

1. Campaign on Energy Efficiency Launched in Vietnam

On November 27, 2012, in Hanoi, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Vietnam launched an energy efficiency campaign, which will be implemented in three years, i.e. 2012-2015 in order to create positive change in energy use in industries and State agencies of the country, contributing to the National energy reduction target in the period.

With technical support from the Embassy of Denmark and the International Financial Institutions (IFC), the campaign will focus on raising awareness and supporting key energy consumption enterprises in the implementation of the Law on Energy Efficiency and Conservation.

Within the campaign, a wide range of communication activities towards business will be carried out to raise awareness about the benefits of using energy efficiently, including: reducing production costs, increasing competitiveness and enhancing the image and prestige of business. A hotline and website with useful information about the legal framework on the efficient use of energy, energy-saving solutions and financial assistance programmes will also be set up. In the context of difficult market and capital constraints, efficient use of energy in production is the fastest way to help businesses reduce costs, increase productivity and profitability as well as build up an image of an environmentally and community responsible business, a representative from the Ministry of Industry and Trade emphasised.



2. Steel industry set to apply new standard

Viet Nam applies QCVN07:2011/BKHCN – the national technical specification – starting from June 01, 2013 in order to raise the competitiveness of domestically produced steel and limit the import of low-quality steel products. The move aims to reduce the quantity of cheap steel products imported from China, as well as outdated equipment and machines, which increase environmental pollution, Dien, former Deputy Director of the Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality said.

Also present at the event was Nguyen Huu Truong, an official of the Viet Nam Standard and Quality Institute, who said the national standard, would set out clear technical requirements for construction steel sold on the Vietnamese market. “All organisations and individuals involved in steel production, import or distribution would have to meet these requirements,” he stressed.



Both locally made and imported steel reinforced concrete must be stamped with the new standards to be sold in Viet Nam. The officials emphasised that effectively applying the national standard required strict compliance by steel makers, importers and traders. If this was accomplished, they predicted, the move would improve steel quality in a transparent manner – improving construction projects and creating favourable conditions for local steel producers. Annually, Viet Nam imports about 700,000-800,000 tonnes of this kind of steel and uses about 3.6 to 3.8 million tonnes for construction.

Pham Chi Cuong, Chairman of the Viet Nam Steel Association, appreciated the new standard but said steel businesses should have more time to prepare to adopt it. Many producers found it difficult to sell their products, he pointed out, and many companies were suffering from losses and needed more time to reduce their inventories. The association asked the Ministry of Industry and Trade and Ministry of Science and Technology to delay applying the standard until 2015.

3. TPP talks stalled over tariff elimination

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade negotiations remain stalled over five topics including the key issue of market access or tariff elimination.

One market access proposal under discussion calls for all parties to agree on the removal of tariffs on all products before moratoriums are set up on the removal of tariffs for certain products of special concern to TPP participants. It was likely that some of the decisions would be subjected to political decisions in the final phase. The other four problematic issues are intellectual property rights (IPRs), environmental problems, labour and electronic commerce.

The 11 TPP negotiation participants including the US, Australia and Malaysia plan to broadly agree on the TPP free trade agreement by October and sign the pact by the end of this year. But the stalemate over the five topics and Japan's imminent participation in the talks are expected to make it difficult for the negotiating parties to meet the schedule.

Negotiations have ended on five of the 29 planned chapters – trade facilitation, standard unification, telecommunications, development, small and medium-sized enterprises – and have effectively been completed on nine others.



4. Global food production will slow in next decade

Global food production will slow in the period to 2021 after the exceptional but unsustainable rate of growth seen in the last decade in a number of developing countries, the UN's food agency said. In its yearly report, the Food and Agriculture Organisation said that, "the average annual growth in global agricultural production through 2021 will slow to 1.7 percent, down from the 2.6 percent of the previous decade". Increased fertiliser application and more water usage through irrigation have been responsible for over 70 percent of the crop yield increase in the past.



Food supply, however, is not only a function of production, but also of energy efficiency. Food energy efficiency is our ability to minimise the loss of energy in food from harvest potential through processing to actual consumption and recycling. By optimising this chain, food supply can increase with much less damage to the environment, similar to improvements in efficiency in the traditional energy sector. However, unlike the traditional energy sector, food energy efficiency has received little attention.

A substantial share of the increasing food demand could be met by introducing food energy efficiency, such as recycling of waste. With new technology, waste along the human food supply chain could be used as a substitute for cereal in animal feed. The available cereal from such alternatives and efficiencies could feed all of the additional 3 billion people expected by 2050. At the same time, this would support a growing green economy and greatly reduce pressures on biodiversity and water resources – a truly 'win-win' solution.

5. Trade policy review: Standards and technical regulations in Vietnam

During the first Trade Policy Review of Vietnam, WTO Members congratulated Vietnam on its achievement in moving from being a low-income country with a centrally-planned economy to become a market-led lower middle-income economy. They strongly commended Vietnam on its impressive socio-economic performance, allowing the country to substantially reduce its poverty levels, and secure high growth rates over the last couple of decades, as well as its gradual integration to the multilateral trading system and rising competitiveness, making it an active player in export-led growth thanks to significant reforms.

Vietnam's continued, active pursuit of trade liberalisation in a multilateral, regional and bilateral context is also commended. Many of the Members praised Vietnam for its firm commitment to trade

openness as a means for development and its rejection of protectionism in general. At the same time, with such an ambitious regional and bilateral agenda, the need to ensure compatibility with the multilateral trading system was highlighted.

The Members also recognised Vietnam's serious efforts to implement its WTO accession package, among other things, highlighting the extensive tariff reductions undertaken by Vietnam and its relatively comprehensive services' reforms, as well as expressed appreciation for its efforts towards administrative reform, improved transparency of its trade regime, and enhanced protection and enforcement of IPRs.

Even so, Members pointed to a number of areas where further improvements could be made and technical standards and sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) measures are one of such areas. Although some progress has been made in setting of technical regulations and standards and SPS measures, some Members were concerned over the lack of sufficient opportunities to comment on proposals, that the measures were more trade-restrictive than necessary, particularly those relating to food safety, and that the measures deviated from international standards. Members encouraged Vietnam to act in line with its international obligations, including under the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and SPS Agreements.

In Vietnam, standards and technical regulations are drawn up by technical committees with support from the Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEQ), under the Ministry of Science and Technology. STAMEQ, which is the WTO TBT enquiry point, also represents Vietnam in a number of international and regional standards organisations and its subsidiary bodies are responsible for metrology, conformity assessment, quality assurance, and certification.

Accreditation of laboratories is the responsibility of the Bureau of Accreditation, also under the Ministry but not part of STAMEQ. At the end of 2012, Vietnam had 6,800 national standards, 40 percent of which were harmonised with international, regional, or foreign standards, and 116 technical committees with plans to complete 813 standards in 2013.



6. Navigating new ISO standards

Dryad Maritime Intelligence, a UK maritime intelligence provider, issued guidance on the latest framework of standards to be issued by the maritime security industry. Their advisory considers and comments upon the three main proposed standards that are currently hot topics of debate in the maritime security industry: the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) PAS 28007, the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) and ANSI/ASIS PSC 1 & 4.



Dryad Maritime's Chief Operating Officer said that the sheer speed at which this framework was being set up has inevitably led to a degree of confusion about what this means for the shipping industry and how much the standards were likely to overlap.

The revised standards are expected to be implemented in order to provide a framework of accreditation to be used by ship owners, managers and operators. One of the key benefits of the introduction of these standards is that it will allow seafarers to select accredited and approved Privately

Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP).

Dryad's guidance continues by considering the ICoC standards for Private Security Companies, paying particular focus to the ICoC's grounding within the principles of the Montreux document. Dryad goes on to discuss the planned overhaul of the body which will see the introduction of membership fees, audits and accreditation.

For those that reach the standards set by the planned introduction of ANSI/ASIS PSC 1 & 4 – a series of American National Standards, they will also crucially be certified as conforming to the ICoC standard with no additional auditing required.

7. CFP lessons learnt and experience sharing workshop

Climate change is increasingly recognised as a global crisis which affects every country, people in different locations, social classes, genders and ages. The main cause of climate change is the increase of Green House Gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere as a negative result of human activities such as burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) for energy, leading to increased CO₂ emission. In order to mitigate climate change and to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions, one must first identify their sources. The carbon footprint concept highlights the contribution of individual products to the greenhouse effect.

Vietnam is one of the countries most affected by climate change because of its geographic and natural conditions, together with its fast but massive and unplanned urbanisation. Recognising the urgency of dealing with climate change, the Government of Vietnam has been proactively setting out policies to regulate adaptation and mitigation activities as well as establishing national mechanisms to get the global crisis reflected into the national context.

Being one of 8 countries engaged in a two-year programme entitled “Trade Promotion through Standardisation in the South and Southeast Asia regions” (SESA programme) led by the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS), Vietnam has been active in the pilot implementation of ISO/TS14067 – Carbon Footprint of Products. This pilot implementation was undertaken in 4 countries, i.e. Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal on rubber tyres, rubber gloves, rice and tea products respectively.

With a view to creating an opportunity for National Standard Bodies (NSBs) and relevant stakeholders to learn and share experiences and challenges during the implementation of ISO/TS 14067, a regional two-day workshop was organised in November in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. During the workshop, an international expert also had a walkthrough introduction about the content of the ISO technical specification and it was a good opportunity for participants to discuss and get a deeper understanding about the TS.



Regional Seminar on Standards & Standardisation: Linkages to Regional Integration and Trade Promotion

For many countries, international trade has been facilitated by international standards. However, those standards are also a form of non-tariff barriers when developing countries export their products into the developed world. Therefore, vital and sustainable local standardisation processes with a rich involvement from private and public sector is of key importance to build necessary technical capacity on the concepts and methodologies of different international standards.

During the regional integration of the ASEAN, it has recognised that “*systems of standards, quality assurance, accreditation, and measurement are crucial to promote greater efficiency and enhance cost effectiveness of production of intra-regional imports/exports.*” This is essential to ensure the free flow of goods and services across borders in the region and thus would contribute greatly towards turning all the 10 Member States of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) into a single market and production base.

It is against this background that CUTS Hanoi organised a two-day seminar on December 17-18, 2013 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in cooperation with the Mekong Institute (MI) and the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS). There were 40 representatives from National Standard Bodies, Ministries of Industry and Commerce, Chambers of Industry and Commerce as well as several export-oriented enterprises from Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Singapore and Vietnam taking part in the event. They shared and exchanged their view on significance of standards and the standardisation process as well as impacts on regional integration and trade promotion. It was also an opportunity to collect feedbacks on national, sub-regional, regional and international institutions for more inclusive and effective standardisation process at all levels.