

Frequently Asked Questions

Novel Coronavirus outbreak

amfori members

General

How many producers are affected?

As the situation changes rapidly, amfori recommends members to check the World Health Organization (WHO) [coronavirus dashboard](#) for the latest updates on the number of the cases confirmed in China by province as well as other countries.

How do I know if any of my producers are affected?

amfori recommends that members contact their local producers directly. Chinese provinces may also issue official announcements with the latest developments in their region. Members may consult the local authorities for the latest information.

In how far will this disrupt production? Will I receive my order on time?

The outbreak is disrupting global supply chain operations; however, since the situation is changing rapidly, it is difficult to provide an accurate estimation of its impact. Closely following up with local producers is the best way to monitor the situation and to decide on contingency plans should operations be impacted.

Due to travel restrictions, members cannot visit their producers and may not be able to carry out their own monitoring measures; the same applies to member offices in China Hong Kong. What should we do?

The Chinese Government has officially asked businesses to gradually resume work starting from 10 February (after the extended Chinese New Year holiday). Businesses need to fulfil the Work Resumption precondition which includes various health and safety precaution measures. The situation evolves rapidly so we encourage members to consult their producers, suppliers, logistics service providers and auditing companies for the most up to date information. Members are advised to plan realistically in relation to shipments and to expect delays. Workers' health and safety should be the top priority at all times.

We have seen the work resumption in China has greatly improved in the past two months. Wuhan city and Hubei province have ended their lockdown as of 8 April after 75 days.

Auditing companies have planned how to resume their work. Members should keep in mind that auditing companies need to comply with local laws and policy regarding work resumption. They also need to strike the balance between serving their customers' needs and safeguarding the wellbeing of their employees and fellow auditors on the ground. Current mobility restrictions prevent auditors from conducting full-scale third-party audits as usual. To date, most audit activities in China have resumed. The pace of audit resumption in other countries varies. We suggest that members contact the local auditing company to understand the current situation.

Some auditing companies might have contingency plans to conduct partial audits online. Members should consult auditing companies.

What do I do when goods get stuck on ships or in ports and cannot be processed?

All customs authorities across different countries are under pressure. This situation is beyond the remit of amfori. Members are recommended to find out more via their local agents or contact the local authorities for the most up to date advice. In highly affected areas within China, only designated logistics service providers are designated to do the transportation.

What do I do if companies insist on punctual delivery even though the COVID-19 may be considered a force majeure event?

We recommend members consult their legal advisors or consultants on the implication and proper arrangement for the failure of punctual delivery. The business contract should be checked to determine whether it contains the respective arrangements under this situation – including *force majeure*.

As well as investigating the contractual implications, businesses should put in place effective health and safety systems to ensure the safety of workers.

What do I do if some producers are not available?

As mentioned, work resumption in China is very high as of 8 April. Many producers have restarted operations. We recommended that members contact their suppliers for more information. In the long run, we recommended that members build up a balanced and geographically dispersed portfolio of suppliers to mitigate the impact of any future potential issues.

What do I do in response to disruption in supply chains and "supply bottlenecks"?

Temporary disruption to the supply chain is inevitable. In China, the government is supporting businesses, particularly SMEs, to resume work gradually. In order to alleviate their financial burden, the latest policy allows a temporary suspension of social insurance from April to June. This temporary policy aims to support micro, SME business in China to overcome the challenge and financial burden which is brought by COVID-19. However, it is important to understand this temporary policy won't impact the benefits of the workers as long as they pay their part. In addition, the [government is supporting businesses which focus on exports](#).

Monitoring activities

Are auditors operating in the field?

Auditing companies have developed and communicated their own health and safety internal policies regarding the outbreak. For more information, please contact the auditing companies directly.

What happens if I had scheduled an audit in China?

The auditing company will evaluate the situation and inform you whether the audit can be conducted or not. If the audit cannot be carried out, it will be cancelled. If applicable/necessary, the audit validity will be extended by three months.

You may need to submit another audit request on the platform. We recommend you discuss the timing of your new audit with the auditing company before making your request. For more information, check [these recommendations](#).

What if I want to request an audit now, can I do it?

The audit can be requested but the auditing company will evaluate the situation to ensure the safety of auditors and employees. If the auditing company is unable to conduct the audit, they will communicate with the RSP holder. The RSP holder needs to communicate to their producers.

What happens with follow up audits during this time?

The expiry date of a full audit may be impacted. Following the Chinese Government's communication, amfori can extend the audit expiry date by 3 months. The audit can then be requested for a future date. In order to keep the RSP before the automatic release on the system, it is highly recommended to request the audit at least 3 weeks before the expiry date for a future date.

What do we have to do to initiate the extension? Do we need to request the validity extension for each factory?

The RSP holder will need to check with the auditing company for each factory whether an audit can take place. If the auditing company confirms that the audit cannot be conducted in time, the RSP holder will need to submit a new audit request. The RSP holder should inform on the audit request box of the situation and reason why the audit will be requested after the expiry date.

Will the validity automatically be extended on the amfori BSCI platform, when the audit is requested later than expiry?

The extension of the audit will not be reflected on the amfori BSCI platform. Therefore, there is no automatic extension of the audit validity. The validity extension will be done *ad hoc*, it will be mentioned in the audit report.

If the new audit can only take place after expiry date because of the novel coronavirus, will there be a gap between old and new audit, which is visible on the platform?

Yes, the auditing companies should put a note on the audit summary in order to provide visibility on the situation.

Currently there is no end of the outbreak in sight. For example, if an audit is valid until April 2020, does this mean that the validity will automatically be extended to August 2020 in case the virus should end in April?

amfori has decided to extend by three months the validity dates of amfori BSCI audits worldwide with an expiry date between 1 March 2020 and 1 June 2020, provided that the auditing company cannot conduct the audit in time.

Some auditing companies are not reachable, how should we proceed?

amfori BSCI: If members are encountering problems when reaching out to auditing companies locally, they should approach the amfori BSCI Scheme Manager (contact info available on the amfori BSCI platform homepage by clicking on "Auditors Directory").

If that fails, then please send a request for advice/support to info@amfori.org and our Services team will follow up with you. Please kindly note that many auditing companies are taking precautionary working measures which may cause a delay to their service level. amfori BSCI audits with an expiry date between 1 March 2020 and 1 June 2020 have been extended by three months, provided that the auditing company cannot conduct the audit in time and the RSP holder requests the extension.

amfori BEPI: All amfori BEPI Scheme manager contacts are available via the amfori BEPI platform. On the bottom left of the page there is a link to BEPI Service Providers.

What should I do if I suspect there is a higher risk of extreme overtime and subcontracting among producers who are working with a reduced workforce?

This could have serious negative impacts on workers' safety. Members are encouraged to be considerate and to establish an open dialogue with business partners to set realistic delivery times.

Capacity Building

What if my course has been cancelled?

If your session been cancelled, we invite you to find out a new date for that session on the amfori Academy. Please also check for other online courses available on this platform.

Is it safe to attend the sessions scheduled as of March?

For travel and safety, please refer to official announcement from the relevant travel agency and local Health Authority. If you sign up, please make sure cancellation policy applies to your travel and accommodation arrangements.

What happens if I register for a session in March and it is cancelled afterwards?

Workshops will be rescheduled as much as possible once the situation allows it. For any further information, please contact info@amfori.org

Scheme Managers

If the number of factory workers is reduced due to the outbreak at the moment of the audit, should we adapt the duration?

The RSP holder should decide whether it makes sense to conduct the audit in this situation and if the audit will properly reflect the factory's working conditions.

Is the 3 months extension "expiry date + 3 months" or "three more months following the end of the outbreak"? Both wordings are used in the MEMO.

Expiry date + 3 months.

Is this regulation valid only for audits in China or it can be applied also in other countries where audits cannot be conducted due to the outbreak? (E.g. because the audit team or factory management cannot travel or factory is not operating especially in factories under Chinese management in Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, etc.)

It can also be applied to countries outside China, always making sure to keep record of the justification.

If the 3 months extension is not visible on the amfori BSCI platform, how can amfori members, other than the RSP, know the extended expiry date?

They will have to communicate with the RSP holder.

If an audit is requested, but it cannot be conducted, do we need to cancel the audit request and ask the RSP to create a new one? Can an existing request be modified by RSP?

In the system, the audit request can only be cancelled by the RSP and then a new one is to be requested.

Is the 3 months extension only granted to producers through a new audit request? Or also to producers without active audit request but with expiry date coming up soon?

It is only granted to producers through a new audit request.

Do we understand correctly that the RSP holder will lose the RSP for a specific producer if they don't request an audit before the expiry date of last audit?

For more information on this matter, please check the System Manual Part II (p. 38) about the RSP holder status.

As recommended in the MEMO, RSP holders should apply for an audit latest 3 weeks before the expiry date. Is there any earlier time, when an audit with extended date can be applied for? As soon as the "Request audit" button is available?

Yes, this can be changed.

Is any other action needed when initiating/scheduling the audit and writing the report for audits with extended deadline?

There is an opportunity to add this in the summary report. We will update the MEMO to require a note on the summary report.

Will the calibration meeting in Brussels on 11-12 March 2020 take place as planned, or is there any change?

The calibration meeting is postponed until further notice.

We receive the instruction on extension of audit expiry date for 3 months through the communication box on audit request screen. However, the "Schedule Audit Between" is still following the current original expiry date, is that right? Or this period also needs to extend to reflect the intention of extension?

The period should be reflected in the audit request "schedule audit between".

While travel restrictions are imposed and in the case of countries with low volume of audits, with limited resources, including cluster coverage, would it be possible to use an expert (someone who is not formally amfori BSCI qualified) instead of an amfori BSCI auditor?

Not at the moment. The current solution is to postpone the audit, but no exception on qualification, cluster and audit team composition can currently be applied. If the situation persists, this might be reconsidered.