



THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY SERIES



Session n°14 Digital traceability and supply chain transparency: policies for food safety and market access

Thursday 15 October 2026

09:00-10:30 UTC/11:00-12:30 CET (time in Paris/Brussels)

[Online \(Zoom\)](#)

Live interpretation in English and French

1. Context

Food safety in fruit and vegetable supply chains depends not only on preventing contamination, but also on being able to identify products, trace their movement and, when problems arise, identify their source and take appropriate action. EU food law requires businesses to be able to identify their immediate suppliers and the businesses to which they have supplied products, allowing products to be traced through the food chain when necessary.¹

For businesses supplying international markets, the ability to produce reliable information about a product's origin, handling and compliance can also determine whether a shipment reaches the market and whether a buyer continues to work with a supplier.

The European Union (EU) shows the scale of the challenge clearly. In 2025, its Alert and Cooperation Network, recorded 10,490 notifications, 11% more than the year before. Fruit and vegetables were again the largest group, making up 18% of notifications, and pesticide residues were the most common issue among them². For exporters, processors and traders, this is not just a paperwork problem. Food-safety incidents and difficulties in demonstrating compliance can result in rejected shipments, loss of customers and financial losses.

Digital tools can help businesses collect, manage and share traceability information across the supply chain.³ For example digital records, QR codes, barcodes and, in some cases, blockchain can help, but technology alone does not guarantee food safety or compliance. They depend on the requirements they need to support and on the ability of different actors to understand and use the information. Policies and regulations, standards and buyer requirements therefore all influence how traceability and transparency systems are designed and used.⁴

This session will examine how policies and regulations, standards, and buyer requirements shape digital traceability and supply-chain transparency in the fruit and vegetable sector, what these

¹ European Commission, 2026. [Food traceability in the EU: Transparency, safety and trust](#).

² European Commission, 2025, [Alert and Cooperation Network \(ACN\) Annual Report 2025](#).

³ GSI, 2021. [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Traceability Guideline](#)

⁴ GSI, [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Traceability Guideline](#).



requirements mean in practice for businesses seeking to access international markets, and how greater coherence between systems could support both food safety and market access.

2. Policy, Standards and Buyer Requirements

Fruit and vegetable companies supplying international markets may need to respond to requirements coming from several sources.

The first layer is mandatory regulation. For businesses supplying the EU market, this includes requirements relating to food safety, hygiene, pesticide residues and, where applicable, plant health. EU food law establishes traceability requirements at all stages of production, processing and distribution, including the ability to identify immediate suppliers and customers.⁵

The second layer consists of standards and guidance. These are not necessarily legally binding, but can provide common approaches for identifying products, recording information and exchanging data across supply-chain actors. UNECE maintains international quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables, with standards continuing to be reviewed and updated through its specialised work in this area.⁶ GSI provides sector-specific guidance for traceability as well as standards for data identification, capture and exchange.⁷

The third layer comes from buyers and commercial partners. Retailers, importers and other buyers may request certifications, traceability information or digital records as part of their commercial relationships. These requirements are distinct from legal obligations but may nevertheless be important conditions for establishing or maintaining access to particular markets or buyers.

These different layers can support food safety, confidence and market access, but they do not always use the same systems, formats or processes. Businesses may therefore be asked to provide similar information several times to different regulators, certifiers or buyers.

The issue is consequently not only whether the necessary information exists, but whether the systems used by different actors can work together and whether information collected once can be understood and reused where appropriate. This is where standards, interoperability and coordination become important considerations for both businesses and policymakers.

3. From requirements to practice

The availability of digital tools does not in itself solve these challenges. Businesses need solutions that respond to the requirements they face and are appropriate to their needs and capacities.

Digital traceability can involve relatively simple tools, such as product identification and digital records, as well as more integrated systems connecting information across production, aggregation, processing, logistics and markets. GSI's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Traceability Guideline covers traceability practices across the supply chain and identifies the information that different supply-chain partners need to capture and share.⁸

At a broader digital-supply-chain level, GSI's EPCIS and Core Business Vocabulary (CBV) standards provide a framework for sharing information about events and supply-chain visibility across systems.⁹

⁵ European Union, 2002. [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council – Article 18: Traceability. Current consolidated version.](#)

⁶ UNECE, 2026. [Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Standards and Recommendations.](#)

⁷ GSI, 2021. [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Traceability Guideline](#)

⁸ GSI, 2021. [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Traceability Guideline](#)

⁹ GSI, 2023. [EPCIS & CBV – Increasing Supply Chain Visibility.](#)

There is therefore rarely one “right” technology. What matters is whether the information captured by a system can be understood and used by the relevant actors including businesses, regulators, certifiers and buyers.

When systems can communicate and information can be reused appropriately, digital traceability can help businesses respond to requirements, strengthen buyer confidence, identify affected products when food-safety issues arise and reduce repeated paperwork or checks.

Putting such systems into practice can be challenging. Businesses may face different information requirements across markets and buyers, costs associated with digital systems and certification, limited technical capacity, and systems that do not connect easily with national, regional or international requirements.

These challenges are therefore not only a question of individual business capacity. The wider systems in which digital tools operate also need to be sufficiently coherent for information to move across the supply chain.

4. Way Forward

Making digital traceability and supply-chain transparency more effective for food safety and market access requires action from businesses as well as regulators, standards organisations, buyers and development partners.

This session will explore:

- What are policies, regulations, standards and market requirements asking fruit and vegetable businesses to demonstrate, and how are these requirements evolving?
- How are businesses implementing digital traceability and supply-chain transparency to meet these requirements in practice, and what challenges do they face in collecting, managing and sharing the required information?
- How can policies, standards and market practices better support effective digital traceability and supply-chain transparency? What priorities could improve coherence, interoperability and practical implementation in support of food safety and market access?

Together, these questions will connect the requirements shaping traceability and transparency with the realities of implementation and identify practical priorities for making digital traceability more useful for businesses, regulators, buyers and other supply-chain actors.



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Agenda

Moderator: *José Brambila-Macias, Programme Manager, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, Agricultural Codes and Schemes, OECD*

09:00-09:10 :

- **Welcome and introduction:** *Ines Bastos, Head of Network and Alliances*
- **Keynote :** *Silvia SORESCU, Trade Policy Analyst at the OECD*

09:10-09:45 What is shaping digital traceability and supply-chain transparency?
(Policies, standards and market requirements for food safety and market access)

- *Axelle Rupert, EU Policy and Regulations Expert, COLEAD*
- *Fenohery Tiana Andriamanampisoa, Head of the Computer Science Department, Oniversity FJKM Ravelojaona*
- *Lucy Matthewson, Agribusiness and Export Development Expert, FAO*

09:45-10:05 From Requirements to Digital Traceability in Practice (How businesses respond in practice)

- *Alioune Ndao, CEO, La Casa Fruit, Senegal*
- *Ganiu Ademola Okeowo, CEO AgricTrail, Nigeria*

10:05-10:20 Q&A session

10:20-10:30 Conclusion and way forward: *Ahoefa Soklou, Project Officer, Networks and Alliances, COLEAD*



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