

Box 6.2: Affordable accreditation to help Caricom businesses develop trade

In the face of diminishing access to official development assistance for social programmes, the region has had little choice but to focus on augmenting revenue through trade. In order to do so, it will be imperative for domestic markets to prioritize innovation and raise the levels of productivity and competitiveness of the goods and services produced, while protecting consumers and the environment.

It is with this objective in mind that all 15 Caricom members adopted a *Regional Quality Policy* on 10 November 2017 for the development of quality infrastructure. The latter has five components: standards and technical regulations; metrology; accreditation; conformity assessment, encompassing inspection, testing and certification; and quality promotion through marketing, communication and education.

The Caricom Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

then embarked on a two-year consultative process to implement the Regional Quality Policy, with the support of Germany's Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt and the Dominican Institute for Quality under the 10th European Development Fund's Technical Barriers to Trade Project.

The *Regional Quality Policy* commits all 15 Member States to strengthening technical competence to address issues related to productivity, innovation and competitiveness; and consumer, health and environmental protection. It also commits governments to inculcating a culture of quality across the economy. To this end, each Caricom country has begun developing or refining their own national quality policy. The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have already formally adopted theirs, whereas Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis and St Lucia are on the point of doing so.

The process for accrediting inspection and testing bodies has always been taxing for small island states but the

establishment of the Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation (CCA) in April 2013 should lighten their burden. It provides manufacturers and service providers in the region with access to internationally recognized accreditation services at an affordable rate.

The CCA is based on principles of co-operation and collaboration among the recognized National Accreditation Bodies (NABs). CROSQ serves as the secretariat and co-ordinator of support services. The NABs provide authoritative oversight and accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies, which include testing and calibration laboratories, and inspection and certification bodies. The National Accreditation Focal Point in each member state provides an administrative link between potential clients and the NABs and CROSQ Secretariat.

Source: authors and UNIDO/International Network on Quality Infrastructure (2018) *Quality Policy – Guiding Principles*