

BELIZE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY 2022



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The Government of Belize

BELIZE

NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY 2022



FORWARD

It is with great pride that I present the Belize National Quality Policy (NQP), a strategic framework that will drive our nation's efforts towards improving the quality of goods and services produced within our borders. This policy is more than just a document; it represents our collective commitment to excellence and a future of sustainable economic growth, trade competitiveness, and enhanced quality of life for all Belizeans.

In a rapidly changing global economy, the quality of our products, services, and systems is critical to maintaining and increasing Belize's competitiveness. Through the effective implementation of the NQP, we aim to establish a robust National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that

meets international standards. This infrastructure will provide the necessary support to our local businesses, industries, and service providers, enabling them to compete in local, regional, and global markets while safeguarding consumer health, safety, and environmental sustainability.

The NQP is aligned with our national development objectives, serving as a catalyst for innovation, productivity, and economic resilience while also ensuring that our products and services meet the highest standards of quality and safety. It is through this policy that we will foster a national culture of quality, embracing best practices in standards, metrology, accreditation, and conformity assessment.

The Government of Belize remains committed to creating an environment that will enable the development and enhancement of our NQI. We recognize that quality is not just the responsibility of government but also a shared responsibility among all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, and regional partners.

Together, let us strive for a Belize where quality is the foundation of our economic success and the well-being of our people is assured.

HON. Abelardo José Mai

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise

The Belize National Quality Policy (NQP) is a comprehensive framework designed to strengthen Belize's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI). It aims to promote a culture of quality that underpins economic growth, sustainable development, trade competitiveness, and consumer protection. The NQP provides the strategic direction for establishing a cohesive and internationally recognized NQI that will facilitate both local and international market access for Belizean goods and services.

This policy aligns with national priorities, such as Horizon 2030 and the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), by focusing on improving product quality, facilitating trade, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The NQP emphasizes building the five key pillars of NQI: **standards, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment, and technical regulations**. These pillars will support local enterprises, especially Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), in meeting national and international market requirements. The policy also aims to protect consumers by enforcing regulations that ensure products and services are safe and reliable while also encouraging the adoption of sustainable production practices that benefit the environment.

Through a strong quality infrastructure, Belize can boost innovation, productivity, and competitiveness, enabling its products and services to access regional and global markets. By fostering a national culture of quality, the NQP will drive continuous improvement in both public and private sectors. Ultimately, this policy is intended to enhance the standard of living for Belizeans, contributing to a resilient, prosperous, and globally competitive economy.

The implementation of this policy requires the collective efforts of both public and private sector stakeholders. Successful implementation hinges on a shared commitment to quality and the continuous improvement of the systems that support it. I invite all Belizeans to join us in embracing this vision as we work together to build a nation that is competitive, resilient, and prosperous.

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1. ACRONYMS

BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BBS	Belize Bureau of Standards
BIPM	International Bureau of Weights and Measures
BSOs	Business Support Organizations
CABs	Conformity Assessment Bodies
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CAHFSA	Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency
CCA	Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation
CIPM	International Committee for Weights and Measures
CROSQ	CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality
CMC	Calibration and Measurements Capabilities
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
EU	European Union
EPA	European Union - CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement
GRP	Good Regulatory Practice
GSDS	Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
MS	Member States – for the purpose of this document, CARICOM and the DR
NAB	National Accreditation Body
NAFP	National Accreditation Focal Point

NQI	National Quality Infrastructure
NSBs	National Standardisation Bodies
NES	National Export Strategy
OIML	International Organisation of Legal Metrology
OIRSA	Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria
QI	Quality Infrastructure
SI	International System of Units
RQP	Regional Quality Policy
TBTs	Technical Barriers to Trade
TRIs	Trade Related Institutions
WTO	World Trade Organization



2. DEFINITIONS

The definitions that follow are very important in understanding the rest of the document. They come from various authoritative sources and have been included so as to make their meanings more understandable to a wider audience.

Accreditation

Third-party verification related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks.

Certification

Third-party attestation that products, processes, systems, or persons conform to established standards.

Civil Society

Society is considered a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity and seen as a social sphere separate from both the state and the economic market.

Competent Authority

Any person or organization that has the legally delegated or invested authority, capacity, or power to perform a designated function.

Competitiveness

A country's ability to sell goods and services (under free and fair conditions) in global markets while maintaining and expanding the real incomes of its people over the long term.

Conformity Assessment

Demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person, or body are fulfilled, typically conducted through quality assessment services such as inspection, testing, and or certification.

Consumer Protection

The safety and interests of buyers of goods and services against low quality or dangerous products that are not fit for its end use and advertisements that deceive people.

Demand Oriented

A customer-driven good or service.

Ecosystems

A complex network or interconnected system.

Environmental Protection

Refers to any activity to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances. Includes such factors as energy efficiency and renewable energy and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Goods

Commodities such as is the subject of trade or commerce and includes services, processes, and practices.

Good Regulatory Practice

Good Regulatory Practice (GRP) are internationally recognised processes, systems, tools and methods for improving the quality of regulations. GRP systematically implements public consultation and stakeholder engagement, as well as impact analysis of Government proposals before they are implemented to make sure they are fit for purpose and will deliver what they are set out to achieve.

Health Protection

A term used to encompass a set of activities within the Public Health function. It involves ensuring the safety and quality of food, water, air, and the general environment, preventing the transmission of diseases.

Innovation

The implementation of a new or significantly improved product, service process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization, or external relations.

Inspection

Examination of a product design, product, process or installation and determination of its conformity with specific requirements or, based on professional judgement, with general requirements.

Metrology

Science of measurement and its application; branches of the discipline extend to scientific (artifact type standards), industrial (calibration) and legal (verification) metrology.

Productivity

The effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.

Promulgate

To put (a law or decree) into effect by official proclamation.

Quality

The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. It is demonstrated by the degree of customer satisfaction.

Quality Culture

An individual and societal state of being wherein a continual strives for a consciousness of quality improvement is embedded in attitude and personified in behaviour in all things, great or small.

Quality Infrastructure (National and Regional)

The totality of internationally recognized standards and technical regulations, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment services and information, awareness and education programmes involved in strengthening the quality competitiveness of the goods and services produced or provided in the Caribbean Community with the aim of: increasing trade, boosting industrial efficiency and effectiveness, supporting the development of the CSME, promoting consumer welfare and safety and contributing to energy security and the preservation of the environment.

These five pillars of quality infrastructure - Standards, Metrology, Accreditation, Conformity Assessment and the cross functional Information/Awareness/Education - can be applied at the national level – National Quality Infrastructure and complimented through the regional level – Regional Quality Infrastructure.

Quality Infrastructure Institutions or Quality Institutions

Bodies organised at the national and regional level, and in any socio-economic sector, to provide quality infrastructure services such as Standards development, Accreditation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Information, Awareness and Education. Institutions can come from the public, private or civil society not-for-profit sectors.

Quality Infrastructure Services or Quality Services

Technical services provided by Quality Infrastructure Institutions.

Regional Public Good

Any good, commodity, service, system of rules or policy regime that is public in nature and that generates shared benefits for the participating countries and whose production is a result of collective action by the participating countries.

Standards

Document approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines, and characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminologies, symbols, packaging, marking, or labeling requirements as they apply to a product, process, or production method.

Standardization

A framework or methodology to ensure that the process for formulation, publication, and implementation of guidelines, rules, and specifications for common and repeated use achieves uniformity in each context, discipline, or field. It includes transparency and consensus for the most efficient use of research, development and production resources.

Sustainable Development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs includes economic, social, environmental, and technological resilience as well as other factors.

Technical Barriers to Trade

A category of nontariff barriers to trade or measures that countries use to regulate markets, protect their consumers, or preserve their natural resources (among other legitimate objectives), but they also can be used unnecessarily (or perceived so by third parties) to discriminate against imports in order to protect domestic industries.

World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement

An agreement that aims to ensure that regulations, standards and Conformity Assessment Procedures are non-discriminatory and do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. At the same time, it recognizes World Trade Organization members' rights to implement measures to achieve legitimate policy objectives, such as the protection of human health and safety or the protection of the environment. The TBT agreement strongly encourages members to base their measures on international standards to facilitate trade. Through its transparency provisions, it also aims to create a predictable trading environment.

Technical Regulation

Document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative and conformity assessment provisions, with which compliance is mandatory.

Testing

Determination of one or more characteristics of an object of conformity assessment, according to a procedure, e.g., analytical, medical, etc.



I.

BELIZE

NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY





3. RATIONALE

3.1 THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY, AND THE DEFINITION OF A QUALITY POLICY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Concept of Quality

According to the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the term “quality” means the “degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object (i.e., product, service, process, organization or resource) fulfills requirements”[1]. Several important features of “quality,” such as requirements, specifications, measurement, and conformance, are embedded in this definition.

A country is regarded as developed when the political and economic systems can afford the citizenry a high quality of life and standard of living. The National Quality Policy, therefore, constitutes a strategic intervention intended to positively influence the quality of public service provided by the state for the citizenry and to encourage the private sector to produce goods and services that are globally competitive.

National Quality Policy

The National Quality Policy (NQP) is intended to guide the development and implementation of an effective National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)[2] for Belize. A QP provides the glue to link and appropriately underpin other national policies (e.g., trade, industrial, environmental, SME, science, research & innovation, and investment policies).

The NQP specifies the objectives of the Quality Infrastructure (QI) in building the necessary foundation and providing the appropriate underpinning for assisting local enterprises, including MSMEs, to access local, regional, and global markets whilst also ensuring human, animal, and plant health and safety and protection of the environment.

National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)

The National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) is the system comprising the organizations (public and private) together with the policies, relevant legal and regulatory framework, and practices needed to support and enhance the quality, safety, and environmental soundness of goods, services, and processes, [3].

[1] ISO 9001:2015 Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary

[2] Quality Policy – Guiding Principles. UNIDO / International Network on Quality Infrastructure, Vienna, Austria, 2018.

[3] Quality Policy – Guiding Principles. UNIDO / International Network on Quality Infrastructure, Vienna, Austria, 2018.

The quality infrastructure is required for the effective operation of domestic markets. International recognition of elements of the NQI is important to enable access to foreign markets.

3.2 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Government of Belize, like its neighbours in the region, has a responsibility towards the quality of goods and services produced and consumed by its citizens from the perspective of health, safety, deceptive practices and the environment. The role of the Government, therefore, is to promulgate and enforce laws and regulations focused on the protection of human, animal, plant health and the environment while creating an enabling environment for businesses. The standards developed primarily to facilitate trade and commerce are voluntary. They do not contain regulatory requirements related to health, safety and/or the environment. Where such protection is required, it is international best practice for governments to develop technical regulations that require mandatory compliance.

In order to compete successfully in developed markets, enterprises in Belize face a formidable array of challenges. Over and above the logistics, management and financial issues, one of the major stumbling blocks is the attainment of demonstrable product and/or service quality as demanded by authorities and purchasers in domestic and especially foreign markets. In order to fully exploit the possibilities for trading with foreign markets, enterprises in Belize need cost effective access to an internationally recognized, but supportive NQI that can provide the required independent evidence of product compliance.

Considering these realities, the Government of Belize is committed to strengthen, upgrade and appropriately maintain the capacity of all the components of the NQI (i.e., standardization, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment and the supporting regulatory regime). This imperative is also a logical outflow of the National Development Framework for Belize 2010 – 2030, especially the pillars related to economic resilience, healthy citizens and a healthy environment and for that matter also all other UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recognizing that the NQI and technical regulation regime in Belize may not yet be developed to full potential, and that it may not be fully harmonized with those of its major trading partners, it follows that efforts to develop and strengthen the NQI in Belize needs to be addressed in a holistic manner, to address NQI components within Government Ministries, agencies and private sector enterprises. As Belize strengthens its NQI, enhances its technical regulation regime and appropriately organizes the relationship between the two, the country must decide how it will cater for technological and quality

needs, minimize environmental, health, and safety externalities, and at the same time, avoid unnecessary and costly barriers to trade.

In furtherance of the objectives and provisions of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Free Trade Agreement on compatibility and equivalence in reducing Technical Barriers to Trade, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) has produced a Regional Quality Policy (RQP). This NQP, which appropriately incorporates the concepts and principles expounded in the RQP, provides Belize with the necessary policy guidance to appropriately and sustainably address its NQI-related needs.

3.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

A Situational Analysis can be found in a separate document entitled “Improving Competitiveness, Market Access and Economic Resilience – The Case for the Implementation of the NQP in Belize.” A summary of important background information contained in this document is provided below.

Social and Economic Context

Belize is an upper-middle-income country with a small open economy supported primarily by a natural resource base with principal sectors including (i) agriculture, (ii) agro-processing, and (iii) tourism. The economy is characterized by a trade deficit, which has widened in the last decade.

Preferential trade agreements

Belize is part of several regional and international organizations, such as CARICOM, CARIFORUM, Central American Integration System (SICA), OAS, and the Commonwealth of Nations. Through these associations, the country is able to facilitate political dialogue, coordinate economic policies, and benefit from preferential trading arrangements. There are still many areas of growth that are still to be exploited in this regard.

National priorities

The National Development Framework for Belize 2010 – 2030 (Horizon 2030), especially the pillars related to economic resilience, healthy citizens, and a healthy environment, the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), the National Export Strategy, and recent focus on certain sectors for COVID-19 recovery, envisage several activities that indicate the need to appropriately strengthen and reinforce the NQI institutional capability and capacity.

The National Development Framework for Belize – HORIZON 2030 outlines strategies to achieve the country’s goals for economic resilience. It recognizes the need for an appropriate quality infrastructure through the inclusion of

goal 2 - “Develop the Domestic Market as a Springboard for Exports, Produce Quality Goods and Services and Expand Exports.”

Issues and challenges

There are many needs related to the QI in Belize's strategic documents, where implementation would be strengthened and made more sustainable through the implementation of the NQP in Belize. An appropriate NQI provides a means to compete globally, improve economic priorities, and attract foreign investments, a concept that has been widely accepted in countries regionally and internationally. To drive Belize's agenda for economic growth, producers/exporters of goods and services need to better understand and seek appropriate compliance or conformance with the requirements as defined by the local, regional, and international technical regulations or standards that are often times referenced by trading partners.

A re-engineered and robust NQI and related regulatory framework, driven by government support through the NQP, facilitates the maximization of the potential benefits to be gained through the increased participation of Belize within the global trading system and is an important driver for the development of key sectors, cost-effective and sustainable development and enhanced resilience of the Belizean economy.

3.4 THE NEED FOR A POLICY INTERVENTION

Through its accession to membership of the World Trade Organization, Belize has declared its desire and commitment to increasing its participation in the global trading system. To gain more from such participation, Belize, like other developing countries, seeks to increase exports in order to drive their socio-economic development agenda. There is, therefore, a need to better understand and seek appropriate compliance with the appropriate international requirements and best practices as defined by the regional and international community.

Like many other countries, the NQI in Belize has developed in an organic way in the absence of an appropriate and overarching clear government policy framework. Over time, such an uncoordinated approach often leads to unintentional restrictions that hinder rather than support trade. This Policy is intended to guide the application of quality infrastructure in support of sustainable development and economic resilience. Through nurturing a culture of quality consciousness, judicious application of the policy will promote higher levels of productivity, innovation, export competitiveness, and consumer, health, and environmental protection through improved quality of products and services and the development of an internationally recognized demand-oriented quality infrastructure. All of this to occur within the context of various trade agreements that have or will be concluded.

The NQP implementation strategy addresses both the short -and longer-term needs related to the further strengthening and expansion of the NQI required for Belize. Recognising that a critical level of quality Infrastructure development has a progressive effect on society, the economy, and the provision of state services, this Policy is meant to assist decision-makers in increasing regional and international accessibility, affordability, and use of recognized quality infrastructure services to:

- Support the building of economic, social, environmental, and technological resilience in Member States and the region as a whole and contribute to the strengthening of the Caribbean integration movement and governance structures in support of the implementation of the CARICOM and national development goals;
- Embed continuous quality improvement principles and practices in other important sustainable development policy areas such as research, security, and natural resource management;
- Support CARICOM and national pursuits and priorities in the areas of productivity, innovation, export competitiveness, consumer, health and environmental protection, food security, and the focus on key sectors for sustainable development and resilience of the Belizean economy; and
- Honour commitments made under various trade agreements such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, European Union – CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, and World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement.





4. STAKEHOLDERS, VISION, POLICY GOAL, PRIMARY OBJECTIVES, AND EXPECTED RESULTS

(i) STAKEHOLDERS

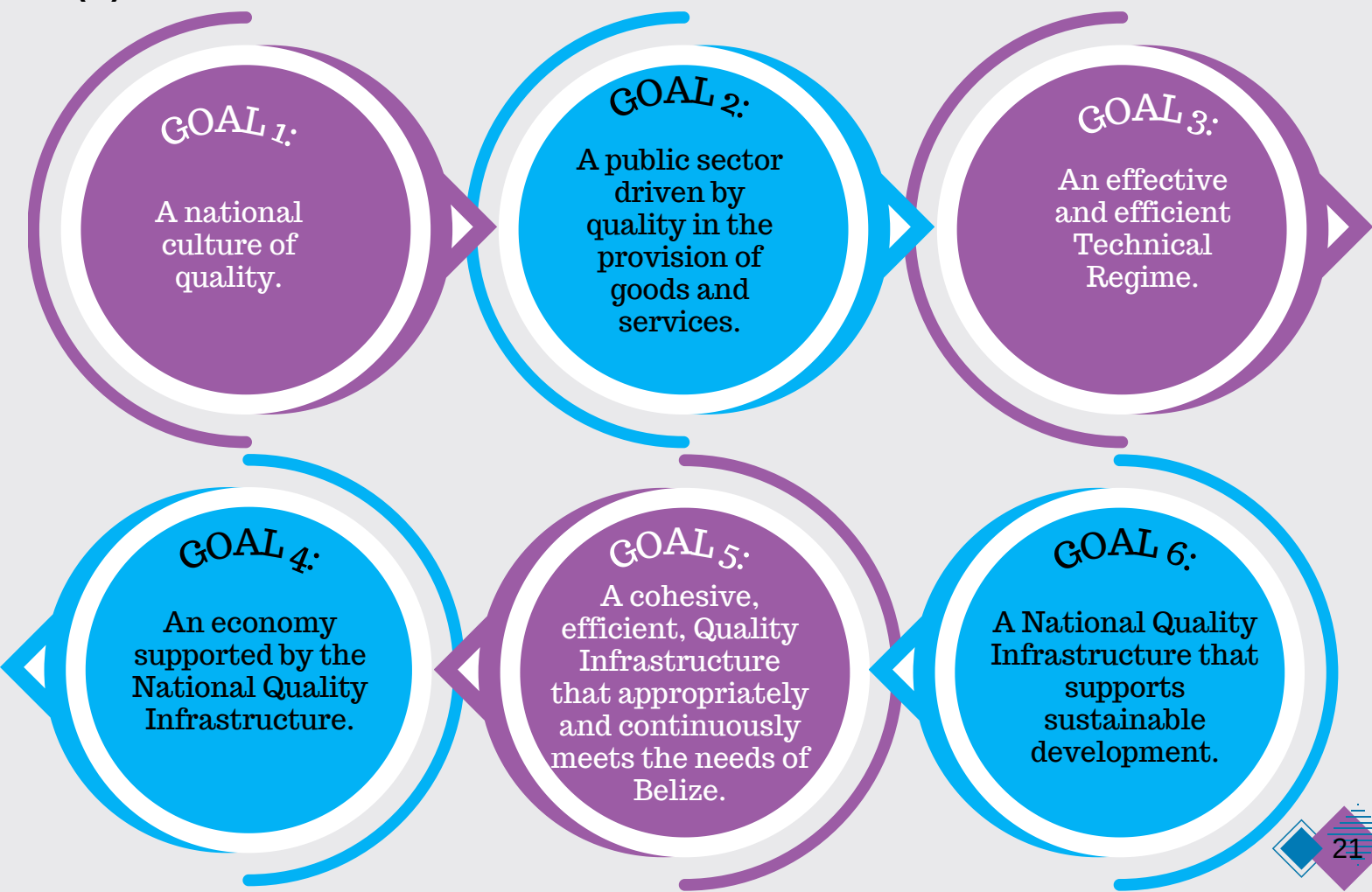
This document is primarily intended for:

- National Governmental Organizations (Public Sector): Government Ministries, Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS), Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), and the Customs Agency.
- Businesses and Business Support Organizations: Manufacturers, Exporters, Service Providers, Engineers, Importers, Retailers, and support organizations, including but not limited to the Belize Chamber of Commerce, Belize Poultry Association, Association of Professional Engineers of Belize, Citrus Growers Association, and Belize Shrimp Growers Association.
- Civil Society - Trade unions, Academia, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations.
- Regional Governmental Institutions: CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards & Quality (CROSQ) and other National Standards Bodies (NSBs)

(ii) VISION

A strong quality culture embraced by all levels of society that supports an effective National Quality Infrastructure which will enhance sustainable economic growth and development, trade competitiveness, consumer and environmental protection, food security and other sustainable development priorities, improving the quality of life of the citizens of Belize.

(iii) POLICY GOALS



1

A national culture of quality – the advancement of a quality culture in Belize that supports economic, socio-cultural, environmental, legal and technological resilience and other developmental imperatives.

2

A public sector driven by quality in the provision of goods and services – the implementation of appropriate management and customer service systems, the development of suitable data collection and information management systems for use in decision making and suitable assistance programmes within the NQI to serve public and private sector needs.

3

An effective and efficient Technical Regulations Regime – The development of harmonized best practices for the preparation/adoption and implementation of Technical Regulations aligned to and consistent with bi-lateral, regional, and other international conventions and agreements to which Belize is a signatory.

4

An economy supported by the National Quality Infrastructure - Establish priority sector needs for NQI interventions/services in the private sector and establish targeted and sector driven programmes to address these.

5

A cohesive, efficient, and effective National Quality Infrastructure that appropriately and continuously meets the needs of Belize - Identify market conditions/needs, encourage research and innovation, and identify and provide NQI-related assistance towards satisfying these market-driven needs, including the development and retention of adequate technical capabilities and expertise.

6

A National Quality Infrastructure that supports sustainable development – Supportive strategies and associated activities that meet the needs and improve the lives of the citizens of Belize, build economic development, trade competitiveness and prosperity and protect the environment.

(iii) PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Attainment of a higher level of productivity, innovation, domestic and export competitiveness, consumer health, safety and security, and environmental protection of Belize by the year 2030. This will be accomplished through the strategic development of an internationally recognized, accessible, and affordable quality infrastructure and associated services.

These objectives are specifically detailed as follows:

- a) **Facilitate the increase in productivity and competitiveness of** Belize through assurance that goods and services produced or traded meet defined requirements of national and international markets.
- b) **Protection of consumers** from unsafe or dangerous products and services, deceptive practices, and unfair trade.
- c) **Protection of human, animal, and plant life caused by diseases, unsafe food**, and other causes.
- d) **Environmental sustainability**, including shifting consumption to goods and services with lower energy and material footprints.

The supporting strategies to increase the main objectives include:

- a) establishing the elements of the quality infrastructure, specifically metrology, standardization, accreditation, inspection, testing, and certification infrastructure
- b) promoting the use of national and/or international standards in service and manufacturing to ensure quality consciousness amongst producers, manufacturers, retailers, brokers, and consumers;
- c) promulgating the necessary legislation that meets international requirements such as the WTO-TBT and SPS Agreements and international best practices;
- d) establishing and improving a framework for technical regulation
- e) cooperating with BSOs, trade associations, and regional institutions to accelerate the national quality policy and promoting standards;

f) developing the human capacity through technical training and apprenticeship methodologies to support the various metrology, standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment, and technical regulation activities and programmes;

g) establishing a public education programme to sensitize Belize citizens with the intent of improving and sustaining a culture of quality.

(iii) EXPECTED RESULTS

a) A greater demonstration of quality-conscious behaviour by government officials, policymakers, manufacturers, exporters, service providers, consumers, and civil society leaders

b) Increased productivity, innovation, export competitiveness, and trade facilitation (free circulation of goods and services, market access, and market penetration) of regional goods and services in selected international markets and in compliance with various trade agreements

c) Improved consumer, health, and environmental protection

d. Better quality of and adherence to national regulations

e) A growth in demand-oriented quality infrastructure and use of related services such as the uptake of management systems standards; the application of quality principles to all processes, productive and social; decision making based on the results of accredited conformity assessment processes; monitoring of processes with statistical input, clear policies and procedure outlined for guidance; traceable metrology and standards applied in support of production, trade, etc.



5. CORE PRINCIPLES

**The following
tenets underpin
the Policy
perspectives:**

Individual commitment and inclusive ownership to improve the level of quality consciousness in society.

Continuous strengthening of national and regional quality infrastructure in order to facilitate greater participation in trade agreements to inter alia, improve levels of productivity, innovation, and export competitiveness; increase levels of consumer, health, and environmental protection; and reduce technical barriers to trade.

International recognition for national and regional quality infrastructure services through the adoption or adaption of international standards, international notifications of technical regulations development, international traceability of measurements, and international mutual recognition arrangements in the area of conformity assessment and accreditation.

Functional cooperation, coordination, and sharing of resources in support of the development of national quality infrastructure services that also contribute to enhancing regional public goods.



6. QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

Belize's progress has been significant in its development in recent years despite the development gap, as cited in Horizon 2030. Belizeans strive to achieve a higher quality of life. This achievement can only be realized from increased economic growth. Increasing prosperity, eradicating poverty, improving social cohesion, caring for our natural resources, and securing peace and justice for all Belizeans which are the stipulated goals of Horizon 2030. The strategy being pursued is to ensure an appropriate balance of economic, social, and environmental policies to create optimal outcomes. There are resource constraints that pose significant challenges; however, this has made Belize more resilient in an everchanging, volatile global economy.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

Belize has made significant progress in establishing quality infrastructure by setting up the Belize National Metrology Institute, Legal metrology services, the development of local standards, control of supplies, a food safety certification programme, and the provision of testing facilities.

BBS and BAHA are institutions that have committed significant financial and human resources to establishing a quality infrastructure dedicated to facilitating trade with the intent of improving Belize's competitiveness. These agencies have established public and private sector partnerships to engage their constituencies in developing technical regulations and voluntary standards, promoting international certification, and providing conformity assessment services to increase recognition of locally made products and services.

The BBS and BAHA have been focused on improving and sustaining human capacity and competency development with the intent of implementing an NQI that meets international best practices. Further investments continue to take place in training, public education, sensitization, campaigns, stakeholder engagements, and technical committees.

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:

Several regional quality infrastructure development frameworks and implementation committees have been established and operate in the areas of Standardisation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation, and Information/Awareness/Education, coinciding with the five pillars of quality infrastructure. These committees have been instrumental in harmonizing standards across the region, resourcing and developing member state measurement infrastructure, supporting laboratory accreditation in all sectors of the economy and spreading the message of the benefits and availability of quality services. The sustainability of these programs, however, requires tangible national recognition, commitment, and financial support.

A more recent initiative is the committee of regional conformity assessment bodies that was formed in order to plan and apply internationally recognized and harmonized quality assurance systems across the region's laboratories, certification bodies, and inspection bodies to further reduce technical barriers to trade. This is a key touch point for a quality infrastructure and as such, much focus will be placed here in the future.

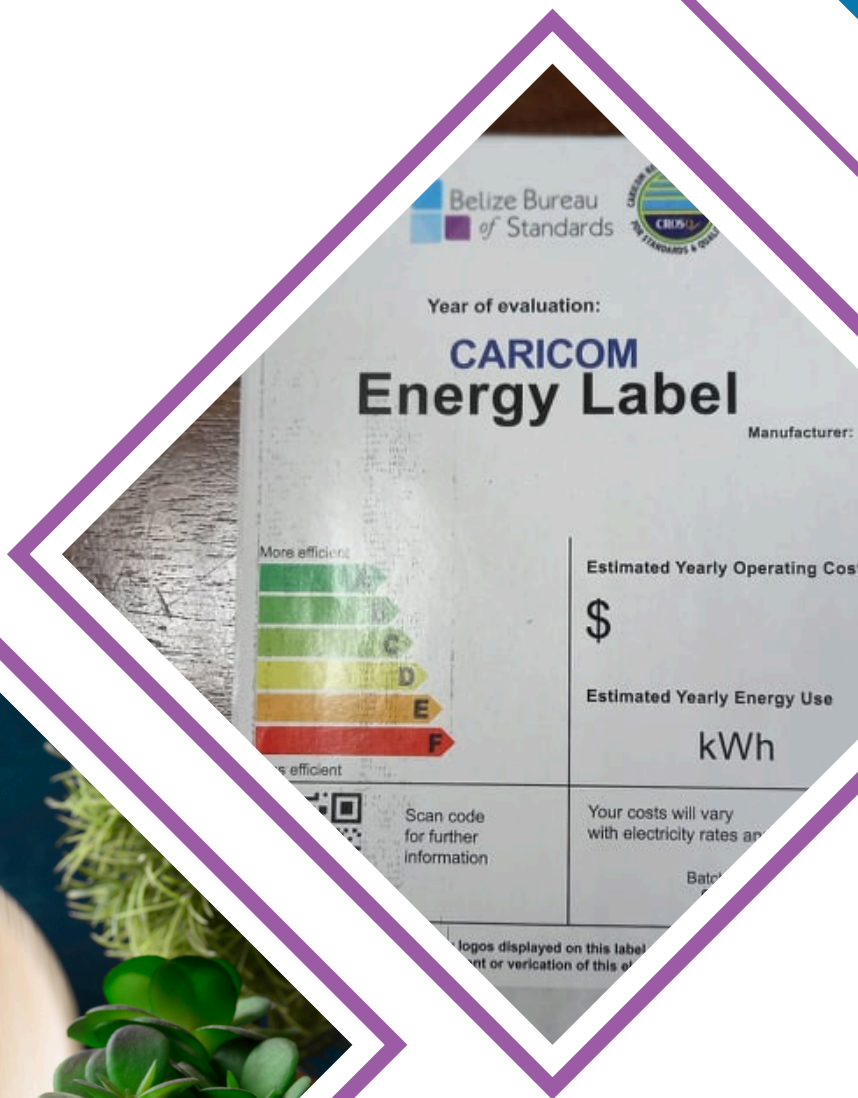
The region has three national accreditation bodies (NABs) that can also provide regional accreditation services. One of these NABs is notably already a signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation Mutual Recognition Arrangement for the ISO/IEC 17025 standard for testing labs and the ISO15189 standard for medical labs and soon will add ISO/IEC 17020 for inspection bodies to their portfolio of services and can thus confer international recognition status to qualifying quality infrastructure services; a facility that needs to be more utilized by the public and private sector alike.



III.

BELIZE

QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE





7. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 GENERAL

The National Quality Policy will be implemented across four technical areas:

- a) Metrology
- b) Standards
- c) Conformity Assessment; and
- d) Accreditation

7.2 METROLOGY

The government of Belize will continue to provide the resources and support necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to develop the national measurement infrastructure.

The BBS will:

- a) Be known and recognised both locally and internationally as the National Metrology Institute for Belize.
- b) Adhere to international treaties and agreements related to metrology, most notably, the Metre Convention.
- c) Abide by all international measurement standards, recommendations, and procedures as published by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) and the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML).
- d) Establish and maintain traceability to the International System of Units (SI).
- e) Establish and maintain the international recognition of BBS' calibration and measurement capability (CMC) through either accreditation or the International Committee of Weights and Measures – Mutual Recognition Agreement (CIPM-MRA)
- f) Promote scientific metrology as a research driver for economic development.
- g) Support the industry by establishing local, sustainable calibration services while facilitating access to those calibration services that are not available within the country.
- h) Ensure the fairness and accuracy of all measurements used in trade.
- i) Develop a national metrology system that utilises competent calibration laboratories and designated institutions.

7.3 STANDARDS

The Government of Belize continues to provide the resources and support necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to facilitate the development of technical regulations and standards.

The BBS will:

- a) Continue to maintain a transparent and credible standards development process that engages a balance of representation of stakeholders on a voluntary basis and achieves consensus;
- b) be the sole agency for publishing Belize's National Standards;
- c) conform to the WTO-TBT Agreement guidelines and best practices of the ISO/IEC Directives;
- d) align as best as possible to regional and/or international standards while ensuring the development of national standards that are relevant to the needs of the country.
- e) Be accountable in systematically reviewing standards for continuous relevance to technological developments, market trends, national and international requirements;
- f) Participate and/or facilitate regional and international technical committees to represent the needs of the country
- g) Educate the relevant stakeholders on technical regulations and voluntary standards
- h) All national standards development activities must be communicated and endorsed by the BBS

7.4 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

The Government of Belize will provide the resources and facilitation necessary to strengthen and enable the BBS to offer nationally recognized conformity assessment services namely certification, testing and inspection services. The Ministry is responsible for creating the environment to support private conformity assessment service providers that is in line with the vision of the country.

7.4.1 TESTING

The BBS will:

- a) In co-operation with professional associations, public and private laboratories, trade associations, and other public and private sector actors, determine the testing needs to ensure there are adequate accredited testing facilities that meet the requirements for competitiveness for export, local manufacturing, and import verification and validation.
- b) Promote accreditation of laboratory management systems to ensure international recognition and thereby raise Belize's credibility and impartiality of test results.
- c) Provide training support in relevant standards to improve management systems

The BAHA will:

- a) Ensure that its laboratories implement the relevant quality and laboratory management systems to provide its customers with credible test results. It will, as much as possible, gain and maintain international accreditation for all the tests it administers.
- b) Operate testing facilities that are appropriate and cost-effective in support of local industries.
- c) Strengthen national laboratories to become reference laboratories in the Caribbean.

7.4.2 CERTIFICATION

BBS and BAHA will:

- a) Promote the implementation of certification to local and international standards
- b) Cooperate with trade associations and other government ministries to promote international certification as a tool for increasing the competitiveness of local manufacturers and service providers

- c) Develop product certification marks as they see fit to be used by local organizations to promote their goods and services
- d) Promote certification marks as a symbol of quality and conformity to instill consumer confidence

7.4.3 ACCREDITATION

The Government of Belize will provide the necessary resources and facilitation required to maintain and strengthen its capacity as the National Accreditation Focal Point (NAFP) and ensure the maintenance of relationships with internationally recognized accreditation bodies.

The BBS is the NAFP and will:

- a) Promote requirements for accreditation and provide support to laboratories seeking to become accredited
- b) Become the national resource centre for accreditation information to guide interested parties toward gaining accreditation
- c) Maintain a listing of all testing and medical laboratories in accordance with the Caribbean Cooperation in Accreditation (CCA) Scheme. This is a scheme of mutual cooperation amongst National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) (in the CARICOM region), National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs), and CROSQ.
- d) Be a facilitator for the training of potential accreditation assessors and technical experts. This is to assist in establishing and maintaining a regional pool of recognized accreditation experts in support of regionally agreed accreditation plans.

Local laboratories are encouraged to access information on accreditation requirements. The laboratories must implement these requirements for improved delivery of services, increase their competitiveness and sustainability, and expand their range of services to local and regional customers.

7.5 TECHNICAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Belize will:

- a) Establish a common Compliance and Regulatory Framework and support it with appropriate legislation;
- b) Establish a technical regulation and compliance regime that complies fully with the WTO TBT Agreement, relevant trade agreements, conventions and protocols;

- c) Identify and require the use of inspection and testing bodies that have the competence and capacity to play a part in the implementation of technical regulations;
- d) Establish a “firewall” between BBS core operations and regulatory activities to avoid conflicts of interest



IV. INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE





8. TOWARDS A NATIONAL QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

Government Commitment:

The NQP and, by extension, the development of the NQI will not be possible without commitment. The Government of Belize, therefore, resolves to:

- a) Promote a public-private partnership approach in implementing the National Quality Policy and collaborate with trade organizations, consumers, trade unions and civil society;
- b) Establish incentive programmes to encourage the use and implementation of local and international standards as tools for increased competitiveness;
- c) Incentivize the private sector to actively participate in standardization, accreditation, and conformity assessment activities; and
- d) Provide financial and human resources to support the implementation of the National Quality Policy.

Enabling Legislation for Quality:

Legislators and policymakers will undertake systematic reviews of regulatory instruments for reform to prompt the requisite attitude and behavioral shift in society to that of continuous quality improvement.

By Declaring

- a) The development of a National Quality Infrastructure to support a healthy, safe, and competitive Belize;
- b) The allocation of resources to embed NQI in the national development dimension;
- c) Promoting the benefits of elements of the NQI and technical regulatory systems in the business sector and among the population;
- d) Integrating standards awareness into educational curricula at all levels;
- e) Developing and implementing plans for the provision of continuous training on standards implementation and promotion of quality culture;
- f) Developing and implementing a Communications Strategy for awareness creation on the National Quality Policy; and
- g) Disseminate widely information relating to all approved national standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment requirements.

The background features several overlapping geometric shapes, primarily hexagons and diamonds, in shades of blue and purple. These shapes contain various icons and text. In the top right, a diamond shape contains icons of a checkmark in a circle, gears, and a globe. In the bottom right, a large diamond shape contains the text 'ISO 9001' over a background of a hand pointing. In the bottom left, a hexagon contains the text 'ISO 17025' over a background of a hand pointing. A clipboard icon is visible in the bottom left corner.

V.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**ISO
9001**

**ISO
17025**



9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NQI. The Ministry should establish a National Quality Council (however named) that includes representative stakeholders in the review of the progress of the NQP implementation activities. The group should also assess the impact of the NQP implementation activities on the overall objectives captured in the Horizon 2030 National Export Strategy and the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy.

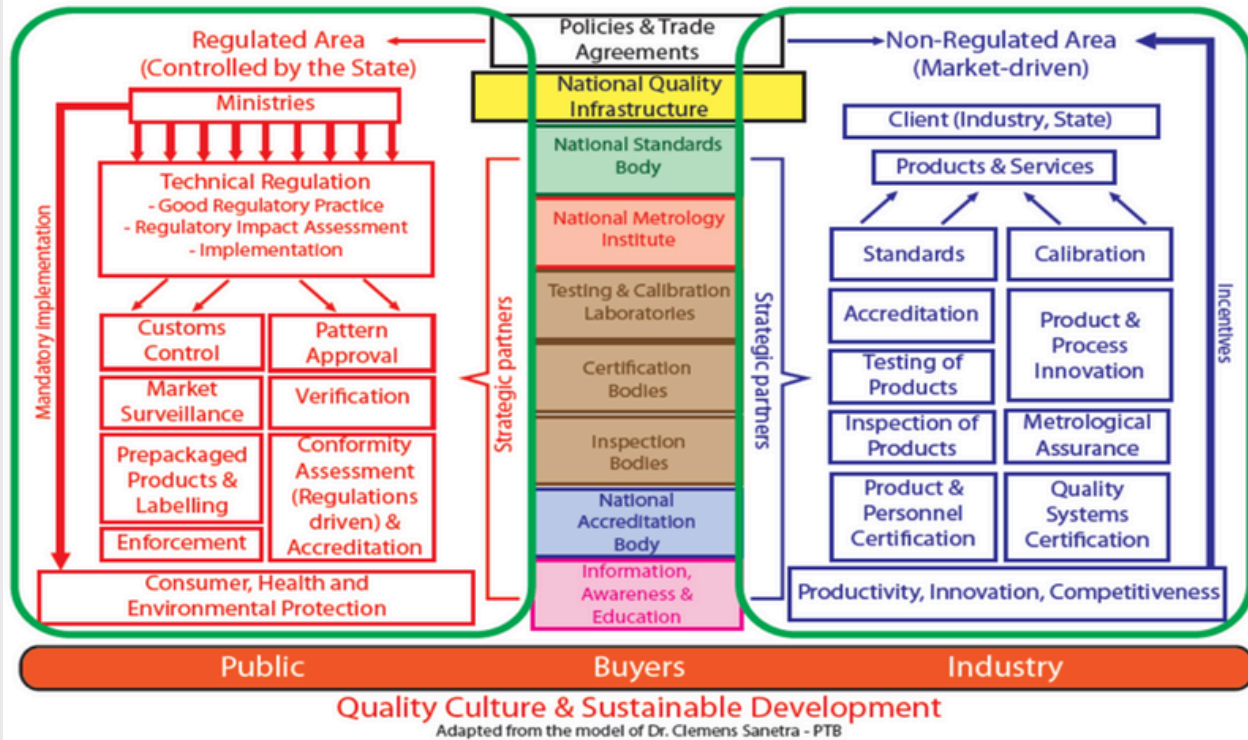
The Policy's goal, objectives, and results are contained within a logical measurement framework that includes indicators, milestones, and targets. Review and evaluation should stimulate the collection of appropriate data and other information, which can then also be used to disseminate good practices, effect corrections, and corrective actions, and encourage positive change in the long term.

Implementation of the policy at the national and regional levels will need to be evaluated for medium- and long-term impact, relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness, and sustainability of the mission.

VI. APPENDIX



The Role of a Demand Oriented Quality Infrastructure



Quality Infrastructure System

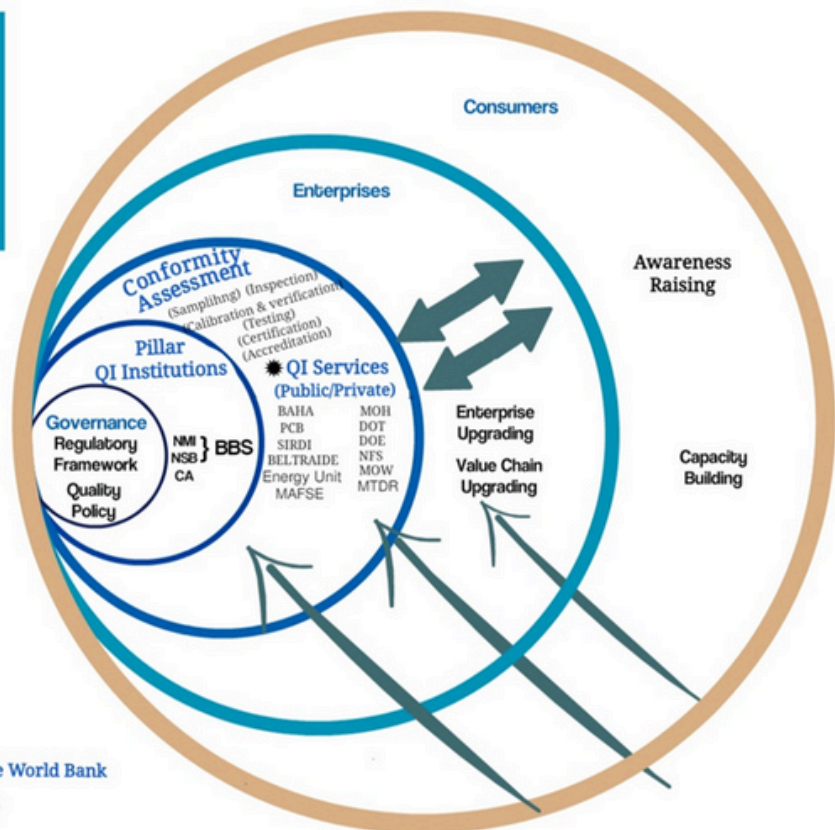
Systemic approach

in line with private sector needs

NMI - National Metrology Institute
NSB - National Standards Body
CA - Conformity Assessment

Source: QI Systems Framework adopted by the World Bank

★ QI Services not limited to these institutions





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