

## BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY



# BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY

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# BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY

## 1 ACRONYMS

<b>BAHA</b>	-	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
<b>BBS</b>	-	Belize Bureau of Standards
<b>BIPM</b>	-	International Bureau of Weights and Measures
<b>BSOs</b>	-	Business Support Organizations
<b>CABs</b>	-	Conformity Assessment Bodies
<b>CARICOM</b>	-	Caribbean Community
<b>CAHFSA</b>	-	Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency
<b>CCA</b>	-	Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation
<b>CIPM</b>	-	International Committee for Weights and Measures
<b>CROSQ</b>	-	CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality
<b>CMC</b>	-	Calibration and Measurements Capabilities
<b>CSME</b>	-	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
<b>EU</b>	-	European Union
<b>EPA</b>	-	European Union - CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement
<b>GRP</b>	-	Good Regulatory Practice
<b>GSDS</b>	-	Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy
<b>ISO</b>	-	International Organisation for Standardization
<b>IEC</b>	-	International Electrotechnical Commission
<b>MRA</b>	-	Mutual Recognition Agreement
<b>MS</b>	-	Member States - for the purpose of this document, CARICOM and the DR
<b>NAB</b>	-	National Accreditation Body
<b>NAFP</b>	-	National Accreditation Focal Point
<b>NQI</b>	-	National Quality Infrastructure

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<b>NSBs</b>	-	National Standardisation Bodies
<b>NES</b>	-	National Export Strategy
<b>OIML</b>	-	International Organisation of Legal Metrology
<b>OIRSA</b>	-	Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria
<b>QI</b>	-	Quality Infrastructure
<b>SI</b>	-	International System of Units
<b>RQP</b>	-	Regional Quality Policy
<b>TBTs</b>	-	Technical Barriers to Trade
<b>TRIs</b>	-	Trade Related Institutions
<b>WTO</b>	-	World Trade Organization

## 2 DEFINITIONS

The definitions that follow are very important in understanding the rest of the document. They come from various authoritative sources and have been included so as to make their meanings more understandable to a wider audience.

### **Accreditation**

Third-party verification related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks.

### **Certification**

Third-party attestation that products, processes, systems or persons conform to establish standards.

### **Civil Society**

Society considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity and seen as a social sphere separate from both the state and the economic market.

### **Competent Authority**

Any person or organization that has the legally delegated or invested authority, capacity, or power to perform a designated function.

### **Competitiveness**

A country's ability to sell goods and services (under free and fair conditions) in global markets while maintaining and expanding the real incomes of its people over the long term.

### **Conformity Assessment**

Demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled; typically conducted through quality assessment services such as inspection, testing and or certification.

### **Consumer Protection**

The safety and interests of buyers of goods and services against low quality or dangerous products that are not fit for its end use and advertisements that deceive people

### **Demand Oriented**

A customer driven good or service

### **Ecosystems**

A complex network or interconnected system

### Environmental Protection

Refers to any activity to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances. Includes such factors as energy efficiency and renewable energy and the sustainable use of natural resources.

### Goods

Commodities such as is the subject of trade or commerce and includes services, processes, and practices.

### Good Regulatory Practice

Good Regulatory Practice (GRP) are internationally recognised processes, systems, tools and methods for improving the quality of regulations. GRP systematically implements public consultation and stakeholder engagement as well as impact analysis of Government proposals, before they are implemented to make sure they are fit for purpose and will deliver what they are set out to achieve.

### Health Protection

A term used to encompass a set of activities within the Public Health function. It involves: ensuring the safety and quality of food, water, air and the general environment preventing the transmission of diseases.

### Innovation

The implementation of a new or significantly improved product, service process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization, or external relations.

### Inspection

Examination of a product design, product, process or installation and determination of its conformity with specific requirements or, based on professional judgement, with general requirements.

### Metrology

Science of measurement and its application; branches of the discipline extend to scientific (artifact type standards), industrial (calibration) and legal (verification) metrology.

### Productivity

The effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.

### Promulgate

To put (a law or decree) into effect by official proclamation.

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### **Quality**

The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. It is demonstrated by the degree of customer satisfaction.

### **Quality Culture**

An individual and societal state of being wherein a continual strives for a consciousness of quality improvement is embedded in attitude and personified in behaviour in all things, great or small.

### **Quality Infrastructure (National and Regional)**

The totality of internationally recognized standards and technical regulations, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment services and information, awareness and education programmes involved in strengthening the quality competitiveness of the goods and services produced or provided in the Caribbean Community with the aim of: increasing trade, boosting industrial efficiency and effectiveness, supporting the development of the CSME, promoting consumer welfare and safety and contributing to energy security and the preservation of the environment.

These five pillars of quality infrastructure - *Standards, Metrology, Accreditation, Conformity Assessment* and the cross functional *Information/Awareness/Education* - can be applied at the national level - National Quality Infrastructure and complimented through the regional level - Regional Quality Infrastructure.

### **Quality Infrastructure Institutions or Quality Institutions**

Bodies organised at the national and regional level, and in any socio-economic sector, to provide quality infrastructure services such as Standards development, Accreditation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Information, Awareness and Education. Institutions can come from the public, private or civil society not-for-profit sectors.

### **Quality Infrastructure Services or Quality Services**

Technical services provided by Quality Infrastructure Institutions.

### **Regional Public Good**

Any good, commodity, service, system of rules or policy regime that is public in nature and that generates shared benefits for the participating countries and whose production is a result of collective action by the participating countries.

### **Standards**

Document approved by a recognised body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines and characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminologies, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method

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### **Standardization**

A framework or methodology to ensure that the process for formulation, publication and implementation of guidelines, rules and specifications for common and repeated use achieves uniformity in each context, discipline or field. It includes transparency and consensus for the most efficient use of research, development and production resources.

### **Sustainable Development**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; includes economic, social, environmental and technological resilience as well as other factors.

### **Technical Barriers to Trade**

A category of nontariff barriers to trade or measures that countries use to regulate markets, protect their consumers, or preserve their natural resources (among other legitimate objectives), but they also can be used unnecessarily (or perceived so by third parties) to discriminate against imports in order to protect domestic industries.

### **World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement**

An agreement that aims to ensure that regulations, standards and Conformity Assessment Procedures are non-discriminatory and do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. At the same time, it recognises World Trade Organization members' rights to implement measures to achieve legitimate policy objectives, such as protection of human health and safety, or protection of the environment. The TBT agreement strongly encourages members to base their measures on international standards to facilitate trade. Through its transparency provisions, it also aims to create a predictable trading environment.

### **Technical Regulation**

Document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative and conformity assessment provisions, with which compliance is mandatory.

### **Testing**

Determination of one or more characteristics of an object of conformity assessment, according to a procedure e.g., analytical, medical etc.



## I) BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY



## 3 Rationale

### 3.1 The Concept of Quality, and the Definition of a Quality Policy and Quality Infrastructure

#### **The Concept of Quality**

According to the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) the term “quality” means the “degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object (i.e., product, service, process, organization or resource) fulfils requirements”<sup>1</sup>. Several important features of “quality” such as requirements, specifications, measurement, and conformance are embedded in this definition.

A country is regarded as developed when the political and economic systems can afford the citizenry a high quality of life and standard of living. The National Quality Policy therefore constitutes a strategic intervention intended to positively influence the quality of public service provided by the state for the citizenry and to encourage the private sector to produce goods and services that are globally competitive.

#### **National Quality Policy**

The National Quality Policy (NQP) is intended to guide the development and implementation of an effective National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)<sup>2</sup> for Belize. A QP provides the glue to link and appropriately underpin other national policies (e.g., trade, industrial, environmental, SME, science, research & innovation and investment policies).

The NQP specifies the objectives of the Quality Infrastructure (QI) in building the necessary foundation and providing the appropriate underpinning for assisting local enterprises, including MSMEs, to access local, regional and global markets whilst also ensuring human, animal and plant health and safety and protection of the environment.

#### **National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)**

The National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) is the system comprising the organizations (public and private) together with the policies, relevant legal and regulatory framework, and practices needed to support and enhance the quality, safety and environmental soundness of goods, services and processes<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ISO 9001:2015 *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

<sup>2</sup> *Quality Policy – Guiding Principles*. UNIDO / International Network on Quality Infrastructure, Vienna, Austria, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> *Quality Policy – Guiding Principles*. UNIDO / International Network on Quality Infrastructure, Vienna, Austria, 2018.

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The quality infrastructure is required for the effective operation of domestic markets. International recognition of elements of the NQI is important to enable access to foreign markets.

### 3.2 Background and Purpose

The Government of Belize, like its neighbours in the region, has a responsibility towards the quality of goods and services produced and consumed by its citizens from the perspective of health, safety, deceptive practices and the environment. The role of the Government, therefore, is to promulgate and enforce laws and regulations focused on the protection of human, animal, plant health and the environment while creating an enabling environment for businesses. The standards developed primarily to facilitate trade and commerce are voluntary. They do not contain regulatory requirements related to health, safety and/or the environment. Where such protection is required, it is international best practice for governments to develop technical regulations that require mandatory compliance.

In order to compete successfully in developed markets, enterprises in Belize face a formidable array of challenges. Over and above the logistics, management and financial issues, one of the major stumbling blocks is the attainment of demonstrable product and/or service quality as demanded by authorities and purchasers in domestic and especially foreign markets. In order to fully exploit the possibilities for trading with foreign markets, enterprises in Belize need cost effective access to an internationally recognized, but supportive NQI that can provide the required independent evidence of product compliance.

Considering these realities, the Government of Belize is committed to strengthen, upgrade and appropriately maintain the capacity of all the components of the NQI (i.e., standardization, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment and the supporting regulatory regime). This imperative is also a logical outflow of the National Development Framework for Belize 2010 - 2030, especially the pillars related to economic resilience, healthy citizens and a healthy environment and for that matter also all other UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recognizing that the NQI and technical regulation regime in Belize may not yet be developed to full potential, and that it may not be fully harmonized with those of its major trading partners, it follows that efforts to develop and strengthen the NQI in Belize needs to be addressed in a holistic manner, to address NQI components within Government Ministries, agencies and private sector enterprises. As Belize strengthens its NQI, enhances its technical regulation regime and appropriately organizes the relationship between the two, the country must decide how it will cater for technological and quality

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needs, minimize environmental, health and safety externalities, and at the same time avoid unnecessary and costly barriers to trade.

In furtherance of the objectives and provisions of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Free Trade Agreement on compatibility and equivalence in reducing Technical Barriers to Trade, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) has produced a Regional Quality Policy (RQP). This NQP, that appropriately incorporates the concepts and principles expounded in the RQP, provides Belize with the necessary policy guidance to appropriately and sustainably address its NQI related needs.

### 3.3 Situation Analysis

A Situational Analysis can be found in a separate document entitled “Improving competitiveness, market access and economic resilience - The case for the implementation of the NQP in Belize”. A summary of important background information contained in this the document is provided below.

#### *Social and Economic Context*

Belize is an upper-middle income country with a small open economy supported primarily by a natural resource base with principal sectors including (i) agriculture, (ii) agro-processing and (iii) tourism. The economy is characterized by a deficit in trade which has widened in the last decade.

#### *Preferential trade agreements*

Belize is part of several regional and international organizations, such as CARICOM, CARIFORUM, Central American Integration System (SICA), OAS and the Commonwealth of Nations. Through these associations, the country is able to facilitate political dialogue, and co-ordinate economic policies, as well as benefit from preferential trading arrangements. There are still many areas of growth that are still to be exploited in this regard.

#### *National priorities*

The National Development Framework for Belize 2010 - 2030 (Horizon 2030), especially the pillars related to economic resilience, healthy citizens and a healthy environment, the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), the National Export Strategy, and recent focus on certain sectors for COVID-19 recovery, envisage several activities that indicate the need to appropriately strengthen and reinforce the NQI institutional capability and capacity.

The National Development Framework for Belize - HORIZON 2030, outlines strategies to achieve the country's goals for economic resilience. It recognizes the need for an appropriate quality infrastructure, through the inclusion of goal 2 - “Develop the Domestic Market as a Springboard for Exports, Produce Quality Goods and Services and Expand Exports”.

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### *Issues and challenges*

There are many needs that have surfaced related to the QI in the strategic documents of Belize where implementation would be strengthened and made more sustainable through the implementation of the NQP in Belize. An appropriate NQI provides a means to compete globally, improve economic priorities and attract foreign investments, a concept that has been widely accepted in countries regionally and internationally. To drive Belize's agenda for economic growth, producers / exporters of goods and services need to better understand and seek appropriate compliance or conformance with the requirements as defined by the local, regional and international technical regulations or standards that are often times referenced by trading partners.

A re-engineered and robust NQI and related regulatory framework, driven by government support through the NQP, facilitates the maximization of the potential benefits to be gained through the increased participation of Belize within the global trading system and is an important driver for the development of key sectors, cost effective and sustainable development and enhanced resilience of the Belizean economy.

### **3.4 The need for a Policy Intervention**

Through its accession to membership of the World Trade Organization, Belize has declared its desire and commitment to increasing its participation in the global trading system. To gain more from such participation, Belize, like other developing countries, seeks to increase exports in order to drive their socio-economic development agenda. There is therefore a need to better understand and seek appropriate compliance with the appropriate international requirements and best practices as defined by the regional and international community.

Like many other countries, the NQI in Belize has developed in an organic way, in the absence of an appropriate and overarching clear government policy framework. Over time, such an uncoordinated approach often leads to unintentional restrictions that hinder, rather than support trade. This Policy is intended to guide the application of quality infrastructure in support of sustainable development and economic resilience. Through nurturing a culture of quality consciousness, judicious application of the policy will promote higher levels of productivity, innovation, export competitiveness and consumer, health and environmental protection through improved quality of products and the services and the development of an internationally recognized demand-oriented quality infrastructure. All of this to occur within the context of various trade agreements that have or will be concluded.

The NQP implementation strategy addresses both the short -and longer-term needs related to the further strengthening and expansion of the NQI required for Belize. Recognising that a critical level of quality Infrastructure

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development has a progressive effect on society, the economy and the provision of state services, this Policy is meant to assist decision-makers to increase regional and international accessibility, affordability and use of recognized quality infrastructure services to:

- Support the building economic, social, environmental and technological resilience in Member States and the region as a whole and contribute to the strengthening of the Caribbean integration movement and governance structures in support of implementation of the CARICOM and national development goals;
- Embed continuous quality improvement principles and practices in other important sustainable development policy areas such as research, security, and natural resource management;
- Support CARICOM and national pursuits and priorities in the areas of productivity, innovation, export competitiveness and consumer, health and environmental protection, food security and the focus on key sectors for sustainable development and resilience of the Belizean economy; and
- Honour commitments made under various trade agreements such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, European Union - CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, and World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement.

## 4 Stakeholders, Vision, Policy Goal, Primary Objectives, and Expected Results

### (i) STAKEHOLDERS

This document is primarily intended for:

- **National Governmental Organizations (Public Sector):** Government Ministries, Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS), Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and the Customs Agency.
- **Businesses and Business Support Organizations:** Manufacturers, Exporters, Service Providers, Engineers, Importers, Retailers, support organizations including but not limited to the Belize Chamber of Commerce, Belize Poultry Association, Association of Professional Engineers of Belize, Citrus Growers Association, and Belize Shrimp Growers Association.
- **Civil Society** - Trade unions, Academia, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations.

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- **Regional Governmental Institutions:** CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards & Quality (CROSQ) and other National Standards Bodies (NSBs)

### (ii) Vision

A strong quality culture embraced by all levels of society that supports an effective National Quality Infrastructure which will enhance sustainable economic growth and development, trade competitiveness, consumer and environmental protection, food security and other sustainable development priorities, improving the quality of life of the citizens of Belize.

### (iii) POLICY GOALS

- **Goal 1: A national culture of quality** - the advancement of a quality culture in Belize that supports economic, socio-cultural, environmental, legal and technological resilience and other developmental imperatives.
- **Goal 2: A public sector driven by quality in the provision of goods and services** - the implementation of appropriate management and customer service systems, the development of suitable data collection and information management systems for use in decision making and suitable assistance programmes within the NQI to serve public and private sector needs.
- **Goal 3: An effective and efficient Technical Regulations Regime** - The development of harmonised best practices, for the preparation/adoption and implementation of Technical Regulations aligned to, and consistent with bi-lateral, regional and other international conventions and agreements to which Belize is a signatory.
- **Goal 4: An economy supported by the National Quality Infrastructure** - Establish priority sector needs for NQI interventions/services in the private sector and establish targeted and sector driven programmes to address these.
- **Goal 5: A cohesive, efficient and effective National Quality Infrastructure that appropriately and continuously meets the needs of Belize** - Identify market conditions/needs, encourage research and innovation and identify and provide NQI related assistance towards satisfying these market driven needs including the development and retention of adequate technical capabilities and expertise.
- **Goal 6: A National Quality Infrastructure that supports sustainable development** - Supportive strategies and associated activities that meet the needs and improve the lives of the citizens of Belize, build economic

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development, trade competitiveness and prosperity and protect the environment.

### (iv) PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Attainment of a higher level of productivity; innovation; domestic and export competitiveness; consumer health; safety and security and environmental protection of Belize by the year 2030. This will be accomplished through the strategic development of an internationally recognized, accessible and affordable, quality infrastructure and associated services.

*These objectives are specifically detailed as follows:*

- a. **Facilitate the increase in productivity and competitiveness** of Belize through assurance that goods and services produced or traded meets defined requirements of national and international markets.
- b. **Protection of consumers** from unsafe or dangerous products and services, deceptive practices and unfair trade.
- c. **Protection of human, animal and plant life caused by diseases, unsafe food and other causes.**
- d. **Environmental sustainability** including shifting consumption to goods and services with lower energy and material footprints.

**The supporting strategies to increase the main objectives, include:**

- a. establishing the elements of the quality infrastructure specifically metrology, standardization, accreditation, inspection, testing and certification infrastructure
- b. promoting the use of national and/or international standards in service and manufacturing to ensure quality consciousness amongst producers, manufacturers, retailers, brokers, consumers;
- c. promulgating the necessary legislation that meets international requirements such as the WTO-TBT and SPS Agreements and international best practices;
- d. establishing and improving a framework for technical regulation
- e. cooperating with BSOs, trade associations, regional institutions to accelerate the national quality policy and promoting standards;



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- f. developing the human capacity through technical training and apprenticeship methodologies to support the various metrology, standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment and technical regulation activities and programmes;
- g. establishing a public education programme to sensitize Belize citizens with the intent of improving and sustaining a culture of quality.

### (iv) EXPECTED RESULTS

- a. A greater demonstration of quality conscious behaviour by government officials, policy makers, manufacturers, exporters, service providers, consumers and civil society leaders
- b. Increased productivity, innovation, export competitiveness and trade facilitation (free circulation of goods and services, market access and market penetration) of regional goods and services in selected international markets and in compliance with various trade agreements
- c. Improved consumer, health and environmental protection
- d. Better quality of and adherence to national regulations
- e. A growth in demand-oriented quality infrastructure and use of related services such as the uptake of management systems standards; the application of quality principles to all processes, productive and social; decision making based on the results of accredited conformity assessment processes; monitoring of processes with statistical input, clear policies and procedure outlined for guidance; traceable metrology and standards applied in support of production, trade etc.

## 5 Core Principles

The following tenets underpin the Policy perspectives:

- a. **Individual commitment and inclusive ownership** to improve the level of quality consciousness in society
- b. **Continuous strengthening of national and regional quality infrastructure in order to facilitate greater participation in trade agreements** to inter alia, improve levels of productivity, innovation and export competitiveness; increase levels of consumer, health and environmental protection; and reduce technical barriers to trade
- c. **International recognition for national and regional quality infrastructure services**, through the adoption or adaption of international standards, international notifications of technical regulations development, international

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traceability of measurements and international mutual recognition arrangements in the area of conformity assessment and accreditation

- d. Functional cooperation, coordination and sharing of resources** in support of the development of national quality infrastructure services that also contributes to enhancing regional public goods

## II) QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN BELIZE AND ITS INTEGRATION IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION



## 6 Quality Infrastructure

### OVERVIEW

Belize's progress has been significant in its development in recent years, despite the development gap as cited in Horizon 2030. Belizeans strive to achieve a higher quality of life. This achievement can only be realized from increased economic growth. Increasing prosperity, eradicating poverty, improving social cohesion, caring for our natural resources, and securing peace and justice for all Belizeans which are the stipulated goals of Horizon 2030. The strategy being pursued is to ensure an appropriate balance of economic, social, and environmental policies to create optimal outcomes. There are resource constraints that pose significant challenges however, this has made Belize more resilient in a an everchanging volatile global economy.

#### AT NATIONAL LEVEL:

Belize has made significant progress in establishing quality infrastructure by the setting up of the Belize National Metrology Institute, Legal metrology services, the development of local standards, control of supplies, food safety certification programme and the provision of testing facilities.

BBS and BAHA are institutions that have committed significant financial and human resources to establishing a quality infrastructure dedicated to facilitating trade with the intent of improving Belize competitiveness. These agencies have established public and private sector partnerships to engage their constituencies in developing technical regulations and voluntary standards, promoting international certification and providing conformity assessment services to increase recognition of locally made products and services.

The BBS and BAHA have been focused on improving and sustaining human capacity, and competency development with the intent of implementing an NQI that meets international best practices. Further investments continue to take place in training, public education, sensitization, campaigns, stakeholder engagements and technical committees.

#### AT REGIONAL LEVEL:

Several regional quality infrastructure development frameworks and implementation committees have been established and operate in the areas of Standardisation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Information/Awareness/Education, coinciding with the five pillars of quality infrastructure. These committees have been instrumental in harmonizing standards across the region, resourcing and developing member state measurement infrastructure, supporting laboratory accreditation in all sectors of the economy and spreading the message of the benefits and availability of quality services. The sustainability of these programmes however, requires tangible national recognition, commitment and financial support.

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A more recent initiative is the committee of regional conformity assessment bodies that was formed in order to plan and apply internationally recognized and harmonized quality assurance systems across the region's laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies to further reduce technical barriers to trade. This is a key touch point for a quality infrastructure and as such, much focus will be placed here in the future.

The region has three national accreditation bodies (NABs) that can also provide regional accreditation services. One of these NABs is notably already a signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation Mutual Recognition Arrangement for the ISO/IEC 17025 standard for testing labs and the ISO15189 standard for medical labs and soon will add ISO/IEC 17020 for inspection bodies to their portfolio of services and can thus confer international recognition status to qualifying quality infrastructure services; a facility that needs to be more utilized by the public and private sector alike.

### III) BELIZE QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE - DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION



## 7 Belize Quality Infrastructure- Development And Implementation

### 7.1 General

The National Quality Policy will be implemented across four technical areas:

- a. Metrology
- b. Standards
- c. Conformity Assessment; and
- d. Accreditation

### 7.2 Metrology

**The Government of Belize will continue to provide the resources and support necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to develop the national measurement infrastructure**

- **The BBS will:**
  - a. Be known and recognised both locally and internationally as the National Metrology Institute for Belize.
  - b. Adhere to international treaties and agreements related to metrology most notably, the Metre Convention.
  - c. Abide by all international measurement standards, recommendations and procedures as published by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) and the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML).
  - d. Establish and maintain traceability to the International System of Units (SI).
  - e. Establish and maintain the international recognition of BBS' calibration and measurement capability (CMC) through either accreditation or the International Committee of Weights and Measures - Mutual Recognition Agreement (CIPM-MRA)
  - f. Promote scientific metrology as a research driver for economic development.
  - g. Support the industry by establishing local sustainable calibration services while facilitating access to those calibration services that are not available within the country.
  - h. Ensure the fairness and accuracy of all measurements used in trade.

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- i. Develop a national metrology system that utilises competent calibration laboratories and designated institutions.

### 7.3 Standards

**The Government of Belize continues to** provide the resources and support necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to facilitate the development of technical regulations and standards.

**The BBS will:**

- a) Continue to maintain a transparent and credible standards development process which engages balance of representation of stakeholders on a voluntary basis and achieve consensus;
- b) be the sole agency for publishing Belize's National Standards;
- c) conform to the WTO-TBT Agreement guidelines and best practices of the ISO/IEC Directives;
- d) align as best as possible to regional and/or international standards while ensuring the development of national standards that are relevant to the needs of the country.
- e) Be accountable in systematically reviewing standards for continuous relevance to technological developments, market trends, national and international requirements;
- f) Participate and/or facilitate regional and international technical committees to represent the needs of the country
- g) Educate the relevant stakeholders on technical regulations and voluntary standards
- h) All national standards development activities must be communicated and endorsed by the BBS



## **7.4 Conformity Assessment**

**The Government of Belize will** provide the resources and facilitation necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to offer nationally recognized conformity assessment services namely certification, testing and inspection services. The Ministry is responsible for creating the environment to support private conformity assessment service providers that is in line with the vision of the country.

### **7.4.1 Testing**

**The BBS will:**

- (a) In co-operation with professional associations, public and private laboratories, trade associations, and other public and private sector actors, determine the testing needs to ensure there are adequate accredited testing facilities that meet the requirements for competitiveness for export, local manufacturing and import verification and validation.
- (b) Promote accreditation of laboratory management systems to ensure international recognition and thereby raise Belize's credibility and impartiality of test results.
- (c) Provide training support in relevant standards to improve management systems

**The BAHA will**

- (a) Ensure that its laboratories implement the relevant quality and laboratory management systems to provide its customers with credible test results. It will as much as possible gain and maintain international accreditation for all the tests it administers.
- (b) Operate testing facilities that are appropriate and cost effective in support of local industries.
- (c) Strengthen national laboratories to become reference laboratories in the Caribbean

### **7.4.2 Certification**

**BBS and BAHA will**

- (a) Promote the implementation of certification to local and international standards
- (b) Cooperate with trade associations and other government ministries to promote international certification as a tool for increasing competitiveness of local manufacturers and service providers

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- (c) Develop product certification marks as they see fit to be used by local organizations to promote their goods and services
- (d) Promote certification marks as a symbol of quality and conformity to instill consumer confidence

### 7.4.3 Accreditation

**The Government of Belize** will provide the necessary resources and facilitation required to maintain and strengthen its capacity as the National Accreditation Focal Point (NAFP) and ensure maintenance of relationship with internationally recognized accreditation bodies.

**The BBS is the NAFP and will:**

- a) Promote requirements for accreditation and provide support to laboratories seeking to become accredited
- b) Become the national resource centre for accreditation information to guide interested parties towards gaining accreditation
- c) Maintain a listing of all testing and medical laboratories in accordance with the Caribbean Cooperation in Accreditation (CCA) Scheme. This is a scheme of mutual cooperation amongst National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) (in the CARICOM region), National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) and CROSQ.
- d) Be a facilitator for training of potential accreditation assessors and technical experts. This is to assist in establishing and maintaining a regional pool of recognized accreditation experts in support of regionally agreed accreditation plans.

**Local laboratories are encouraged to** access information on accreditation requirements. The laboratories must implement these requirements for improved delivery of services, increase their competitiveness and sustainability and expand their range of services to local and regional customers.

### 7.5 Technical Regulatory Framework

- **Belize will:**

- a) Establish a common Compliance and Regulatory Framework and support it with appropriate legislation;
- b) Establish a technical regulation and compliance regime that complies fully with the WTO TBT Agreement, relevant trade agreements, conventions and protocols;

## BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY

- c) Identify and require the use of inspection and testing bodies that have the competence and capacity to play a part in the implementation of technical regulations;
- d) Establish a “firewall” between BBS core operations and regulatory activities to avoid conflicts of interest

#### IV) INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE



## **8 Towards a National Quality Infrastructure Framework:**

### **Government Commitment:**

The NQP and by extension the development of the NQI will not be possible without commitment. The Government of Belize therefore resolves to:

- (a) Promote a public-private partnership approach in implementing the National Quality Policy and collaborate with trade organizations, consumers, trade unions and civil society;
- (b) Establish incentive programmes to encourage the use and implementation of local and international standards as tools for increased competitiveness;
- (c) Incentivize the private sector to actively participate standardization, accreditation and conformity assessment activities; and
- (d) Provide financial and human resources to support the implementation of the National Quality Policy.

### **Enabling Legislation for Quality:**

Legislators and policy makers will undertake systematic reviews of regulatory instruments for reform, to prompt the requisite attitude and behavioural shift in society to that of continuous quality improvement.

### **By Declaring**

- a) The development of a National Quality Infrastructure to support a healthy, safe and competitive Belize;
- b) The allocation of resources to embed NQI in the national development dimension;
- c) Promoting the benefits of elements of the NQI and technical regulatory systems in the business sector and among the population;
- d) Integrating standards awareness into educational curricula at all levels;
- e) Developing and implementing plans for provision of continuous training on standards implementation and promotion of quality culture;
- f) Developing and implementing a Communications Strategy for awareness creation on the National Quality Policy; and
- g) Disseminate widely information relating to all approved national standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment requirements.

## V) MONITORING AND EVALUATION



## 9 Monitoring and Evaluation

The **Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise** is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NQI. The Ministry should establish a National Quality Council (however named) that includes representative stakeholders in the review of progress of the NQP implementation activities. The group should also assess the impact of the NQP implementation activities on the overall objectives captured in the Horizon 2030 National Export strategy and the Growth and Sustainable Development strategy.

The Policy's goal, objectives and results are contained within a logical measurement framework that includes indicators, milestones and targets. Review and evaluation should stimulate the collection of appropriate data and other information, which can then also be used to disseminate good practices, effect corrections and corrective actions, and encourage positive change in the longer term.

Implementation of the Policy at the national and regional level will need to be evaluated for medium and longer term impact, relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness and sustainability of the mission.

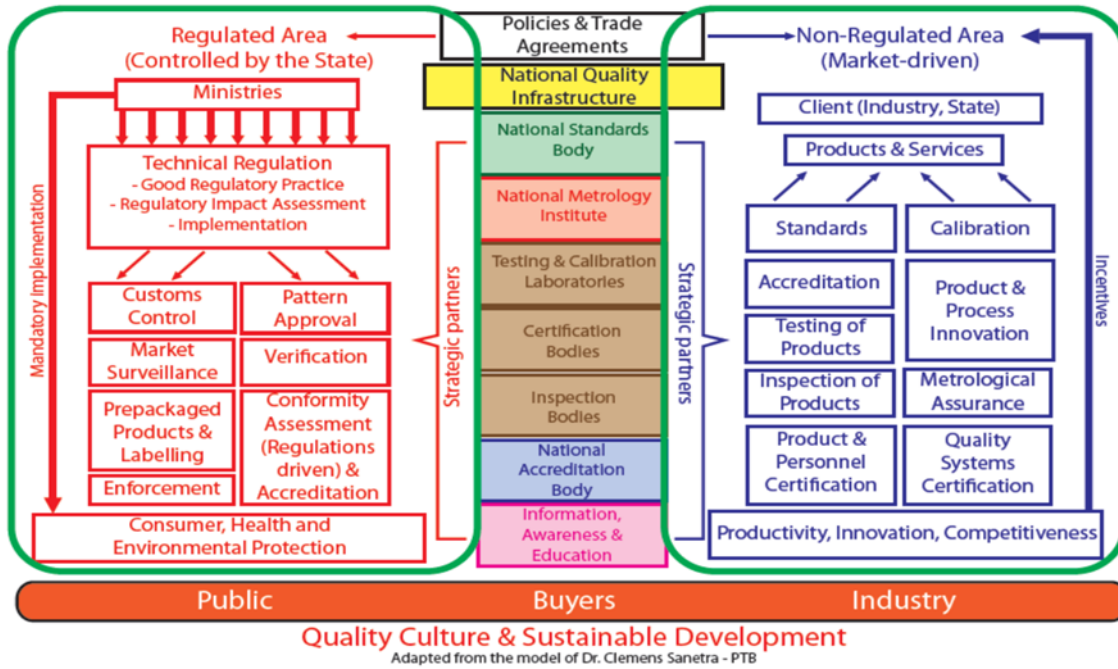
## APPENDIX





# BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY

The Role of a Demand Oriented Quality Infrastructure



# BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY

