

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION CAN BOOST YOUR BUSINESS



RODNEY RAMNATH
HEAD CERTIFICATION DIVISION, TTBS

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Possessing a robust and resilient economy, Trinidad and Tobago is known for being an industrialized and diversified nation in the English-speaking Caribbean.

It is against this backdrop, that the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) a statutory agency which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Trade, Industry,

Investment and Communication (MTIIC), is committed to improving competitiveness and promoting sustainable development through the formulation, promotion and application of standards and conformity assessment activities such as Product Certification (PC). These activities will simultaneously ensure that consumers have an adequate level of protection and confidence when purchasing goods and services.

Rodney Ramnath, Head of the Certification Division of the (TTBS) realizes that in order to be globally competitive, penetrate new markets and to maximize existing trade agreements products have to conform to standards.

Q: Mr. Ramnath, what is Product Certification (PC)?

A: As the name implies, this is where a product is certified against specifications or criteria. These requirements are normally listed in national, regional or international standards. The certification process involves the inspection and testing of the product as well as an assessment of the production process and quality systems to ensure the consistent production and delivery of conforming products. Conforming products are certified and this is demonstrated via the certifying organization issuing a certificate for the product and a certification mark which can be placed on the product.

Q: How long is the Product Certification Process?

A: The time may vary depending on the requirements against which the product is being assessed; the level or extent of the quality control system the manufacturer or service provider currently possesses and the time needed to complete inspection and testing activities since some laboratory tests can be performed quickly whereas others require a significant time.

Q: Mr. Ramnath, you said that Product Certification is distinguished by a Certification Mark, what does having this mark mean?

A: The presence of this mark means that the certification body has

conducted an independent assessment against the specifications or criteria listed in the standard and that the product has conformed to those requirements. It also means that the certification body will continue to conduct these assessments periodically to ensure that the product continues to conform. The mark identifies the specific standard against which the product has been certified through the standard's unique identification number.

Q: Given the economic challenges facing T&T, do you see Product Certification assisting businesses and why?

A: Yes. In an economic downturn customers are looking for value for money and exercise a greater level of discernment when deciding over competing products or services. Product certification tells the customer that the product has been assessed by an independent body and meets the requirements of the standard thereby giving them confidence that the product will meet their expectations as it pertains to quality, safety, reliability, interoperability and environmental impacts.

It is now a common practice globally for regulations to include or make references to standards and product certification can facilitate market penetration at regional and international levels since it demonstrates adherence to standards.

Q: Do you think that manufacturers who use Product Certification have satisfied customers?

A: Definitely. Conformity to standards generally ensures that products are of an acceptable level of quality and safety.

Q: Is the TTBS the only body authorized to conduct Product Certification process?

A: No. Private and international bodies can conduct product certifications as well. TTBS is however the National Certification Body of Trinidad and Tobago as stated in the Standards Act, Act No 18 of 1997 and very well recognized in the region.

Q: What are some of the companies that have been certified?

A: We currently work with a number of companies that carry our certification mark on their products. These companies include:-

- Ansa McAL Chemicals - Liquid Chlorine Bleaches
- Trinidad Match Limited - Safety Matches and,
- Trinidad Cement Limited - Portland Cement and Hydraulic Blended Cement

One Bureau

....many services



The primary role of TTBS is to develop, promote and enforce standards in order to improve the quality and performance of goods produced or used in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; ensure industrial efficiency and development; promote public and industrial welfare, health and safety; and protect the environment.

The Bureau provides the following services:

- **Standards Development**
- **Inspection**
Goods covered by National Compulsory Standards:
 - Automotive Tyres
 - Textile Products and Footwear
 - Appliances and Safety Products
 - Pre-packaged and Construction Goods
- **Laboratory Services**
Testing:- Electrical - Fibre/footwear - Materials - Chemical
- **Metrology**
 - Inspection and verification of measuring devices and pre-packaged goods
 - Calibration of measuring instruments
- **Product/System Certification**
Quality and Environmental Management Systems (ISO 9001, ISO 14001), Travel and Tourism Industry – (TTTIC) and Quality and Environmental Management for SME's (Q&EMS-SMEs)
- **Laboratory Accreditation**
- **Standards Information & Technical Barriers to Trade advice**

TTBS' mandate includes all goods except food, drugs and cosmetics.

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