

Digital Product Conformity Certificate Exchange

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Project Details

Domain	Trade Procedures Facilitation Domain and Agriculture Fisheries and Agri food Domain
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Supporting VC	Ian WattEstelle Igwe
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Project Purpose

Product conformity systems and mutual recognition agreements provide global quality assurance and supply chain safety mechanisms. The increasing complexity of supply chains is adversely impacting the visibility of the product conformity assessment processes, potentially reducing trust in product claims. This project focuses on product conformity as part of a broader regulatory compliance framework to define a glide path for business-to-government (B2G) and business-to-business (B2B) transition from paper and pdf-based exchange of product conformity credentials towards a paperless future.

Current product conformity and claims verification processes are vulnerable and cumbersome in an increasing digital trade environment with the electronic exchange of trade-related data. Digitalisation of accreditation and credentialing processes represent a response to this emerging problem. CASCO, the ISO International Committee on Conformity Assessments, has declared digitalisation a high priority to enhance international product conformity systems integrity. Digital validation of credentials and claims, including product certification, provides an important anchor of trust and means to establish the bona fides of the issuing authorities.

Industry has identified the risk of systems integrity failure, not limited to certificate counterfeiting or misuse, should a divergence of approaches or 'a mosaic of incompatible systems' emerges as Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) embrace 'their own way' of managing issues. A recent report by NATA, JAS-ANZ and GS1 in Australia explains 'the mosaic' is likely to take the form of an incompatible array of QR codes with proprietary (non-standard) syntax and semantics directing users to websites with limited, or no, validation of the credentials (competency) of the issuing authorities.

The strength and integrity of product conformity systems has significant implications for the digital trade environment. Linking products to certificates and consignments is gaining significant importance – especially in the context of increasing level of ESG supply chain regulations. Current product conformity assurance systems struggle to provide traceability of the original conformity attestation back to the globally-recognised authority – typically the national accreditation bodies which operate under global mutual recognition agreements. Advances in supply chain traceability (not limited to blockchain, non-fungible tokens and verifiable credentials) are placing increased emphasis on ISO/IEC product identification standards, standardised semantics, and data carriers to associate physical products with claims about those products from creation, consumer interaction and the circular economy.

This White Paper aims to stocktake, align, and integrate existing UN/CEFACT bodies of knowledge with frameworks being developed by the global product conformity community, including IAF and ILAC members. It leverages and extends existing e.Cert standards and recent G2G work on Verifiable Credentials to define a practical way forward (a glide-path) for B2G and B2B exchange of product conformity certificates.

It will also ensure existing UN/CEFACT standards (data models, messages, BRS) are integrated into envisaged digital conformity systems to ensure interoperable exchange of physical and paperless documents.

Project Scope

This project is closely linked with existing UN/CEFACT activities of the PoW 2021-2022, namely, focus area C Developing further;

(g) The development of standards and recommendations to enhance the harmonisation, exchange and processing of certificates used in trade;

(h) Work on a mutual recognition mechanism to facilitate domestic and cross-border paperless trade; and,

(i) Recommendations and standards relevant to existing UN/CEFACT domains such as Transport and Logistics; Supply Chain Management and Procurement; Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrifood; Travel and Tourism; etc.

UN/CEFACT considers Cross-border standardisation, simplification and harmonisation to be fundamental tools for the facilitation of international trading processes forming the nucleus of UN/CEFACT work.

The project complements existing UN/CEFACT standards and recommendations and aims to overcome existing challenges and constraints for the paperless movement of goods and services. It recognises the significant innovation and opportunity that Verified Credentials provides for Government and addresses a significant and widening gap that exists both between mature and less mature economies, between B2G and the vast B2B landscape.

The project brings ISO/IEC product identification standards into focus, aligned with UN/CEFACT norms with a view to providing clear, accessible and concise guidance for government and industry modernisation of product international product conformity systems.

This work will benefit the development of UN/CEFACT standards in future and governments implementing digitised trade facilitation solutions via ISC-PDA/eDATA Verifiable Credentials for Cross Border Trade – P1075

Project Deliverables

The project deliverables are:

- Deliverable 1: Webinar to invite experts for brainstorm
- Deliverable 2: White Paper on Product Conformity Certificate Exchange
- Deliverable 3: Webinar to present findings

Exit Criteria

The exit criteria will be:

- Exit Criteria for Deliv. 1: Working group formation with industry lead
- Exit Criteria for Deliv. 2: White paper ready to publish. Internal and External comment logs demonstrating that all comments have been taken into consideration.
- Exit Criteria for Deliv. 3: Publication of White Paper/Report

Project Team Membership and Required Functional Expertise

Membership is open to UN/CEFACT experts with broad knowledge in the area of: Trade Facilitation, SPS, Cross-border data harmonisation, eCerts, Verified Credentials

In addition, Heads of Delegations may invite technical experts from their constituency to participate in the work.

Experts are expected to contribute to the work based solely on their expertise and to comply with the UN/CEFACT Code of Conduct and Ethics and the policy on Intellectual Property Rights.

Geographical Focus

The geographical focus of the project is global.

Initial Contributions

- ° NATA/JAS-ANS/GS1 Discussion Paper on Digitalisation of Accreditation and Product Conformance.
- ° UN/CEFACT – ISC-PDA/eDATA Verifiable Credentials for Cross Border Trade – P1075

Resource Requirements

Webinar support by UNECE Secretariat .

Project working documents

FILE SHARING WIZARD

File	Modified
PDF File DigitalProductConformityCertificateExchange.pdf	Jul 19, 2022 by Aruna VIVEKANANTHAM

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