

Regional Standards Technical Working Group meeting

25 October 2005 Kampala, Uganda

Participants:

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David Eboku	Uganda National Bureau of Standards
Anna Griggs	CBTF
Irene Kugonza	NOGAMU
Peter Lustig	Grolink
Eva Mattsson	Grolink
Obadiah Msaki	Tanzania Bureau of Standards
Leonard Mtama	TanCert
Asad Naqvi	CBTF
John Nderitu	KOAN
Moses Ogwal	EABC
Carol Tom	Kenya Bureau of Standards
Charles Walaga	UgoCert

Welcome and back ground presentations

The meeting started with Anna Griggs welcoming the participants to this working group. This was followed by presentations of participants. Asad Naqvi and Anna Griggs then introduced the UNEP - UNCTAD Capacity Building Taskforce on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) and the project 'Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in East Africa' which provided the background and framework for work in the Regional Standards Technical Working Group.

The next background presentation on the previous work for regional harmonisation was made by Eva Mattsson. Each country then presented the current situation for standards, certification and accreditation in the respective country.

Comparison of East African Standards

A comparison of 6 different standards for organic production from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda was presented by Eva Mattsson. Some of the conclusions were:

- All are new standards and have so far they have almost not been used
- They have different roles - some are more for local production and some are written to try to get international acceptance
- They cover different areas
- There is a range of areas which differs as conversion time, possibilities for retroactive conversion, parallel production, biodiversity, inputs lists, additive and processing aids, labelling
- There is also many areas where the compared standards are the same or very similar as most of plant production standards, wild production, bee keeping and processing
- The standards still could cover and include local conditions better but there are several reasons why they don't do it yet. The standards are new and not used, there is a high pressure from outside to follow international standards and that it still is little organic production going on to experience from
- The final conclusion from the comparison was that there will be a lot to gain to cooperate on one standard but to keep it simple and not making the standards too complicated. Another important issue is to get local conditions into consideration so that the standard will function in East Africa.

Group discussions

In the afternoon there were group discussions around a range of issues. The two groups reported and these notes try to cover reports from both groups.

Need for a regional standard

Group 1. There is a need for a regional standard, this will also make it easier to develop local markets. EAC can help in handling a regional standard.

Group 2. Yes there is a need for a regional standard, this can give common positions for trade negotiations and ease the harmonisation process.

Ownership of the standard

Group 1. The standard can be owned by the private sector or be a governmental standard. If there will be a system of equivalency, the national government has to be involved. As all countries have had input by the stakeholders in the development of standards there is still an ownership of the regional standard.

Group 2. A regional body can own it and as all the member countries are under the EAC institutional framework, the EAC can be the owner.

Mechanisms and procedures involved

There can be several mechanisms and procedures around a secretariat. Stakeholders can give input to a standards committee which then would provide it back to the secretariat. (Group unknown).

Group 2. A protocol for making standards exists within the EAC, but it is not legally binding. There is a need for a permanent technical working group

Revision process

Group 1. Each Bureau of Standards has a group which can handle the revision process. It is important to not have parallel structures.

Group 2. Revisions can take place in intervals of 2-3 years,

Focus, i.e. local or regional trade or export

Group 1. There is not a big consumer market so the focus should be export.

Group 2. The focus should be ALL areas!

Time frame and resources,

Group 1. The private sector and the government don't move at the same pace. Resources can be problem

Group 2. It can be quicker to draft a regional standard directly instead of harmonise national ones. It can still be nationally owned. The state is not interested in certification but is interested in accreditation

Capacity building is important.

Conformity assessment

Wasn't discussed

Other relevant points brought up during the discussion

(Here follow different opinions and statements from the discussion)

- The link and implications between national and international standards, as well as public and private standards are important to sort out.
- We (in the group) couldn't agree if it should be one standard in line with international standards only or if the private standards should be left.
- For EAC standards there are already mechanisms for EAC standards - Several participants stated that they were in favour of an EAC standard.
- NOGAMU, TOAM and KOAN can work well and have action in this area.
- Why should we have an East-African standard for export, the importing countries will anyhow request that we inspect to their regulations and standards?
- It is an East-African standard that is for East African – not international and not for local which we want.
- It is the framework which is the problem – not the content.
- Identified areas should be worked through and fixed and then go to the East-African level.
- We should take our time, and then push it to an East African standard.
- We should be careful and learn from others, it is not always that a national regulation solves problems. How do our countries fit in, by having regulation or not?
- What do you mean by saying that you have an international standard, does it then fulfil all regulations?
- It takes long time to revise/set and EAC standards – the permanent working group can get the agreement in the group and then bring the issue to the EAC.
- Let's start to work on a regional standard now and compare with other regulations.

Issues resolved:

- The need for a regional standard is agreed.
- The drafting of a regional standard should start soon however time and care should be taken to complete it, there is no need to rush.

Outstanding issues:

- Should regional standard be formed from compilation of national standards or should it be formed independently as the national standards have not yet been used (in most cases)?
- The ownership of the regional standard. EAC was supported as a possible owner however the mechanism for doing this needs to be clarified.
- Is the regional standard for the local, regional or international market?
- How should the Regional Steering Committee and the RSTWG interact?

How to go on?

UNCTAD and UNEP are setting up a new meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, on 6 March.

Eva Mattsson will give technical support to the RSTWG.

- The comparison of standards will be completed and then circulated for comments to the RSTWG
- The framework will be discussed on e-mail and will be worked out before the end of the year
- The EAC standards and procedures should be investigated into. Ogwal Moses will help out with information and contact details
- Standards differences will be fleshed out and further discussed in the group until the end of the year. International standards as IFOAM, Codex, EU, NOP and JAS should also be taken into consideration.
- A draft of a regional standard will be presented at next meeting.