

TIC Council Webinar - Remote Conformity Assessment Activities: How will COVID-19 and innovation change the landscape of conformity assessment?

Summary

On 16 February, the TIC Council hosted a webinar focusing on the opportunities and challenges posed by remote conformity assessment activities to address today's global and dynamic demands.

Remote activities serve to enable conformity assessment bodies (CAB's) to perform on-site inspections, auditing, assessment, and verification methods virtually, by means of various technological tools and devices. In doing so, this innovative solution has been vital in facilitating the continuity of conformity assessment activities at a pressurised time of restricted travel and social distancing. Following the TIC Council's [White Paper on Remote Inspection](#), this webinar further explored the broader landscape of remote inspection to understand the preferential circumstances of their use, the risks and challenges posed along with the solutions and lessons learnt.

Our virtual panel featured speakers with a wealth of experience in the TIC Sector. With moderation given by **Hanane Taidi, TIC Council Director General**, the session kicked-off with the TIC Council Member of the Global Board and Sponsor of the TIC Council's Accreditation and Standardisation Committee, Ugo Salerno CEO of RINA. Mr Salerno gave valuable insights into the many advantages of remote inspections. Specifically offering extensive details into how more frequent and accurate remote inspection and monitoring can provide reliable and demonstrable evidence for follow-up review and assessment. This is a credit to the increased accessibility made available by remote inspections to reach difficult climates and environments. Nevertheless, this is a complex endeavour and will likely require a hybrid model based on market realities. Moreover, a reliable remote solution will require investments in both technology and training.

As such, all panellists agreed on the complexities experienced across all verticals when adapting to remote assessments. What is especially important is understanding that a sufficient level of technical training is crucial not only to perform remote activities, but to know when.

The point was made further by **Erica Sheward** the **Consumer Goods Forum Director** for the **Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)** and **GFSI Senior Manager Marie-Claude Quentin**. Ms Sheward and Ms Quentin shared their organisation's perspectives on challenges in setting requirements to ensure safety and reliability in the field. Specifically, the issue of not being able to guarantee the same entire set of results from a remote assessment in comparison to being physically on-site does raise trust issues. Therefore, a hybrid framework must be deployed to ensure a full-proof assessment and allow inspectors and manufacturers to obtain a sense of trust and confidence. With this being an ongoing process, the panellists expressed the encouragement from the TIC community to share further knowledge for evidence which could help progress the best practices and outcomes regarding remote inspection.

Lastly, a number of these challenges were ultimately reiterated by our final panellist, **Emanuele Riva, Vice-chair of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) & Vice General Manager of Accredia**. Mr Riva shared insights into the actions undertaken by the IAF in response to the pandemic and cited the various opportunities that new technologies could bring to this domain, this evoked current discussion points on what is needed for remote inspections to bring real value. By investing in technical infrastructures such as blockchain and adopting practices like rolling review and data-recording, this will set the stage in boosting efficiency, confidence, and competitiveness.

Speakers

- Ugo Salerno - CEO for RINA, TIC Council Global Board Member
- Erica Sheward - Director for GFSI at The Consumer Goods Forum
- Marie-Claude Quentin - Senior Manager for GFSI at The Consumer Goods Forum
- Emanuele Riva - Vice Chair of IAF & Vice General Manager of Accredia

To learn more, please click to access the webinar recording [here](#).

The presentation of the webinar can also be found [here](#).

The panellists Q&A will be distributed soon, providing answers to participants specific questions.

As TIC Council continues to provide thought-provoking presentations on the current market trends and legislative developments around conformity assessment, check our [list of webinars](#) to learn more.

About TIC Council

TIC Council is a global association representing over 90 international independent third-party testing, inspection, certification, and verification organizations. The industry represents an estimated one million employees across the world with annual sales of approximately USD 200 billion.