

Benefits and use of ISO/IEC TR 17032 for certification of agricultural products

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Summary

This document provides a summary of how [ISO/IEC TR 17032, Guidelines and examples of a scheme for the certification of processes](#), can be used for the certification of agricultural products. Export of agricultural products is important to the economic development of developing countries. Presently, some markets, such as US and EU, specify the requirements (e.g. USDA Organic) to export to their markets and receive certification. ISO standards are being developed to specify technical requirements for some agricultural products. These technical standards and ISO/IEC 17032 can be used to develop a scheme for the certification of the agricultural products that can be used to export to all markets that accept certification in accordance with ISO international standards.

ISO international conformity assessment standards

ISO CASCO Tool

The [ISO CASCO tool box](#) is a comprehensive and widely used set of conformity assessment standards developed by international experts. The CASCO toolbox are the recognized International Standards and Guides for conformity assessment procedures under the World Trade Organization Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO/TBT Agreement). Application of the CASCO toolbox can be a basis for mutually accepting trading partners' products and services, and avoiding unnecessary barriers to trade.

ISO/IEC TR 17032

CASCO has just published ISO/IEC TR 17032, *Guidelines and examples of a scheme for the certification of processes*, the latest addition to the CASCO Tool Box. In most cases, it is difficult to test an agricultural product for quality, therefore an output assured process certification scheme is necessary. ISO/IEC TR 17032 provides guidelines for developing an output assured process certification for the production of agricultural goods. It can be used in conjunction with [ISO/IEC 17065](#), which sets the basic requirements for product certification, and the technical requirements to develop a certification scheme for agricultural products. A uniform certification scheme can be applied for export to those countries that accept certification in accordance with ISO international standards, thereby avoiding the extra cost and challenges for varying import requirements in different countries.

On-going standardization work for agricultural products at ISO

International Standards for Cocoa



A [good example](#) of standardization work for agricultural products at ISO is the development of International Standards for Cocoa in ISO/TC 34/SC 18 'Cocoa.' This work includes the development of technical requirements for sampling, product specifications, test methods, and requirements and verification criteria for determination of the sustainability and traceability of cocoa. A key element of this work is developing the requirements for certification schemes to address the sustainability and traceability of cocoa (ISO 34101-4:2019).

Other technical standards for agricultural products are being developed at ISO in TC 34 (e.g. coffee, cereals and pulses, milk and milk products), and it is expected several more will be proposed (e.g. fish and fishery products, sugar, nuts, oils) and initiated based on the recent survey and initiative of the ISO DEVCO committee.

Use of Regional and Other Standards

The use of ISO/IEC TR 17032 is not limited to be used in conjunction with ISO technical standards. Other technical standards, such as from Codex Alimentarius, can be used with the guidance from ISO/IEC TR 17032 and the requirements in ISO/IEC 17065 and [ISO/IEC 17067](#) to develop certification systems for mutually accepting trading partners, even at a regional level.

The benefit of using ISO/IEC TR 17032 is that ISO CASCO conformity assessment standards are now widely accepted for the assurance of quality, and are the recognized International Standards and Guides for conformity assessment procedures under the World Trade Organization Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO/TBT Agreement).



Figure 1 Monideep Dey promotes partnerships

Challenges ahead

Presently, several developing economies have shown a desire to increase their export capacity, and have established specific export councils in their governments. However, these countries face significant challenges due in part to the lack of international technical standards that meet their needs. It is necessary for developing economies to be collectively involved in the development of technical standards that meet their specific needs.

Development of a certification scheme is not sufficient, the scheme must be accepted by other countries through a mutual recognition agreement (MRA). In order to be accepted through a MRA, conformance

with the scheme must be certified by an accredited conformity assessment body. A national quality infrastructure that includes accredited conformity assessment bodies, and accreditation bodies that accredit the certifying bodies, is necessary. Several international development organizations, including ISO and the World Bank, are assisting developing countries to develop a suitable national quality infrastructure to enable acceptance of their export products worldwide. WTO is specifically also planning to initiate a program in collaboration with the World Bank to address NQI and conformity assessment challenges.

The development of suitable technical standards for agricultural products of developing countries and schemes for certification of these products using ISO/IEC TR 17032 should be initiated now and be ready as the more global issues with challenges in trade are resolved. The availability of the technical standards for agricultural products, and their certification schemes can be a catalyst for driving the resolution of the more global issues.

Workshops or lecture available

Dr. Monideep Dey was the US (ANSI) expert to the CASCO working group which developed ISO/IEC TR 17032.

Content

Dr. Monideep Dey is available to provide a workshop or lecture on the use and benefits of using ISO/IEC TR 17032 to develop schemes for the certification of agricultural products for export using ISO and other international and regional standards. Specific agricultural products of interest can be addressed. Broader issues related to the national quality infrastructure can also be discussed.



Figure 2 Monideep Dey conducts workshop in Zambia

Background

Monideep Dey, PhD, the principal of [Deytec, Inc.](#), is an expert on public policy, regulation and standardization matters (including conformity assessment) for developing countries pursuing economic development through increased trade and competitiveness. Deytec, Inc. is a company member of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and an active participant in the ISO CASCO and DEVCO committees.

Please send a message to Dr. Monideep Dey at deytec@frontiernet.net if you need any further information, or are interested in a lecture or workshop.