBs should identify the risk that can affect remote audit 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

CBs should assess risks of remote audit from the following viewpoints with reference to information about remote audit obtained from 7.1 audit application form, 7.2 submitted materials, and 7.4 connection test, and judge whether remote audit 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 audit.

- (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

CBs should decide how ICT should be used in remote and on-site audit 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 JGAP 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

CBs should report audit information to the JGF as remote audits, and JGF should record certified farms/groups as remote audits.

* Supplementary provision

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

Record of Revisions

Version	Date of Update	Abstract
Ver.1	Oct.7, 2020	JGAP remote audit guideline was created
Ver.1.1	Oct.7, 2021	Deadline for conducting all audits by remote audit was deleted
Ver.2	Mar.24, 2023	Revised for the revision of JGAP2022
Ver.3	Jan. 10, 2024	Since the COVID-19 pandemic is over, the conditions of remote audit should be clarified. The scope was changed from IAF MD4:2022 to IAF MD4 2023. The reason of remote audits (Point 2.1) was deleted. The scope (Point 3) was changed as following: · All of the audits could be conducted remotely · Remote audit is not applicable if a farm got 10% or more NCs in the previous audit Additional requirements of auditors (Point 4) were added.



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