



# TBT PROGRAMME

OVERCOMING TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE



## CASE STUDY

### CERTIFICATION & ACCREDITATION





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### What are certification and accreditation?

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) offers definitions for certification and accreditation:

- **Certification** – the provision by an independent body of written assurance (a certificate) that the product, service or system in question meets specific requirements.
- **Accreditation** – the formal recognition by an independent body, generally known as an accreditation body, that a certification body operates according to international standards.<sup>1</sup>

### What are some of the challenges for ACP countries?

Certification and accreditation pose important challenges to ACP countries. These include lack of laboratory and technical capacity (lack of adequate quality infrastructure), lack of training, high compliance costs, and financial constraints inherent in economies dominated by small producers.



### Why are certification and accreditation important to the ACP?

- **Certification** enhances the credibility of a product/producer/service provider. Certification provides assurance to businesses and consumers that ACP products and services meet certain minimum standards, certain norms or requirements. In some cases, but not always, certification is a prerequisite for sale (market access) and operates as a technical regulation.
- **Accreditation** also enhances credibility and provides business and consumer confidence in ACP goods and services by assuring that a laboratory or other testing or conformity assurance body that awards a certification meets international standards.
- **Certification and Accreditation** are increasingly important for ACP countries, not only as a means to sensitise and win-over consumers, but more importantly as a means to achieve and maintain market access, and to receive higher prices for products that meet specified requirements.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/certification.htm>. Certification and accreditation are sometimes used in a broader sense to indicate conformity with regional, national or local standards.



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### How were Good Practices related to certification and accreditation identified?

Good practices were identified by reviewing certification and accreditation projects managed by the ACP-EU TBT Programme. TORs and Final Reports were reviewed to identify successful elements of projects implemented as part of the ACP-EU TBT Programme, and to articulate how those elements can be replicated in other donor-funded programmes. Interviews were conducted with PMU representatives, beneficiaries, stakeholders, contractors and experts also as a means of identifying successful elements of ACP-EU TBT Programme projects. Pursuant to the ToR, initial findings were presented to the PMU, which provided detailed feedback.

This note focuses primarily on the following projects:

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**NIGER – Support for Quality Infrastructure to achieve a better integration into global trade (38-15)**  
Improvement of the legal framework; capacity building activities of laboratories; producers and exporters are supported to apply management and quality control mechanism for food safety.

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**GHANA - Strengthening the competitiveness of Ghana-based exporters through effective Export Quality Management Systems (EQMS) (40-15)**

This project provided capacity development to the Centre for Logistics and Supply Chain Excellence (CLSCE) to better prepare Ghanaian exporters to meet complex technical standards. This project improved the capability of Ghana-based exporting companies to overcome technical barriers to trade, and to take advantage of existing opportunities offered by regional and international trade agreements. The project also trained consultants and service providers active in the field of EQMS.

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**RWANDA - Horticulture Trade Enhancement & Certification (HORTEC) Project (43-15)**

Working with the Rwanda Private Sector Federation (RPSF), this project supported a number of small-scale farmers seeking Global-G.A.P. certification and strengthened the capability of local service providers and National trade-related organisations to support horticulture producers and exporters in the certification.

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### Kenya - Capacity Building for the Quality Infrastructure Institutions of Kenya (54-15)

This project (1) identified major challenges and constraints and TBT and TFA capacity building needs, (2) strengthened the existing capacity of the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) and the Kenya Accreditation Service (KENAS), (3) and enhanced the institutional capacity in KEBS and KENAS to provide technical assistance to SMEs.

### CARICOM - CABA - Promotion of the Agro-Tourism sector in the Caribbean Region (63-15)

Working with the Caribbean Agri-Business Association this project promoted the adoption of certification schemes by regional designated producers and suppliers in the agro-food sector; with the objective of enhancing their export opportunities and matching the demand of selected regional hotels and restaurants.





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### What good practices were identified?

Pursuant to the PMU's "project description", the good practices identified below are organised based on project design, management, effectiveness, sustainability and results dissemination.

#### PROJECT DESIGN

In the project design phase, it is good practice, to consider the strategic interest of the beneficiaries (for example, to maintain or grow ACP exports to the EU). If a laboratory or testing facility is accredited, will export opportunities expand given that certification would be facilitated? If exporters obtain certification for their products, will their exports to the EU be preserved or grow? For example, the HORTEC project (43-15) is predicated on two important assumptions based on careful consideration of strategic interests inherent in receipt of Global-G.A.P. certification: (i) that market access for cut flowers exported to the EU will be maintained or expanded, and that (ii) producers may receive better prices for flowers exported to the EU market if farmers have Global-G.A.P. certification. Likewise, the PMU focused on strategic interests in the CABA project (63-15). Focusing on the internal market, SMEs that received support for certification now are developing plans to sell their products to international hotels that previously mostly imported food supplies. The success of these

plans will depend on the ability of SMEs to establish an efficient quality management system for which the PMU laid the groundwork.

Striking the right balance between improving structural constraints (lack of auditors, costs of conformity assessment) and direct support to SMEs (direct coaching) is a complex matter to address during the design phase. A combination of both aspects was adopted in the Ghana CLSCE project (40-15) and the Niger project (38-15). The PMU was able to provide guidance to find the right balance of activities through an assessment of the specific needs of the beneficiaries: Is the priority to strengthen certification or accreditation at the national or regional level or are quick results sought in a specific sector? What are the current capacities of service providers in the area of certification and accreditation? Were training programmes already provided in this area? Are there specific sectors in which SMEs are ready to benefit from coaching?

Many challenges arise in the design phase of a project, and some of these challenges are



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due to overly ambitious requests from beneficiaries. While a thorough needs assessment is good practice and will help to minimise certain risks resulting from over-ambition, despite best efforts, it is not always possible to eliminate all risks and the design phase should leave some room for flexibility. Experience demonstrates – in the form of another good practice followed by the PMU – the importance of ongoing dialogue with the beneficiary directed at meeting the beneficiary's evolving needs. For example, in the HORTEC project (43-15) the beneficiary sought certification support for a large number of farms. Based on beneficiary dialogue and a needs assessment, the ToR reduced support to 30 farms. This number was later reduced to 10 cooperatives based on the beneficiary's request to target cooperatives as opposed to small-scale farmers. Dialogue and flexibility aided in the culmination of a successful effort, as did a continuing focus, with the beneficiary and cooperatives, on the incentives for certification. While not contemplated by the terms of reference, due to its flexible approach, the PMU delivered a market access study to better explain the added value of certification, enabling participants to better understand what they would gain by entering into a value chain and why certification might help to retain, attract and receive better prices from customers.

### MANAGEMENT

The PMU has found that a good management practice, that has a very important influence on project success, is to utilise an efficient mechanism for the selection of SMEs capable of benefitting from a project. In the Ghana CLSCE Project (40-15), an inverted funnel approach (whereby criteria were established to narrow down the pool of SME participants) proved to be an important management strategy that increased the project's success as it resulted in the selection of SMEs committed to embracing organisational change and willing to participate in the cost of certification.

A different, but also positive approach towards company selection was observed in the CABA project (63-15). Having a sample of companies pre-selected by the beneficiary (CABA) allowed the experts to focus on the final evaluation which used a non-time-consuming questionnaire. The following criteria were successfully used to select SMEs: types of products, potential for exports, and number of employees. Afterwards, each expert focused on: (i) visiting companies (between two and three companies per expert) in order to identify what type of certification is sought and the main gaps to achieving certification (visit n°1, needs assessment), and (ii) providing bespoke coaching (visit n°2, advice to accelerate and streamline the application of



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HAZOP in the case of Sunbury Farms, Barbados).

Another example of a good management practice is provided by the PMUs HORTEC project (43-15) where the benefits of pairing an international certification or accreditation expert with a knowledgeable local expert are evident. A similar observation was made in the Ghana CLSCE project (40-15) where a good working relationship between an international Quality Expert and a domestic Export Management Export provided a complementary set of skills. This management strategy is a particularly important good practice as it allows an international expert to provide a local expert with a complete skill set, permitting the local expert to master both theoretical aspects and manage practical challenges. Once the project closes, local experts will be in a position to continue to provide guidance and expertise to companies seeking certification.

A final example of a good management practice relates to the reoccurring theme of flexibility. Allowing transfers in the allocation of man/days among experts came up often as a management good practice. The PMU permitted the transfer of men/days between experts in both the Niger project (38-15) and the CABA project (63-15) following a review of the ToRs during the inception phase. This flexibility contributed to improving project results by optimising the resources within the

team and reflects the adjustments to ToRs that are often necessary for the success of a project.





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### EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness can be enhanced when careful attention is paid to project timing and time-management. SME certification is an important but time-consuming process and often cannot be completed within the timeframe normally allocated for ACP-EU TBT projects. Good practice is to recognise what is feasible within the timeframe allocated and to consider from a project's inception a follow-up phase to more fully achieve project goals. For example, in the Ghana CLSCE Project (40-15), additional time was required for coaching and certification in order to set up a quality management certification program. Planning a second intervention (or a follow-up project) from the outset, would allow for fuller achievement of project goals.

Likewise, interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders in the Ghana CLSCE project (40-15) demonstrated that the more training sessions are tailored for participants, the more effective the sessions will be. For example, training on ISO 9001 and Export Quality Management Systems may be more effective when delivered in two separate sessions based on the responsibilities of participants: one session for managers (change in attitude, implementation strategy, and innovation), and one session for quality/marketing technicians.

Discussions with the PMU on the HORTEC project (43-15) reiterated that training-of-trainers remains a good practice in certification projects. In the HORTEC project this activity was successfully implemented through the Rwanda Private Sector Federation. Discussions with the PMU emphasised the importance of identifying capable trainers, and overcoming the fact that in some cases trainers will be drawn from the private sector and may find themselves training prospective competitors. Given the reticence to train competitors (unless all believe that a market will grow sufficiently as a result of enhanced capabilities), it may be good practice to use independent experts to undertake training. In the HORTEC project it was found that most successful certification trainers were independent experts.

Discussions with the PMU concerning the Niger project (38-15) demonstrated a good practice with implications both for Management and Effectiveness. There is a need to select countries where success is possible if results are to be truly effective. There is a further need to screen companies seeking certification carefully. This screening process was successfully applied in the Niger project where the PMU reported that the expert pre-identified 10 companies for certification and whittled the list down to two firms. The PMU also reported that the project effectiveness is enhanced when the private sector is involved and works with national authorities. In part this is because the private



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sector is capable of moving more quickly than government authorities.

Finally, discussions with the PMU demonstrated that there is a greater likelihood of success in certification and accreditation projects, as well as standardisation and QI projects, when the PMU was able to successfully apply the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness:

**1. Ownership:** Developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption; **2. Alignment:** Donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems; **3. Harmonisation:** Donor countries coordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication; **4. Results:** Developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured; **5. Mutual accountability:** Donors and partners are accountable for development results. This is an important cross-cutting finding with implications for the effectiveness of all projects.



### SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is particularly important in certification and accreditation projects as their objectives are, by their nature, long-term – can the certification or accreditation effort continue once the money is spent and the project is over? Good practice thus requires that emphasis be placed on programme continuity and sustainability.

Well-designed training programmes are an important good practice that can help ensure the long-term sustainability of a project. Almost all projects reviewed integrated a training element to ensure sustainability and this training element was recognised by almost all interviewees as an important component in the success of PMU projects. In this regard, a good practice employed by the PMU can be seen in the Ghana CLSCE project where training for auditors in quality standards was designed to facilitate future recognition by a certification body.

When selecting companies to participate in a project, it is important to take into account sustainability, i.e., whether the company is able to meet the demands of the international market. In the case of the CABA project (63-15), linkages between domestic agricultural producers and the tourist industry (regional and international hotel and restaurant chains) were successfully encouraged through the



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PMU's activities as a means to fulfil the project objective "to support CABA in the promotion of quality certification schemes among selected Caribbean agro-food producers and thus meeting the requirements of international markets".

Pursuing synergies and collaborations between programmes is a good practice that the PMU found useful to advance sustainability, and the development of long-term strategies of specific countries and regions. For example, in the CABA project (63-15), the agribusiness forum designed by the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CTA) offered a successful framework for enhancing regional trade and adding value to Caribbean agri-food products. The Ghana CLSCE project (40-15) successfully pursued complementarities: capacity building activities were implemented as: (i) part of the TRAQUE programme (EU-funded), and (ii) part of PTB interventions in Ghana. The Niger project (38-15) also envisioned complementarities with the West Africa Quality System Programme (WAQSP), a regional UNIDO project.

Programme continuity and sustainability admittedly has an important financial component. However, the provision of long-term funding is outside the remit of the ACP-EU TBT Programme. Long-term funding must be dealt with at the government level, the regional level, by the ACP Secretariat, by the

private sector, and by donors and TRTA providers such as the EU. Nevertheless, issues concerning long-term financial support for certification programmes frequently arose in conversations with beneficiaries and experts and may be relevant when future projects seek to replicate the successes of the ACP-EU TBT Programme:

1. Beneficiaries in the Kenya - Capacity Building project (54-15), noted that to be sustainable, a certification programmes should have provisions for continuing financial support, which in the case of KENAS would allow it to develop an inter-laboratory comparison programme that would result in the certification of more participants.
2. Experts recognised that near the end of the project, support towards the design of an exit strategy is highly valuable.
3. Experts and beneficiaries recognised that the sustainability of certification and accreditation projects relies a great deal on follow-up activities to improve capacity and achieve certification and accreditation and that providing support so that the beneficiary can design a suitable post-project action plan would help to guarantee the continuity of the project's objectives. This may involve finding a means to assure sound long-term financial planning and commitment.



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4. Discussions with experts suggested that it would be a good practice that could lead to the success of future projects if experts were to sensitise beneficiaries and financial institutions as to the potential benefits of providing long-term financial support to SMEs seeking certification (access to a loan).
5. Experts also suggested that designing a rolling grant scheme to support the certification of local SMEs with more limited financial resources should be considered. Various entities could assist: business associations, non-profit organisations, Chambers of Commerce and Export Promotion Agencies.

In the CABA project, the PMU's communications strategy was particularly effective as the intervention led to presentation of project findings as part of a conference promoted by the Caribbean Agribusiness Forum (CTA) which is a longstanding EU-funded partner that acts as a platform for liaising with various policymakers and commercial partners. As a result, complementarities and synergies between various interventions could be promoted to the benefit of Caribbean agribusiness. Additionally, SMEs invited to this event had a chance to share experiences and develop potential commercial opportunities.

### RESULTS DISSEMINATION

The Kenya – Capacity Building project demonstrated that the overall communication strategy deserves particular emphasis. Effective communication at the national and regional levels was found to be a good practice that furthered the buy-in of Beneficiaries and other Stakeholders. In this particular programme, KENAS could have done even more to publicise the programme and gain local buy-in. Likewise they could have done even more to disseminate results.



