

1. Myanmar's Quality Standardisation Initiatives to Spur Rice Exports

Myanmar is planning to set up a National Standardisation Council to comply with the Standardisation Law passed in 2015 with a goal to standardize several products, including rice, production technologies and services. A draft framework of the council is waiting for approval at the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Myanmar lacks formal standardisation mechanisms that incorporate international benchmarks. So far, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) has created around 19,000 international standards and the country is yet to experience any standards. A technical subcommittee was created to work on standardisation in order to standardise basic products. There are around 67 products waiting for standardisation.

Rice being an important foreign exchange earning agriculture product, its quality standardisation is expected to gain good results. Quality standardisation is particularly relevant in the light of China demanding phyto-sanitary standards for rice exports from China. Both countries are on the verge of finalising an export agreement in 2015. China is a huge market for Myanmar's rice exports. Recently, China banned rice exports from Myanmar's northern borders citing them as illegal due to absence of the official agreement.

According to rice producers and traders, if the paddy rice meets with official standards, the country will be better equipped to bargain higher prices in the global market and boost the current exports, especially to China.

www.oryza.com/news/rice-news-asia-pacific/myanmar%E2%80%99s-quality-standardization-initiatives-spur-rice-exports



2. Firms Urged to Tackle Trade Barriers

Vietnamese businesses are not fully aware of technical barriers to trade, said Duong Dinh Giam, General Director of the Industrial Policy and Research Institute, at a seminar in HCM City in December 2014.



Nguyen Binh Giang, Import and Export Department under the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Vietnam said the basic solution for businesses is to accelerate market research and promote trade. They must build a long-term strategy to make exported products higher-quality and increase their competitiveness. Moreover, local firms should use more local materials to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers.

At the seminar, officials said local firms must raise awareness and disseminate information about technical barriers to trade in Vietnam's most important export markets, like Japan, the US, Russia, the EU and ASEAN, as Vietnam becomes more integrated into the global economy.

In addition, the government should develop programmes to support key export industries, and help them overcome technical barriers to spur export value and effectively penetrate the international market.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/264582/firms-urged-to-tackle-trade-barriers.html>

3. Paving Way for Sustainable Economic Growth through Standardisation

The imperative for sustainable growth has necessitated a renewed drive for ensuring standardisation of industrial and non-industrial goods and services in Nigeria. Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) is the regulatory agency saddled with the sole responsibility for National Policy on Standards, standards specifications, quality control and metrology, likewise manufactured industrial and imported products and services.

From ratification of roofing sheets and building materials: cement, to gauging of electronic products, sanity is gradually been restored into the Nigerian industrial sector.

Standardisation is not only restricted to industrial products, every human activity leading to the production of goods and services is limited by one set of rules or the other.

SON has since overhauled its electronic system to afford manufacturers, producers and the likes hassle free registration of products. A process mandatory for all consumer of products which also carries identification marks.

Electric bulbs, building materials, tyres, generators are some of the consumer products without which they cannot be displayed.

A four-storey construction that would house 15 standard laboratories comprising testing rooms, training rooms, research faculty, conference rooms and support staff facilities for SON is expected to be completed soon.

Standards are directly related to productivity. Specifically, standards protect the safety of the community; facilitate international trade; enhance the interoperability of technologies and processes; and facilitate technological change and economic development by reducing information asymmetries, an Australian study on standards revealed.

www.tribune.com.ng/business/tribune-business/item/22059-paving-way-for-sustainable-economic-growth-through-standardisation



4. Setting the Foundations of Standardisation in Banking

The case in favour of standardisation across banking is a compelling one. Whether in payments or compliance, the call again and again seems to be that if everyone can agree on a set standard of working, it would make operations easier, more efficient and, ultimately, cost-effective. However, with so many different jurisdictions and regional variations to contend with, where exactly is the call for defined working practices coming from and who is making the final decision on what each strand will be like?



The benefits of this are also widely recognised and stated, whether it be streamlining services or by making processes more cost-effective, but little seems to be decided on what a standard way of working will look like. The push forward thus far seems to be steered by organisations representing the various areas of the industry and not the regulators, which are being slow to give any definite versions of their expectations.

The International Chamber of Commerce has been outspoken on the need for standardisation across banking, with the founding of the trade finance register to define a dictionary of terms to avoid the confusion caused by different names being used for the same products between banks and regions.

Numerous KYC (Know Your Client) registries are being launched under a standardized format in which corporations are required to input the same set of details, allowing banks to compare and differentiate more easily and decide if they meet their requirements before doing business with them.

However, any form of standards will only work if it is flexible and caters for various needs of different regions, and that creating a standard that will work in one region alone defeats the purpose of the process if it means it is not workable. The great challenge that remains is not creating a standard but ensuring it is adopted after implementation.

www.euromoney.com/Article/3402867/Setting-the-foundations-of-standardization.html

5. ITU Standardisation Bureau Prioritises 'Reasonable' Patent Price

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is facing growing challenges when establishing industry standards, having to balance between due reward for innovators and affordable prices for consumers, its Bureau Chief said in November 2014.

The rapid pace of technology evolution has changed the way new standards are proposed, developed and implemented amid a growing number of litigations between multinational software and technology corporations, according to Malcolm Johnson, Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Standardisation Bureau.

The ITU is working on a 'reasonable and non-discriminatory licensing' agreement when dealing with licensing patents, he said, and the key element of his Bureau's role is working with industries and governments to set the right rate to make sure products are 'not prohibitively expensive in the market' but recompense patent holders accordingly.

Johnson said a focus group composed of experts has been working in the past two years on setting the 'reasonable price' of licenses for standard essential patents, a difficult task because the value of software and hardware entail litigation risks as shown in the patent suits between global giants.

At the same time, the ITU should set the right price for licenses to give incentives to inventors, he said. Also, the standardisation process should be 'non-discriminatory' to allow startups in developing nations to enter the market on the same basis, he said.

The ITU is grappling with maintaining its influence as numerous private and regional standard organisations have sprung up to push forward their own industry norms.

Johnson encouraged innovators to work together with well-established bodies to improve interoperability of different devices and reduce production costs. For that goal, Johnson stressed close cooperation between international standard bodies without overlap in roles.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/interview/2014/11/07/3/0800000000AEN20141107003100320F.html>



6. ISO 9001 Revision Moves on to Final Stage

A recent vote approved the latest draft of the revised International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 9001 on quality management systems. The document can now progress to the next stage of the ISO standard development process.

ISO 9001 is undergoing the periodic revision standards generally go through every three to five years to ensure they are relevant and up-to-date. The new edition, expected in 2015, will feature some important changes.

The latest draft was put to vote according to ISO procedures and received nearly 90 percent approval, which is enough for it to progress to the next stage: Final Draft International Standard (FDIS).

Experts in the ISO subcommittee revising the standard will now go through all the comments received during the DIS

vote in order to produce a final draft which will then be put forward for voting. Once approved, the standard can then be published.

www.qualitymag.com/articles/92266-international-organization-for-standardization-9001-revision-moves-on-to-final-stage



7. Coffee Meets New Standards

Around 19,000 coffee farmers in Vietnam have adopted the international 4C (Common Code for Coffee Community) standards for sustainable production and trading with assistance from authorities and food giant Nestle.

The number is up 51 percent year-on-year, according to a report on their programme dubbed NESCAFE Plan by Nestle Vietnam and Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute.

Following these standards has enabled Vietnamese farmers to sell their coffee at higher prices in the world market.

The standards, developed by the Germany-based 4C Association, are a set of social, environmental, and economic principles that farmers must comply with to progressively improve sustainability. Compliance helps them also increase output and protect the environment.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/264515/coffee-meets-new-standards.html>



8. Industry Bodies Urged to become Standards Development Agencies

The Department of Standards Malaysia hopes more industry organisations will come forward to be certified as standards development agencies (SDAs) to maintain and enhance the level of quality in their respective industries.

Since the Standards of Malaysia Act was amended in 2012, five agencies and industrial associations have been appointed as SDAs, in addition to SIRIM Bhd, which took on the role single-handedly in the past. These SDAs help administer and manage standardization activities within the scope of the respective industrial standards.

Certified SDAs in Malaysia include the Malaysian Institute of Chemistry; Malaysian Timber Industry Board; Malaysian Association of Standards Users, which deals with consumer interests; Malaysian Plastics Manufacturers Association (plastics and plastics products); and the Malaysian Rubber Board (rubber and rubber products).

To qualify as an SDA, the agency or industrial association should be free of any conflict of interest and can adhere to Standards Malaysia's criteria for the appointment and accreditation of SDAs on a continuous basis. The adoption of international standards such as

International Organisation Standardisation/International Electrotechnical Commission has also become faster.

www.theborneopost.com/2015/02/21/industry-bodies-urged-to-become-standards-development-agencies/

9. The Big Business of Small Companies

Around the world, the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector is a vital engine of innovation and job creation. Understanding the real challenges and opportunities shaping the future of SMEs, then, is a matter of the highest importance.

According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, which sees to the economic welfare of developing countries, integration into the global economy through economic liberalisation, deregulation and democratisation is seen as the paramount way to triumph over



poverty and inequality. Important to this process is the development of an animated private sector in which SMEs can play a central role.

International Standards provide as many benefits for small businesses as they do for global enterprises. The strategic use of International Standards can make a significant difference to the annual turnover of an SME, sometimes the difference between success and failure.

For smaller firms, some of the benefits of using International Standards include: The opening up of export markets as products become compatible on a global scale; heightened operational efficiency; increased confidence as customers from all over the world recognise ISO International Standards.

A number of recent surveys have linked the low representation of SMEs in standardisation to such obstacles as time, personnel or financial resources. According to the 2014 German Standardisation Panel, a report on how companies conduct their standardization activities and implement standards, small firms are hampered by financial constraints that prevent many of them from taking an active part in standards development.

Are all small businesses doomed to fail? The answer is of course “no”. Interestingly enough, a small number of high-growth businesses do go on to reach a significant size and employ many workers. Furthermore, within the cycle of business births and deaths, SMEs expose incumbents to competition and innovation that force them to change and become more productive. That innovative stimulus helps economies grow.

SMEs are responsible for introducing most of today’s products and services on markets and are typically much better at identifying and adopting new trends than larger, established corporations. They promote diversification of economic activities, support sustainable development, stimulate innovation, and develop entrepreneurial skills, not to mention the significant contribution they make to exports and trade. More importantly, they are structurally a good deal less complicated and more efficient and flexible than larger firms.

With small businesses accounting for approximately half of a country’s business and workforce, we need standard solutions that help small businesses leverage their competitive advantage more effectively. While standards will not shelter small companies from failure, nor will they increase their survival rate, they will level the playing field, allowing them to compete on fair and equal terms. And when they do, we can look forward to a new economic map emerging, where smaller businesses play a big role in shaping the world – at last.

<http://finchchannel.com/index.php/business/item/40905-the-big-business-of-small-companies>

10. Japan Agrees with EU, Others to Align Auto Safety Measures

Japan, the European Union (EU) and four other countries have broadly agreed to standardise their safety criteria for automobiles as early as 2016.

They plan to standardise 40 points for safety checks, including the gripping power of tires, the strength of seat belts and methods for collision experiments. This would shorten safety screening procedures in countries to which cars are exported to a few months or as little as one month. It would probably also allow cheaper Japanese cars through mass production.

Japan, the EU, Russia, Ukraine, Australia and South Africa broadly agreed to the standardisation during talks at the United Nations’ World Forum for Harmonisation of Vehicle Regulations held in early mid-March.

Automobiles’ safety criteria currently differ according to the country and region. Standardising the criteria will make procedures for exports and imports easier.

To export automobiles to the EU, Japanese automakers must test their cars on 60 points based on safety standards set by the EU. Automakers also change specifications to match EU standards. Standardization would make nearly 70 percent of safety screenings unnecessary.

The standardization of safety criteria was urged by the EU. In return for accepting the standardization, Japan intends to call on the EU to abolish the current 10 percent import duty on Japanese cars, according to the sources

<http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002042135>



11. New Standards to Regulate Online Transactions

China is drafting a set of technical standards to better regulate e-commerce transactions and customer reviews on products and services, as authorities seek to intensify efforts to tackle fake products sold online.

The authority will build a standard system in the e-commerce area, including technical standards that guide e-commerce transactions and the review system for consumers and sellers at e-commerce platforms. Meanwhile, the authority is also set to draft technical standards for the social credit system as part of an effort to enhance the supervision of e-commerce fraudsters.

The standardisation authority will also push forward international recognition of China's technical standards for railways, construction machinery, aviation and aerospace industries, and the energy sector.

The authority will also seek to increase the mutual recognition of standards with countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiatives to enable Chinese enterprises to go global. The country is also considering a revision to the law on standardisation in 2015 to push the reform of the country's technical and quality standards system.

www.ecns.cn/business/2015/03-31/159996.shtml

