



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

# *The National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago*

REMARKS

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MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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Good morning,

It is indeed a pleasure for me to officially launch the National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago 2018 – 2030. Given the urgency to accelerate the transition towards a more diversified economy and expand Trinidad and Tobago's business, investment and export-led trade in the non-energy sector, a National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago is critical to ensure competitiveness and sustainable economic growth and development.

In this regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) signed a Grant Agreement on May 9, 2017 for the financing of the Development of a National Quality Policy. The funding resources were provided by the European Union under the CARICOM Single Market and Economy Standby Facility for Capacity Building, 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF). The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade and Industry engaged a consultancy firm MESOPARTNER to develop the National Quality Policy. The Policy was completed and approved by Cabinet on April 12, 2018.

With emerging economies, there are many price competitors and therefore, Trinidad and Tobago's emphasis should be on delivering products and services that differentiate themselves in the world market place on the **basis of quality, value and innovation rather than on price alone.**

Trinidad and Tobago through CARICOM, CARIFORUM and on its own has negotiated a number of trade agreements for our manufacturers and service providers to expand their market access. In consultation with stakeholders, quality related problems were identified as the **number one challenge** in establishing market presence. These included issues related to the country's public laboratory infrastructure (particularly for food, beverages and pharmaceuticals), legislation, enforcement, the need to build awareness of standards and address the costs of certification and accreditation.

Additionally, international trade relations are increasingly driven by compliance with technical regulations, trade-related standards and conformity assessment procedures. Businesses face challenges in meeting stringent quality standards abroad and in competing with poor-quality imported products on the local market. **The National Quality Policy will seek to address these market access challenges.**

Over time, there has been sporadic growth of quality related entities, laboratories, equipment and legislation, but with obvious attendant gaps in the quality infrastructure. Therefore, **the National Quality Policy will guide and foster these institutions to function in a more aligned and rational manner.**

A National Quality Policy is also required to maintain a satisfactory level of health and safety for consumers in Trinidad and Tobago. Quality is a key element of commercial life. It impinges on provision of services, culture and institutions. It encourages environmental protection, social responsibility and sustainable development. **The National Quality Policy will respond to the interest of Trinidad and Tobago's consumers for safe, secure and environmentally friendly products.**

## **STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY**

The National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago sets out the objectives and strategies of the country and stipulates how to develop and use the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) to satisfy Trinidad and Tobago's economic and societal needs. **The National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago is intended to create an enabling policy environment to guide the strengthening and reform of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI). The NQI is considered an institutional framework that includes the following components:**

- i. Standards;**
- ii. Metrology;**
- iii. Conformity Assessment Services;**
- iv. Accreditation; and**
- v. Information Awareness and Education Programmes.**

The aim of the NQP is to develop a functional and effective National Quality Infrastructure. The Policy identifies attendant gaps in the current situation and outlines the specific roles of stakeholders to address the gaps.

Having proper **standards and technical regulations** will ensure that internal production processes are streamlined and provide for the better adoption of regulations ensuring safe, high quality products for consumers.

**Metrology** guarantees reliable measurements. Enforcement of the Metrology Act will ensure that consumers are getting accurate results and value for money.

With regard to **conformity assessment**, currently Trinidad and Tobago's exporters rely heavily on foreign suppliers for conformity assessment services. The development and availability of local conformity assessment bodies will benefit manufacturers by ensuring cheaper access to these services allowing them to be more price competitive.

**Accreditation** is necessary to ensure confidence and trust, of testing and certification agencies and the procedures utilized to produce credible results.

It is expected that the effective implementation of the National Quality Policy by 2030 will result in the following:

- i. a demand-driven Quality Infrastructure which encourages a culture of quality in the private sector, government and civil society;
- ii. an integrated quality policy framework which supports other policies;
- iii. an effective technical regulatory, product certification and conformity assessment mechanism, to protect consumer rights;
- iv. a stronger presence of Trinidad and Tobago's companies in global markets;
- v. a diversified economy based on productivity and creativity;
- vi. an innovative and creative society that promotes sustainable development.

The National Quality Policy consists of supporting Implementation and Communication Plans.

### **EFFECTING THE NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT**

In order to facilitate the development of a national governance arrangement and institutional strengthening for the strategic oversight of NQP activities, a National Quality Council will be established. This Council, chaired by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, will comprise officials with trade relevant regulatory competences from different Ministries, representatives of the Private Sector, civil society and academia.

The National Quality Policy also provides for the establishment of several other bodies such as a Supportive Project Management Office, a Technical Regulations Unit and a Think Tank to assist in the successful implementation of the National Quality Policy.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Ensuring high quality constitutes a vital requirement for increasing the competitiveness of our firms. Quality goods and services will attract and retain customers, open new markets and expand product offerings. Trinidad and Tobago's reputation and brand as a provider of quality products and services in the national and international markets must be assured. The implementation of the National Quality Policy will enable exporters to meet the demands of a multilateral trading system and provide credible proof that products conform to international standards. As such, the **capability of firms to effectively trade on the national, regional and international levels will be enhanced.**

The Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to aggressively pursue its mandate to drive the non-energy sector through championing business growth, trade and investment for enhanced global competitiveness and promoting consumer interest for improved well-being. As such, a National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago signals a move in this direction.

In closing, this National Quality Policy (2018-2023) seeks to address fulsomely the issues with regard to meeting international standards, accessing international markets, increasing competitiveness and ensuring the health and safety of our consumers. As we seek to roll out this

new National Quality Policy, I urge the private and public sectors to collaborate strategically to ensure its successful implementation.

I thank you.