



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT THE ROLE OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC) AND BUREAUS OF STANDARDS IN STANDARDIZATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

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BACKGROUND TO EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

- The East African Community (EAC) is the regional intergovernmental organization of the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi with its Headquarters located in Arusha, Tanzania. The East African Heads of States signed the treaty for the Establishment of EAC in Arusha on 30th November 1999.
- The three East African countries share a common history, language, culture and infrastructure. These advantages provide the Partner State with unique framework for regional co-operation and integration.
- EAC focuses on broad-based regional cooperation and development through increased trade, investment, infrastructure, and industrial and social development. Key areas of cooperation are free movement of production factors including people, products, knowledge, and capital and cooperation in political matters.

EAC AGRICULTURAL POLICY

- The overall objectives of co-operation between Partner States in the agricultural sector are the achievement of food security and rational agricultural production within the Community. The Partner States undertake to adopt a scheme for the rationalisation of agricultural production with a view to promoting complementarity and specialization in and the sustainability of national agricultural programmes.
- To this end, EAC has a common agricultural policy, strategy and regulations which guides and regulate the development of the agricultural sector in EAC. Those includes:-
- Agricultural and Rural Development Policy for the East African Community

EAC AGRICULTURAL POLICY

- Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy for the East African Community
- Harmonised Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards, Measures and Procedures for Plants Vol. I (Phytosanitary)
- Harmonised Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards, Measures and Procedures for Mammals, Birds, and Bees. Vol.II (Sanitary)
- Harmonised Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards, Measures and Procedures Vol.III (Fish and Fishery Products)
- Procedures for Evaluating the Efficacy of Pest Control Products for Plants
- Requirements for Farm Inputs (Pest Control Products)
- Labelling Requirements for Pest Control Products

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EAC SECRETARIAT ON DEVELOPMENT OF EA STANDARDS

- The broad responsibilities of the EAC Secretariat in relation to the East African Standards are the following:
- Publish a notice on the East African Community website of the DEAS before the EA Standard Committee (EASC) approval for public comment for a period of 60 days in terms of WTO TBT Agreement requirements;
- Present East African Standard to the Council of Ministers for endorsement;
- Gazette harmonised East African standards;
- Maintain the register of the final and approved text of the East African Standards;
- Notify the WTO of the East African Standards work programme ; and
- Act as coordinator to other regional standardization organizations

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EAST AFRICAN STANDARDS COMMITTEE (EASC)

- The specific responsibilities of the EASC in relation to East African Standards are the following:
- Approve the final text of East African Standards for endorsement by the Council of Ministers;
- Approve the programme of work and allocation of projects;
- Deals with appeals against East African Standards;
- Develop mechanisms for linkages with other regional and international standardization bodies.
- Develop and maintain the required forms for harmonization process and make available to all National Standards Bodies (NSBs)

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EA STANDARDS TECHNICAL SUB-COMMITTEE (EASTSC)

- The broad responsibilities of the East African Standards Technical Sub-Committee include the following:
- Manages the elaboration and harmonization of proposed standards and finalises them as Final Draft Harmonised Standards as well as other standards related documents.
- Is responsible for supplying the EAC with the list (title and scope) of the standards ready for public comment.
- Develops the work programme for the development and publication of East African Standards.
- Recommends and represents the Final Draft Harmonised Standards to the EASC for approval.
- Advises the EASC on the promotion of the harmonised East African Standards.
- Proposes on the priority of the standardisation project for approval by the EASC taking into account the common interests of the Partner States.
- Manages the review process of the harmonised standards as need arises but at least once every 5 years.
- Maintained and reviews from time to time procedures which should be followed in harmonisation of standards.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL STANDARDS BODIES

- The broad responsibilities of the National Standards Bodies as Project Secretariats include the following:
- Elaborate and develop the Committee draft and related documents;
- Allocate resources for secretarial work;
- Circulates documents for comments to other NSBs, reviews the comments and redistributes comments to the other NSBs;
- Finalise text (including the editing) of the Draft Harmonised Standards for recommendation to the EASTSC, including all unresolved issues; and
- Finalise the Final Draft Harmonised Standards by including EASTSC decisions (preferably during the meetings).

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL STANDARDS BODIES

- The broad responsibilities of the National Standards BODIES (not as Secretariats) include the following:
- Proposed New Work Item proposal for inclusion into the work programme;
- Circulate Committee Draft to stakeholders in own country (i.e through website, etc);
- Collate comments from stakeholders into a national position for submission to the Secretariat; and
- Initiate the corrigenda, amendments and the review process as required by the market place.

STAGES IN HARMONIZATION PROCESS

- Harmonization process involves the following stages;
- Proposal stage
- Preparatory stage
- Committee stage
- Enquiry stage
- Approval stage
- In cases where an existing International Standards (ISO, IEC, etc) is proposed for harmonisation as an EAS, the process may commence with Stage 3.
- After the Approval Stage by the EAC Council of Ministers, the text of the Final Harmonised Standard is available to each NSB for adoption and implementation within its system of national standards. Each EAS adopted as a national standard within an EAC Partner State shall bear an indication on its cover page to the effect that the standard is an EAS.
- At the moment The EAC Secretariat is in the process of Gazetting the Standard as an EA Organic Standard which was approved by EAC Council of Ministers in April 2007.

CONCLUSION

The initiative for private association certification bodies is good move for Regional organic certification movements. However for international recognition the movements should work towards international accreditation with bodies such as UKAS, SANAS etc such that certificates issued by these private EA organic certification bodies are international recognized and accepted. There is no doubt that accreditation of private certification bodies will boost the exports of organic products from the the regional