

Press release

Sedex launches industry-first virtual social assessment, enabling businesses to continue monitoring supply chains and people's working conditions during COVID-19

- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted and increased scrutiny on supply chains, but simultaneously made supply chain assessment harder as safety measures restrict access to sites for social auditing.
- The Virtual Assessment uses video technology to allow social auditors to assess site performance remotely, so that brands can ensure suppliers are maintaining a high level of safety and labour standards for their workers during the pandemic.
- Using Virtual Assessment allows businesses to continue supplier assessment, identify and manage supply chain risks, enabling them to increase supply chain transparency and build a present picture of the impacts to suppliers and workers.

London, 13 October 2020

In an industry first, responsible business membership organisation Sedex has launched a new virtual assessment tool that enables businesses to continue assessing suppliers and protecting workers in their supply chain during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Virtual Assessment is a human rights due diligence tool that a social auditor uses to assess the performance of a site remotely through the use of video conferencing, gaining as much insight as possible into site conditions, management systems and documentation.

"Sedex is pleased to offer the first available virtual assessment tool to our members. We were keen to support businesses in continuing to assess sites despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and moved quickly to develop Virtual Assessment as a solution. We'll continue to invest in and develop this technology and see it as a significant part of our strategy going forward."

Simon McCalla, CEO, Sedex

Virtual Assessment is aligned to Sedex's existing audit methodology, SMETA, which covers health and safety, labour standards, business ethics and environmental areas, allowing for seamless integration with members' existing data on the Sedex platform.

Social audits are an important tool that businesses use to ensure their suppliers are operating ethically. The disruptive nature of the global pandemic has brought increased scrutiny on supply chains even as related restrictions make in-person site audits more difficult than ever.

The pandemic's impact on suppliers and workers cannot be overstated or assumed – it is critical that businesses can gain an up-to-date understanding of their suppliers' operations, so that they can continue to source responsibly. Virtual Assessment provides a practical alternative when on-site social audits cannot take place.

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The tool also provides flexibility when on-site audits are an option but not ideal, such as for sites in remote locations – it has already been used in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. This can provide much-needed savings to small businesses by reducing travel costs for on-site audits while helping to extend due diligence efforts to remote sites.

"We are delighted to bring Sedex Virtual Assessment to our members. In these uncertain times, it is more vital than ever for companies to maintain transparency and protect workers throughout the global supply chain. Site assessment is an integral part of this – at Sedex we knew we should empower our members to continue this activity while respecting safety restrictions around the world."

Magali Martowicz, Director of Responsible Sourcing, Sedex

Sedex members, including members of the AIM-PROGRESS FMCG forum, are already using Virtual Assessment to assess supplier sites.

Virtual Assessments accounted for almost 2% of all audits uploaded to the Sedex platform in September 2020. Uptake has been strongest in India, where more than 20% of Sedex Virtual Assessments have been conducted to date.

"Our common baseline for virtual assessments is the Sedex Virtual Assessment and we recommend [it] as a good standard of practice against which to compare any other virtual assessments"

(AIM-PROGRESS)

Notes to editors

About Sedex

Sedex is a global membership organisation that empowers companies to implement responsible business practices and policies in their business and supply chain to build responsible supply chains.

Sedex provides businesses with practical tools and resources to operate ethically, source responsibly and work with their suppliers to create fair working conditions for the people who make their products and services. Over 60,000 businesses use Sedex to manage business risk, meet compliance and drive positive impacts for people and the environment. Visit our [website](#) for more information. More details on the Virtual Assessment can be found [here](#).

About AIM-PROGRESS

AIM-PROGRESS is a forum of leading Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) manufacturers and common suppliers, assembled to enable and promote responsible sourcing practices and sustainable supply chains. It is a global initiative supported and sponsored by [AIM- the European Brands Association](#). Members include Colgate-Palmolive, Mondelez International, Nestlé, Pepsico, Reckitt Benckiser and Unilever.

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