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THEMATIC HIGHLIGHT

Electrotechnical standardization: Definition, Challenges for Africa and the role of AFSEC

What is electrotechnical standardization? :

As the developed world embraced the benefits of electricity; electrical and then electronic products; systems and services, at the beginning of the 20th century, the need for appropriate international standards and conformity assessment systems developed. Electrotechnical standardization comprises these needs and has continually evolved since the establishment of the International

Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in 1906. Subsequently, in various regions of the world, structures have developed to facilitate trade in electrotechnical equipment and common application of electrotechnical standards, notably CENELEC in the EU and AFSEC in Africa. AFSEC has been established to fulfil a growing need for a focus on electrotechnical standardization in Africa. Together with its sister organization ARSO, AFSEC mirrors the best practices of IEC and ISO in the case of ARSO.



What are the main challenges for Africa?:

The framework for agreement on technical standards in developed countries was established during the first half of the 20th century. The progressive establishment of the electricity supply networks and ICT systems in these countries was done against a background of maturing electrotechnical standards. In contrast, Africa's infrastructure to co-operate on electrotechnical standards has been either missing or ineffective. With the exception of only a few countries, there has been little or no infrastructure established for such standards to be reviewed and updated, which should be in line with progress in international standardization. Standardization is an essential component of Africa's development. The agreement on standards for building infrastructure, in particular the electrical networks is vital to realize the goal of universal access to modern energy. (...)

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PROJECTS' HIGHLIGHTS

African Standards for African Traditional Medicine: Role of the TBT Programme



THC13 Meeting, Mauritius, February 2015

The 2013 WHO Report on Traditional Medicine defines it as “the sum total of the knowledge, skill, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness”. Also this Report states that the number of African countries with national Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) policies increased from eight in 1999/2000 to 39 in 2010, and those with national T&CM strategic plans rose from zero to 18. Country regulatory frameworks increased from one in 1999/2000 to 28 in 2010, including various instruments such as the code of ethics and the legal framework for T&CM practitioners. In recognition of the wide use and hence the importance of integrating traditional medicine into their national health systems, the Heads of States and Governments in their meeting in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001 declared the Decade of African Traditional Medicine from 2001-2010 in order to create an enabling

environment for optimising its contribution (AUC 2007). In order to implement the Lusaka Decision of the Heads of States and Governments (AHG/DEC. 164 (XXXVII)) (AUC, 2001), 2nd ordinary Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Health (CAMH2) meeting in Gaborone, Botswana from 10th – 14th October 2005 approved the Plan of Action on the AU Decade of African Traditional Medicine 2001-2010 (AUC, 2005).

The Progress Report on Decade of African Traditional Medicine in the African Region (WHO-AFRO, 2011) indicates that during the Decade countries popularized traditional medicine, established and strengthened their institutional capacity and developed national policies and regulatory frameworks for the practice of traditional medicine. Countries also made progress in establishing national programmes and expert committees for the development of traditional medicine in their ministries of health.(...)

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PROJECTS' HIGHLIGHTS

ZAMBIA: The Zambia Bureau of Standards on its way to accreditation



Capacity Building to ZBS, Zambia, January 2015

In Zambia the need to improve productivity for export in order to earn foreign exchange is a priority for the public and private sectors. In order for the country to become more competitive, and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new global trade regime, and information technology, the country has to enhance its Quality Infrastructure capabilities to match requirements established by world markets.

Based on the Zambian priorities, the TBT Programme, together with the Zambia Bureau of Standards, launched beginning of 2015 a capacity building intervention towards Quality Infrastructure capabilities enhancement. More specifically, this intervention aims at: upgrading the existing capacities of the Zambia Bureau of Standards in terms of standardisation and management systems and supporting the accreditation process of key proficiency testing facilities. The project has also the objective of

raising awareness on the key elements of the TBT WTO Agreement among public and private relevant stakeholders.

So far, selected staff of the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS) has been trained on the application of ISO/IEC 17025:2005 requirements and in the implementation of the management system. The training has been conducted with the objective of achieving accreditation against the International Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005. A two weeks training has been provided to ZABS Testing Laboratory staff consisting of two parts: 1) Interactive training course provided to 20 representatives of the Testing Laboratories; 2) Practical training Testing protocols in the Testing laboratories.(...)

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NEWS & EVENTS

Vanuatu: Workshop ecolabelling schemes, fish sector, Vanuatu & the Pacific



In November 2014 the ACP EU TBT Programme together with the Pacific region launched a new project to assess the real potentials of the adoption of ecolabelling schemes in the fish sector in the Pacific region and thus provide advice and support to governmental and private sector institutions. The project, resulted from an original proposal submitted by the Government of Vanuatu through its Embassy in Brussels, aims to support the capacities of governments and industry groups on aspects of the WTO TBT Agreement and in particular on how ecoabelling can assist them comply with international standards and facilitate market access of fish products

After 3 months of implementation, the project Final Workshop took place in Port Vila from the 23rd until the 26th of February. The Workshop conveyed 44 participants from 5 different Pacific islands (Papua New

Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). Additionally to the TBT Programme, represented by Ms Claudia Schiattarella, regional organisations such as: Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFs), Parties to Nauru Agreement (PNA) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) took also part to the event.

During the opening session, Hon David TosulButuiso (M.P), Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Bio-Security of Vanuatu, expressed his gratitude to the TBT Programme for the support provided targeting the Pacific's fish sector. The Minister reminded one of the key issues affecting trade in the fish sector: the EU's 'yellow cards' that Vanuatu received in 2012 in the fight against Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.(...)

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NEWS & EVENTS

COMESA: Workshop on Standardization and Quality Assurance strategic plan



COMESA SQA Workshop, Zambia, February 2015

In September 2014 the ACP-EU TBT Programme launched a project to support COMESA Secretariat and the Member States to define a strategic plan to foster regional quality infrastructure in synergy with other regional Standardization and Quality Assurance initiatives. The project aimed at enhancing the capacity of COMESA Quality Infrastructure institutions to coordinate and to harmonize regional technical standards and conformity assessment procedure and ultimately to facilitate intra-regional and international trade. The project was implemented by Enabling Environments to assist COMESA Members States in developing a five-year Strategic Plan. The plan will serve as framework to guide and to underpin activities for Quality Assurance Programme, specifically covering standards harmonization, industrial/scientific metrology and legal metrology, conformity assessment, accreditation, technical regulations and pharmaceutical harmonization. Interviews were conducted in quality infrastructure organizations and in some private sector

organizations in seven (7) of the COMESA region Member States. A needs assessment, a SWOT analysis and a draft Strategic plan addressing the key findings were prepared.

After 5 months of implementation, a regional validation workshop on Standardization and Quality Assurance (SQA) strategic plan was held in Lusaka, Zambia from 26th to 27th February 2015. The workshop aimed at reviewing the SQA needs assessment and SWOT analysis completed in selected pilot countries. The workshop's goal was also to review SQA capacity gaps to contribute to the development of the 5-year SQA strategic plan and implementation plan.

The validation workshop was the opportunity for Member States to provide further inputs and to ensure that their needs were properly addressed by the strategic plan under development.(...)

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INSIGHT: CERTIFICATION

CERTIFICATION: DEFINITION AND ROLE OF THE TBT PROGRAMME

LABELS, TRADEMARKS AND CERTIFICATION

ECOLABELLING PROCESS IN AFRICA: PRESENTATION AND CHALLENGES

The WTO TBT Agreement aims at ensuring that technical regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. This is why the issues of certification are at the heart of the ACP EU TBT Programme with a number of projects having specific activities in relation to certification, namely one on strengthening the competitiveness of Ghana-based exporters through effective Export Quality Management Systems, on providing support to the Mauritius Accreditation Service (MAURITAS), a capacity building intervention to the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS). There are a number of definitions of the term “certification” available, referring, in general, to the confirmation of certain characteristics of an object, person, or organization. To be more technical, certification is the provision by an independent body of written assurance (commonly known as a certificate) that the product, service or system in question meets specific requirements. (...) [Read More](#)



Display of information about a product on its container, packaging or the product itself is known as labelling. Labels may contain trademarks - type of shorthand symbol used to indicate the origin and specific characteristics of goods. The benefits of using such symbols as opposed to the full details of the maker or manufacturer are obvious. A mark is easier to remember and recognise, and more practical to physically apply to the product. It is important to distinguish which types of trademarks are used:

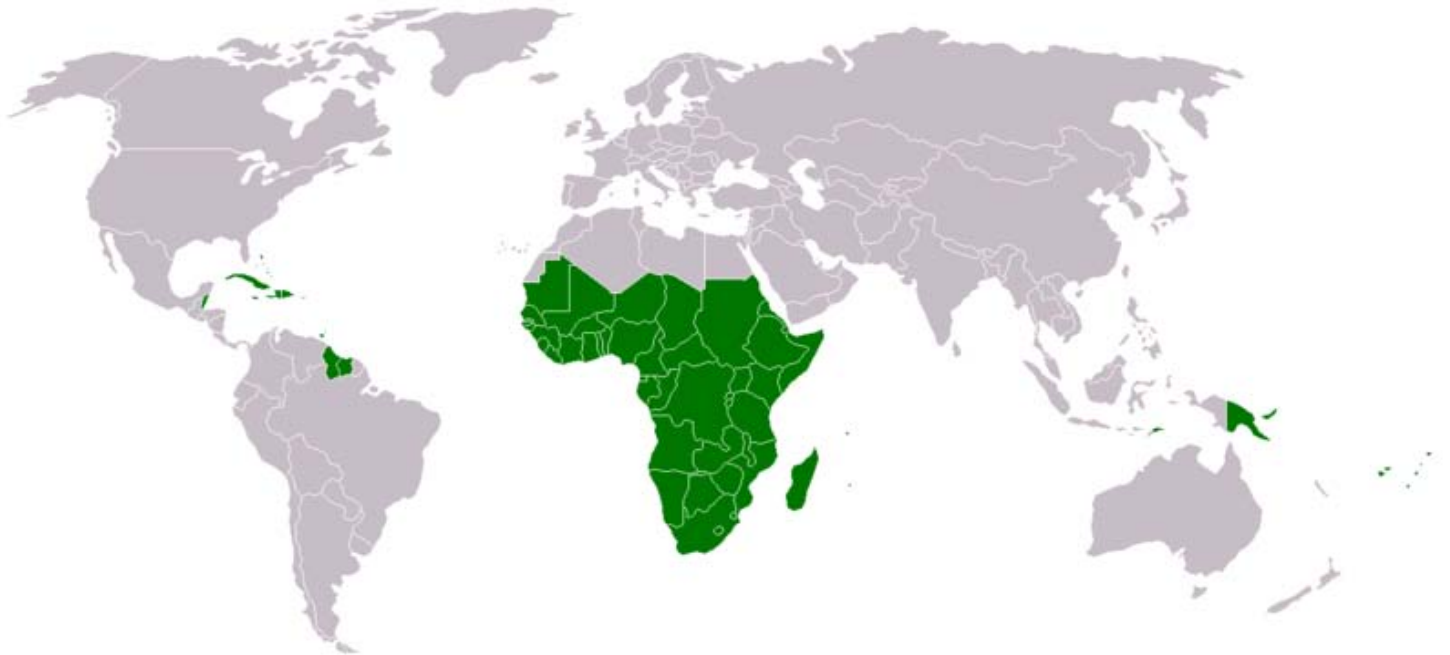


ordinary, collective, certification or guarantee trademarks. In relation to certification trademarks it should be underlined that they require that the holder controls the users of the mark and ensures that they comply with certain pre-defined standards. (...) [Read More](#)

In comparison to the developed continents, the level of awareness and therefore interest and practice in ecolabelling is low in Africa. An overview of ecolabelling and related initiatives in the African region reveals that majority of the ecolabelling schemes operating in Africa are of international origin with very few that are specific to the region or countries within the region. Majority of the ecolabelling schemes tend to be sector specific, mainly in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, textiles and leather – which also happen to be the key economic sectors in Africa. (...) [Read More](#)



ONGOING PROJECTS



ARSO – Harmonisation of African Standards Medicine

ACP Geneva – Enhancing ACP capacity in TBT issues

BOTSWANA –Reinforcement of QA Institutions

BURUNDI – Reinforcement des capacités BBN

CAMEROON –Appui à ONCC

COMESA –Standardization and Quality Assurance

COTE D’IVOIRE – Appui pour accreditation

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – Safety Management System

JAMAICA – Regional Patent Examination Training

MAURITIUS–Regulatory Impact Assessment

RDC – Système de certification

RWANDA –Strengthening RSB

SEYCHELLES–Audit and assessment to SBS

VANUATU–Ecolabelling schemes

VANUATU – Assistance for Kava production

ZAMBIA–Capacity Building to ZBS

UPCOMING EVENTS

- African European Business Forum, Bonn, **June 2015**
- EC InfoPoint Conference: Overcoming the Technical Barriers to Trade, Brussels, **June 2015**

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