

FORWARD

In furtherance of the objectives and provisions of the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement on compatibility and equivalence in reducing Technical Barriers to Trade, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) decided that an important overarching, directional, defining and unifying Regional Quality Policy for CARICOM and the Dominican Republic as a strategic CARIFORUM partner would be most important. In this regard, CROSQ, under its 10th European Development Fund Technical Barriers to Trade Project and with the support of the implementing partners – Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) of Germany and the Dominican Institute for Quality (INDOCAL) of the Dominican Republic, embarked on a two-year stakeholder consultative process in all 15 CARICOM Member States and the Dominican Republic to produce this Regional Quality Policy (RQP) for use separately in both CARICOM and the Dominican Republic.

Additionally, in furtherance of the objectives of the CARICOM Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), it was determined that such a RQP was indeed important.

This RQP was approved for CARICOM Member States by the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) at its Forty-Fifth Meeting held in Georgetown, Guyana on November 10, 2017 and is being published by CROSQ with minor editorial changes and updates, as at March 2019.



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ACRONYMS

BSOs - Business Support Organizations

CABs - Conformity Assessment Bodies

CAIC - Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce

CARICOM - Caribbean Community

CARIFORUM - Caribbean Forum subgroup of African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

(CARICOM and the Dominican Republic for the purposes of this Policy)

CARPHA - Caribbean Public Health Agency

CPA - Caribbean Poultry Association

COHSOD - CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development

COTED - CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development

CROSQ - CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality

CSME - CARICOM Single Market and Economy

EU - European Union

EPA - European Union - CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement

GRP - Good Regulatory Practice

MS - Member States – for the purpose of this document, CARICOM

NAB - National Accreditation Body

NQI - National Quality Infrastructure

NSBs - National Standardization Bodies

OECS - Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

Quality Infrastructure

QI Institutions - Quality Infrastructure development Institutions

RQI - Regional Quality Infrastructure

RQP - Regional Quality Policy

SPS - Sanitary and Phytosanitary

TBTs - Technical Barriers to Trade

TRIs - Trade Related Institutions

WIRSPA - The West Indies Rum and Spirits Producers' Association Inc.

WTO - World Trade Organization

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

These terms and definitions are effectively explanations, and are important to this document and have been modified from authoritative sources so as to make the ideas more understandable to a wider audience.

Accreditation

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

Certification

Third-party attestation that products, services, processes, management systems and persons conform to established standards.

Civil Society

Society considered as a community of citizens; linked by common interests and collective activity, legal or otherwise, 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 vested 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 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, service, process, person or body are fulfilled; typically conducted through quality assessment services such as inspection (desk and field reviews, physical examination, and performance analysis), laboratory testing and certification.

Consumer Protection

Protection of 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 of business relationships within the economy.

Environmental Protection

Any activity designed to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances; initiatives relating to energy efficiency, renewable energy and the sustainable use of natural resources also play a role in this regard.

Goods

Commodities such as are the subject of trade or commerce and include services, processes, and practices.

Good Regulatory Practice

Good Regulatory Practice (GRP) are internationally recognised processes, systems, tools and methods for improving the quality of new and existent 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 address important problems and 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, process etc, and determination of its conformity with specific requirements or, on the basis of professional judgement, with general requirements, e.g. supply chain assessments, market surveillance etc.

Metrology

Science of accurate, reliable and traceable measurement: scientific (artefact 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.

Quality

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

Quality Culture

A culture of quality consciousness and continuous improvement.

Quality Infrastructure (National and Regional)

The institutional framework, including its systems and people, involved in the development and implementation of standards and technical regulations, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment services and the promotion of quality involved in strengthening the quality competitiveness of the goods and services produced or provided at the national and regional levels with the aim of: increasing and facilitating trade, boosting industrial and State 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.

The five components of quality infrastructure – Standards & Technical Regulations, Metrology, Accreditation, Conformity Assessment and Quality Promotion (marketing & communication, information & awareness, education, etc) – can be applied at the national level (National Quality Infrastructure) and complemented at the regional level – (Regional Quality Infrastructure).

Quality Infrastructure Institutions or Quality Institutions

Organisations at the national and regional level, that provide quality infrastructure services such as Standards and Technical Regulations development, Accreditation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Quality Promotions. Institutions may come from the public, private or civil society sectors etc.

Quality Infrastructure Services or Quality-related Services (QI Services)

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 cooperative 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 voluntary. 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.

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 a given 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 to discriminate against imports in order to protect domestic industries or restrict regional or international trade.

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, usually for consumer health and safety and environmental protection.

Testing

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

World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement

An agreement that aims to ensure that product 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 non-discriminatory measures to achieve legitimate policy objectives, such as protection of human health and safety, or protection of the environment. The TBT agreement requires members in most circumstances to base their measures on international standards as a means to facilitate trade. It provides a list of trade facilitation measures. Through its transparency provisions, it also aims to create a predictable trading environment.



"Quality is The Best Business Plan"

- John Lasseter

THE REGIONAL QUALITY POLICY

RATIONALE

This Policy is meant to assist with the nurturing of a quality culture in CARICOM by guiding the development and facilitating the use of an accessible, affordable and internationally recognized, demand-oriented Regional Quality Infrastructure.

Such a regional quality infrastructure, will embed continuous quality improvement principles and practices in industry, the public sector, civil society (including consumers) and academia.

This in turn will encourage higher levels of productivity, innovation, competitiveness and consumer, health and environmental protection in Member States.

These national-level outcomes will eventually:

- aid in building the economic, social, environmental and technological resilience of Member States of CARICOM;
- support development priorities of the Member States of CARICOM and contribute to the strengthening of the CARICOM integration movement; and
- facilitate the realisation of rights and the honouring of commitments made under various trade agreements such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, European Union CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement

2. STAKEHOLDERS, POLICY GOAL, PRIMARY OBJECTIVES, AND EXPECTED RESULTS

STAKEHOLDERS

- Regional Governmental Institutions: Organs and Bodies of the Caribbean Community such as CROSQ, and so forth as defined in various regional treaties and agreements;
- Regional Private Sector Entities and Umbrella Bodies: Business Support Organizations (BSOs), Trade Related Institutions (TRIs) etc. e.g. CPA, WIRSPA, CAIC;
- National Governmental Institutions: Government Ministries and Departments, National Standards Bodies and Agencies, Regulatory Bodies, etc.
- National Private Sector Entities and Umbrella Bodies: Business Support Organizations e.g. Associations of Manufacturers, Exporters, Service Providers, Importers, Merchants, Chambers of Commerce, TRIs etc; and
- Civil Society (Regional & National) Trade unions, Academia, Community-based Organisations, Consumer-based organisations and other Non-Governmental Organisations etc.

POLICY GOAL

Advancement of a quality culture in CARICOM in support of economic, social, environmental and technological resilience, and other sustainable development priorities.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Attainment of a higher level of productivity, innovation, competitiveness and consumer, health and environmental protection by CARICOM Member States over the next fifteen years, through the strategic development of an internationally recognized quality infrastructure characterized by accessible and affordable attendant services. The concept is diagrammatically illustrated in the Appendix.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Greater demonstration of quality conscious decision-making by stakeholders including government officials, policy makers, manufacturers, exporters, service providers, consumers and civil society leaders;
- Increased productivity, innovation, competitiveness and trade facilitation of regional goods and services in selected international markets all in compliance with established trade agreements;
- heightened consumer protection, societal health, safety and security with added focus on environmental preservation, reduction of deceptive practices and inclusion of diversity;
- Improved effectiveness of technical regulations and the national regulatory systems; and
- Strengthened demand-oriented quality infrastructures and growth in the use of related services such as standardization, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation.

3. CORE PRINCIPLES

This Policy is guided by the following core principles:

- Accepting responsibility for decision-making, so as to enhance the level of quality consciousness in society;
- **Fostering functional cooperation**, coordination and sharing of resources in support of the development and effective utilization of national and regional quality infrastructure services as a regional public good.
- Participating in trade agreements that, inter alia:
 - improve levels of productivity, innovation and competitiveness;
 - increase levels of consumer, health and environmental protection; and
 - reduce TBTs and conform to SPS measures.
- Supporting international recognition for national and regional quality infrastructure services, through
 the adoption or adaptation of international standards, international notifications of technical regulations development,
 international traceability of measurement infrastructure and international mutual recognition arrangements in the
 area of conformity assessment and accreditation; and
- **Expanding the offering of national and regional quality infrastructure** services in order to support the sustainability agenda of CARICOM; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

These principles are also in alignment with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Guiding Principles for Quality Policy development, namely: ownership, inclusiveness, coherence, optimization and sustainability, respectively.





"Quality means doing it right when no one is looking"

- Henry Ford

State of the Regional Quality Infrastructure

As a collection of mainly small island and coastal developing states, the member states of CARICOM and the DR face major challenges in:

- improving the quality of goods and services produced or used in the Region;
- ensuring industrial efficiency and development;
- promoting public welfare, health and safety;
- protecting the environment; and
- effective international participation.

Generally speaking, there is a relatively low awareness of, and participation in existing regimes for regional and international standards, technical regulations, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation services. On the supply side, many such quality infrastructure services are not as well developed, resourced or co-ordinated as they should be, in order to comprehensively serve the needs of stakeholders and encourage a sustainable societal culture of quality-competitiveness.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Strides have been made by several countries in developing quality infrastructure policies and establishing enabling legislative frameworks. Notwithstanding this progress, a number of countries still operate under Standards and Metrology Acts that are dated and which need to be modernized; and new systems of legislation and accompanying regulations must be designed and practiced to ensure compatibility with WTO requirements.

At present, national quality-related institutions such as National Standards Bodies (NSBs) exist in 14 of the 15 CARICOM countries, with sporadic and organic growth taking place in office accommodation, laboratories, plant and equipment; and while most of these are full service organizations, they are by and large, fledging entities in

various stages of development. Additionally, many are not in that enviable position of being able to be guided by robust strategic and financial sustainability plans as they attempt to engage in proactive efforts of expanding.

Many of the key quality-related institutions are public sector entities and have generally seen some increase in staffing levels as their relevance and visibility become apparent. However, optimum staffing, competency development and talent retention still remain elusive goals as Member States grapple with the twin problems of slow economic growth and rising national debt which often result in the capping of employment levels in these public sector enterprises.

Investments are fortuitously being made in education and awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagements and standards development through technical committees and this has resulted in more standards being formulated and implemented with concomitant quality assurance regimes. However, in a rapidly evolving and complex international trading environment, this type of facilitated investing must be increased and sustained if a comprehensive range of internationally-recognized quality-related services are to be guaranteed.



REGIONAL LEVEL

Under the operations of CROSQ, regional quality infrastructure development frameworks for CARICOM Member States have been established and are currently overseen by implementation committees; included are the areas of Standardisation and Technical Regulations, Metrology, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Quality Promotions which together constitute the major pillars of any quality infrastructure. The work of CROSQ through these committees has been instrumental, thus far, in harmonizing standards across CARICOM, resourcing and developing Member States' measurement infrastructure, and supporting laboratory accreditation in various sectors, while promoting the availability of and benefits in utilizing such quality-related services. Beyond the initial embryonic stage, however, the sustainability of these programmes will require recognition, commitment and financial support from Member States.

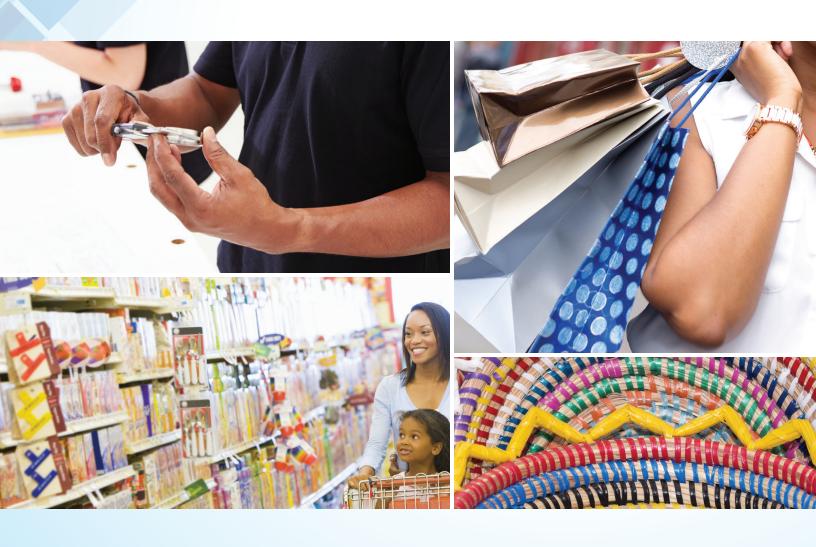
More recently, a committee of regional conformity assessment bodies was formed under CROSQ to plan and apply internationally recognized and harmonized quality assurance systems in CARICOM; this work will involve collaboration and harmonization among the CARICOM Member State's laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies and eventually result in further reduction in technical barriers to trade. Since this particular aspect of the regional quality infrastructure is pivotal to CARICOM's success in enhancing quality - the "moment of truth" as it were - much effort will be focussed in this area in the future.

CARICOM has two National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) that can provide regional accreditation services. Notably, one of these is already a signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement. The scope of accreditation currently includes the accreditation of testing labs to ISO/IEC 17025, and the accreditation of medical labs to ISO15189; soon to be added is the accreditation of inspection bodies to ISO/IEC 17020. Being a signatory to the ILAC MRA in these areas allows this NAB to confer international recognition status to qualifying quality infrastructure service providers - a recognition that both public and private sector providers alike need to aspire to.

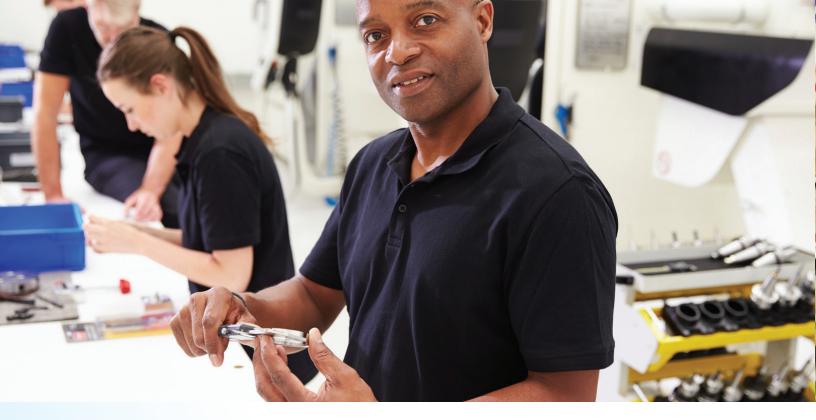
CROSQ actively cooperates on RQI development under various structured arrangements. These cooperative agreements are themselves framed under numerous TBT mitigating provisions of established Free Trade Agreements in respect of seeking more compatibility and equivalency between other countries' standards, technical regulations, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment regimes. Up to this point in time, many important trade related standards have been revised for compatibility, without reducing the level of safety or protection of human, animal, or plant life. Review procedures for conformity assessment in the area of energy efficiency and energy conservation are now underway.

"Quality is Remembered Long After The Price is Forgotten"

- Gucci







1. Quality and Quality Infrastructure: Productivity, Innovation and Competitiveness (Market-Driven Quality Commitments)

Considering that:

- Quality, as both a strategic and enabling business approach, is critical to productivity, innovation, competitiveness and trade facilitation;
- Quality, which on its own has merit as a value and service delivery system, attracts and retains customers, opens new markets and expands product offerings;
- · Quality focused production processes deliver higher levels of output per unit of input and with less waste; and
- Quality infrastructure institutions spearhead the development and implementation of internationally recognized standards, metrology services, accreditation services, testing services, inspection services, and certification services.

- Public sector: increase Government's demand for, and use of, quality infrastructure services as a means of improving quality in the development and execution of public policy and services;
- Private sector: increase the demand for, and use of, quality infrastructure services to improve the efficiency and
 effectiveness of economic activity in industry thereby increasing the degree of both price-competitiveness and
 quality-competitiveness;
- Civil society including consumers: individually and collectively increase the demand for, and use of, quality infrastructure services to promote societal wellbeing and sustainable development; and
- Public sector, private sector and civil society: encourage the quality infrastructure institutions in their technical, financial and institutional strengthening efforts, international recognition initiatives and awareness building activities



2. Quality and Quality Infrastructure – Consumer, Health and Environmental Protection (State Driven Quality Commitments)

Considering that:

- Quality-consciousness is an essential attribute for ensuring the health, safety, and security of consumers and the protection of the environment;
- Quality-related services are foundational inputs in the development of technical regulations and enforcement regimes that must themselves be compliant with various international treaties and trade agreements;
- Quality-related services help industry and business enterprises to comply with regulatory requirements and promote
 public trust and confidence in the quality of goods and services; and
- Quality infrastructure institutions facilitate the implementation of measures or sanctions through regulatory activities such as measurement verifications and other conformity assessment practices like market surveillance, inspection and testing, product and management system certification.

- Public sector: employ the WTO principles of Good Regulatory Practice to develop technical regulations and risk-based compliance schemes that do not generate unnecessary costs and technical barriers to trade;
- Private sector: produce goods and services that comply with relevant advisories, standards, legislation and treaties
 designed to ensure consumer, health, safety and environmental protection and so in the process, enhance their
 degree of quality-competitiveness;
- Civil society including consumers: utilize all opportunities to adhere to and promote the principles of Good Regulatory
 Practice and sensitise, encourage, and seek the commitment of stakeholders to abide by the requirements of
 relevant technical regulations and standards and inclusive practices; and
- Public sector, private sector and civil society: assist the quality infrastructure institutions in implementing Good Regulatory Practice and enforcement activities on goods and services produced or used in Member States.



3. Enhanced Functionality of a Regional Quality Infrastructure – Developing the Enabling Environment

Considering that:

- Quality products and services need an empowering ecosystem that is built on a culture of quality;
- Quality-related legislation helps to positively influence quality culture development by modulating business and society's conduct in a manner that protects and furthers the interests of the community and empowers the operation of quality infrastructure institutions;
- Quality-related organizational commitments, cultivates attitudes and behaviours consistent with quality
 competiveness through the principles and practices of the ISO 9001 Standard: customer centric management;
 stakeholder engagement, relationship development and employee involvement; service leadership; processfocused systems; continuous improvement; evidence-based decision making; and
- Quality infrastructure institutions are responsible for preparing, adopting, advising on and applying mandatory and voluntary technical specifications and conformity assessment regimes that facilitate the assurance of quality.

- Public sector: provide a platform for development and utilization of multi-sectoral quality-related policies, legislation, regulations, systems and institutions;
- Private sector: develop and recommend to government, market incentives that encourage the principles and practices of quality-competitiveness as a complement to price-competitiveness;
- Civil society including consumers: work with stakeholders to embrace a culture of standards, and quality in all walks
 of life; and
- Public sector, private sector and civil society: support the resourcing, international participation and development of these institutions in the delivery and promotion of the public good component of their services.



4. Capacity Building of the Quality Infrastructure Institutions: Strengthening Technical Competence and Improving Operating Frameworks and Networks

Considering that:

- Quality is accomplished by purposeful action and is a recognized professional undertaking governed by technical and ethical standards;
- Quality practitioners help to systematically reduce organizational waste, correct inefficiencies, enhance the customer
 experience, enable knowledge management systems and grow financial returns in the medium to long term through
 quality improvement, quality assurance and quality control services;
- Quality outcomes refresh and energize organizational culture, inspire and uplift individual and corporate performance;
 and
- Quality infrastructure institutions and industry are competent and appropriate for spreading the message of quality and motivating talent development in this regard.

- Public sector: attract, develop, use and retain technical capabilities and expertise in areas of quality management;
- Private sector: attract, develop, use and retain technical capabilities and expertise in areas of quality management and quality-competitiveness;
- Civil society including consumers: engage resources available in academia and other nongovernmental and not-forprofit organizations to help strengthen quality infrastructure technical systems, structures, frameworks and networks; and
- Public sector, private sector and civil society: help these institutions attract, develop, use and retain technical
 capabilities and expertise in areas of quality management, institute organizational succession planning processes,
 and develop proficiency criteria for quality practitioners in the field and certify them accordingly.

"Quality is Everyone's Responsibility"

- W. Edwards Deming



INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE

The success of this Regional Quality Policy will ultimately depend on cascaded and customized National Quality Policies in Member States of CARICOM and the DR, followed up by implementation at the national level.

Some key areas for national strategic planning and execution in this regard are:

- (i) **Political Commitment to Quality:** Government officials need to demonstrate support for this Reginal Quality Policy by formulating National Quality Policies predicated on this document and establishing National Quality Councils to interpret and implement these agendas;
- (ii) Shared Vision of Quality: National and regional decision-makers from the public and private sector and civil society need to fully embrace the concept and tenets of quality culture development as outlined in this regional policy and cooperate effectively in the promotion and use of internationally recognized quality infrastructure services across the region to aid in embracing diversity and sustainable development;
- (iii) **Enabling Legislation for Quality:** Legislators and policy makers need to undertake systematic reviews of regulatory instruments and conduct the necessary reforms in order to prompt the requisite attitude and behavioural shift in society to one of acting on the principles of good regulatory practice and standardisation as prescribed by the WTO and other such international and regional Agreements and Arrangements;
- (iv) **Resource Mobilisation in Quality:** Public and private sector participants need to think, collaborate and routinely invest over the long term in quality infrastructure so that total quality management endeavours are fit for purpose and transcend economic and political cycles; and
- (v) Quality Promotion: All entities directly vested with responsibility for the advancement of this Policy need to further demonstrate their commitment by performing their individual and collective roles in educating civil society on the virtues of demanding and utilizing quality infrastructure services.





MONITORING and EVALUATION

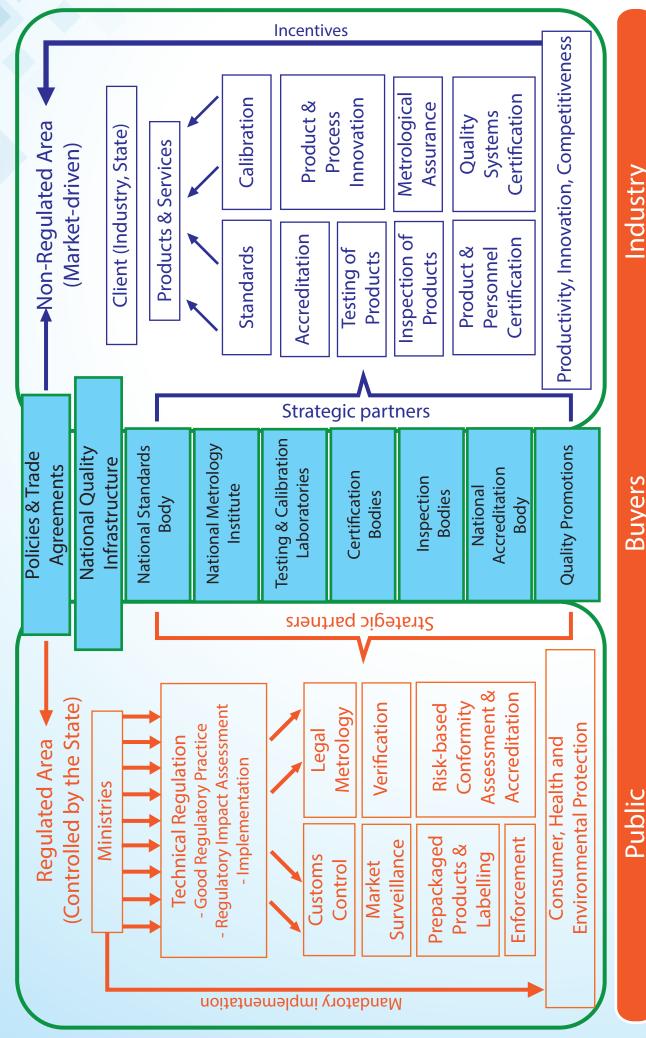
In the short to medium term, the Policy's goal, objectives and results, will need to be well aligned and monitored by way of a logical measurement framework that includes a multi-stakeholder action plan, indicators and targets which will then assist in determining the nature of the progress being made, responsible agencies and lessons learnt. This information, can then be used to communicate information and good practices, effect corrective actions, and create structured progression to the long term.

In the long term, implementation of the Policy at the national and regional levels will need to be evaluated for impact, relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness and sustainability.

It is therefore recommended that a representative of each of the key stakeholder groups commit to sessions to discuss, design and manage a multi-stakeholder national and regional mechanism to accomplish the Policy monitoring and evaluation task.



The Role of a Demand Oriented Quality Infrastructure



Buyers Quality Culture & Sustainable Development

Adapted from the model of Dr. Clemens Sanetra - PTB

"Quality is Not an Act, it is a Habit"

- Aristotle

