VIET NAM

NATIONAL EXPORT ROADMAP

STANDARDS, QUALITY AND CERTIFICATION

CROSS SECTOR FUNCTION

Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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This National Trade Strategy was developed following the process, methodology and technical assistance of the International Trade Centre (ITC) within the framework of its Trade Development Strategy programme.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BSI	British Standards Institute
BSO	Business Support Organization
ISO	The International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
NAB	National Accreditation Body
NSB	National Standards Body
NQI	National quality infrastructure
QCDP	Local technical regulations of Viet Nam
QCVN	National technical regulations of Viet Nam
QM	Quality Management
QMS	Quality Management System
QUACERT	Vietnam Certification Centre
QUATEST	Quality Assurance and Testing Center
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STAMEQ	The Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality of Viet Nam
TCVN	Vietnam National Standards, abbreviated in English for the Vietnamese Tiêu chuẩn Việt Nam
VSQI	The Vietnam Standard and Quality Institute
VMI	Vietnam Metrology Institute
WTO	World Trade Organisation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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Executive summary

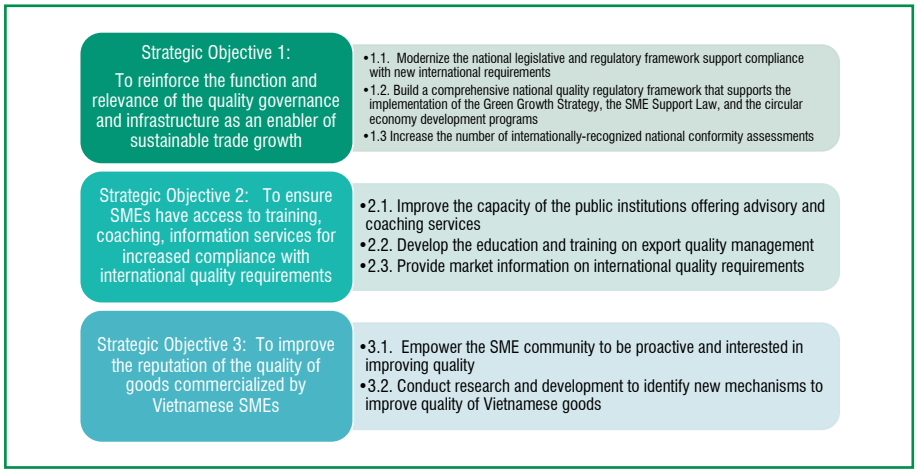
A national quality infrastructure (NQI) can be defined a country's system of the institutional framework (public or private) required to establish and implement standardization, metrology, and the accreditation and conformity assessment services (inspection, testing, and product and system certification) necessary to provide acceptable evidence that products and services meet defined requirements, whether these are imposed by the authorities (in technical regulations and sanitary and phytosanitary measures) or the marketplace (i.e. contractually or inferred).

Awareness of foreign product regulation and standards as well as compliance with them are one of the most common barriers to trade, especially for SMEs. In practice, producers need to understand local requirements to be able to manufacture, market and place their products on the market. This is even more complex when it comes to exporting goods to foreign markets.

A well-functioning and enabling quality management environment requires structured and coordinated interactions between institutions and their functions. The starting point is the overview of domestic and foreign standards and product regulations, aimed to qualify products/services for a particular target market – either domestic or foreign. Many of the requirements are product and industry-specific, which

Under an overall vision of "The Vietnam National Quality Infrastructure is a driving force in supporting SMEs to comply with international market requirements and enables the development of sustainable trade", the strategy aims to contribute to the country's export competitiveness by improving awareness, knowledge, skills and support services in quality management that can help Viet Nam to significantly boost exports. It also aims to support the development of sustainable trade by modernizing the national quality governance and enhancing the capacity of the operational infrastructure to meet international requirements of environmental sustainability and support national programs on green-growth. As illustrated in Figure 1, it is organized in three strategic objectives that provide the backbone to the activities included in the Plan of Action.

Figure 1: Strategic objectives



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: TO REINFORCE THE FUNCTION AND RELEVANCE OF THE QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN ENABLER OF SUSTAINABLE TRADE GROWTH

This strategic objective focuses on building strong links between quality and trade development, with an emphasis is on private-public working together to respond to new international market requirements that are not captured in laws from over ten years ago. There is also a strong focus on building the capacity of policymakers and public institutions to develop new standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessments for the new goods and services that are developed under several new development programs.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: TO ENSURE SMES HAVE ACCESS TO TRAINING, COACHING, INFORMATION SERVICES FOR INCREASED COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL QUALITY REQUIREMENTS.

This strategic objective consists of building an enabling business support environment for SMEs by increasing the number of increasing the supply of quality management professionals available to work with aspiring entrepreneurs and SME. It also prioritizes developing an online platform that serves as a one-stop-shop for SMEs to discover relevant quality requirements for priority products in targeted markets, obtain guidance on quality-related topics, share best practices, and connect with relevant institutions or individuals who can offer assistance and gain insight from other exporting SMEs.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: TO IMPROVE THE REPUTATION OF THE QUALITY OF GOODS COMMERCIALIZED BY VIETNAMESE SMES

This strategic objective focuses on building the quality of goods through other mechanisms aside from certifications. It emphasizes what SMEs can do on their own to improve on quality and how they can be incentivized to be more proactive in implementing quality improvements. This includes ensuring that SMEs are informed and trained issues of packing and labelling, as well as incentivizing SMEs to improve and compete for quality awards by rewarding them with international exposure through national programs on trade promotion.

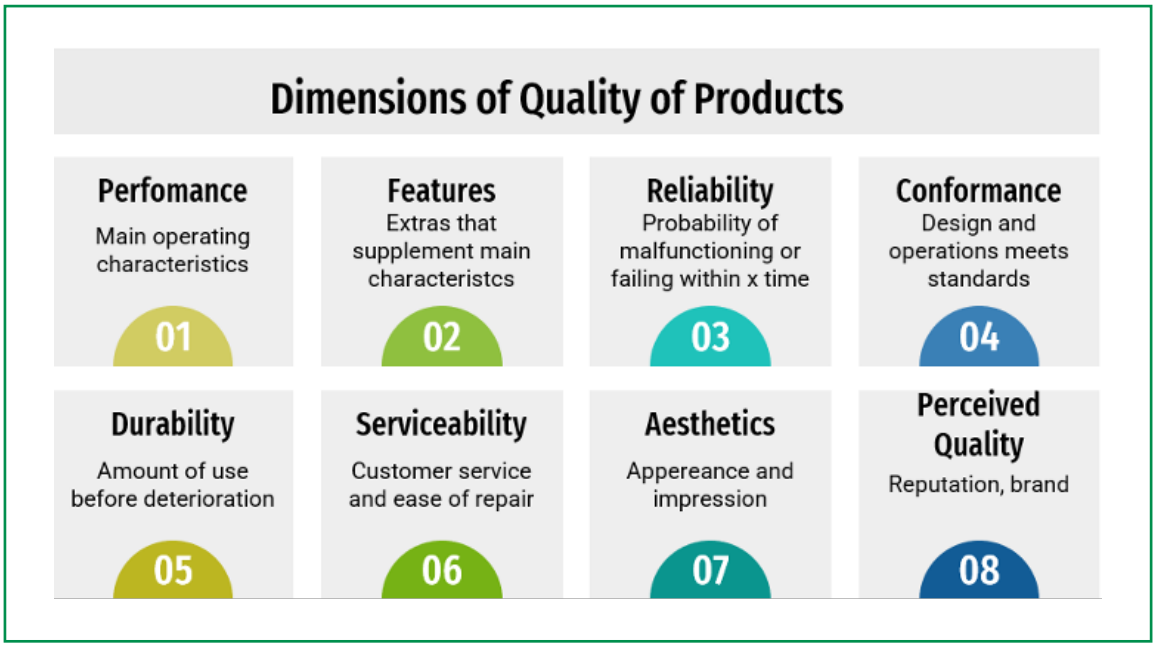
Introduction

Concepts and definitions

Quality can be understood as conforming to customer requirements or being fit for purpose. This is within the context of trade where there is an exchange between two parties, one supplying and the other receiving. Therefore, the definition of quality is relative to that exchange.

In practice, quality has many dimensions based on the design of the product, process of production and conformance of the product to specific requirements or standards. Figure 1 outlines these dimensions.

Figure 2: Dimensions of quality of products



Source: *ITC, modified in 2022.*

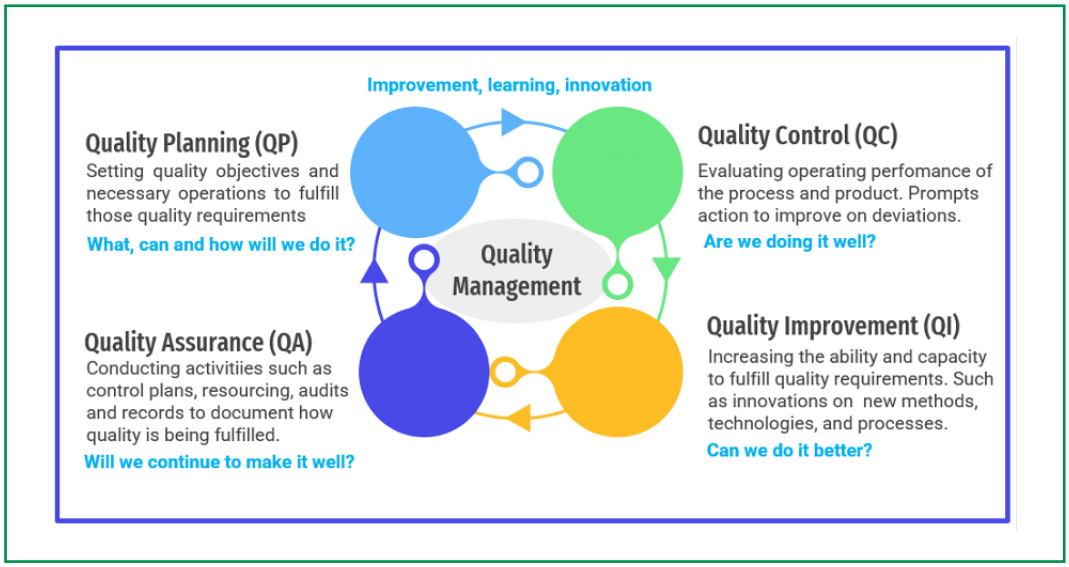
Quality management (QM) refers to the coordinated activities to direct and control an organization regarding quality.[1] The objective of QM is to ensure that all company-wide activities necessary for enhancing the satisfaction of customers and other stakeholders are carried out effectively and efficiently. QM focuses not only on the product quality but also on the means for achieving it.[2]

Figure 2 summarizes the four major components of the quality management process and highlights some questions addressed throughout the different parts of the process.

1.– ISO

2.– ITC Export Quality Management Guide (EQM)

Figure 3: Quality Management Components

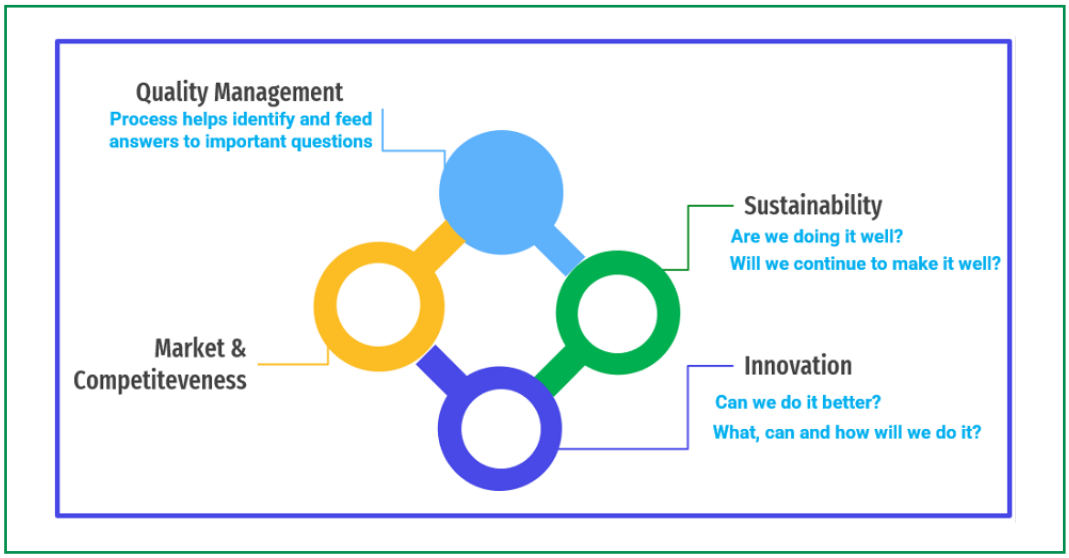


Source: *ITC 2022.*

Quality management system can be a powerful tool for enterprises to innovate (Figure 3), respond to market changes and other requirements such as social, economic, and environment issues of sustainability. This will often require new methods, techniques, technologies, processes.

As the characteristics of quality of design, production, consumer demand, and quality of conformance can change over time, quality improvement activities supply answers to changes needed to the existing methods, to yield more and more by consuming less and less resources. Carrying out continual quality improvement helps enterprises maintain competitiveness in markets (Figure 3).

Figure 4: Quality Management for Competitiveness and Innovation



Source: *ITC 2022*

There are other management systems specific to environment and industries that deal with the processes and procedures of the manufacturer, producer, supplier or service provider, as opposed to certification of a product. This includes the environment management system and food safety management systems, commonly known as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP).

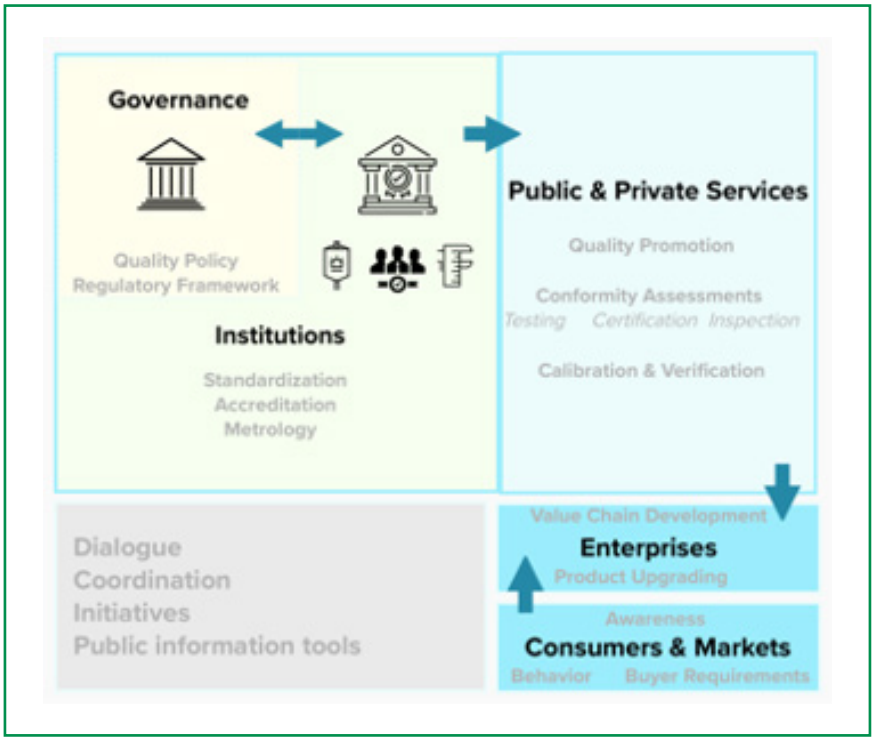
Standards, certifications, and a national quality infrastructure

Standards and certifications are mechanisms to harmonize definitions, validate and, in some cases, enforce quality, production processes, management systems and other requirements. Over time, standards and related concepts have become subject to more scientific and technological scrutiny and definitions. This has facilitated a network of institutions and activities that are part of a complex system known as a quality infrastructure, interlaced at the national and international level.

A national quality infrastructure (NQI) can be defined a country's system of the institutional framework (public or private) required to establish and implement standardization, metrology (scientific, industrial and legal) and the accreditation and conformity assessment services (inspection, testing, and product and system certification) necessary to provide acceptable evidence that products and services meet defined requirements, whether these are imposed by the authorities (in technical regulations and sanitary and phytosanitary measures) or the marketplace (i.e. contractually or inferred).

A national quality infrastructure contributes to trade competitiveness in global markets, efficient use of natural and human resources, food safety, health, the environment, and climate change. It is made up of governance, institutions, service providers, enterprises, consumers and markets, and the interchange between these actors. Figure 4 Provides an overview of an NQI system.

Figure 5: Overview of a National Quality Infrastructure



Source: *ITC*

Governance. A country's government which gives the initial impetus and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the NQI fulfils policy objectives, meets the country's needs, conforms to international standards and best practice, and complies with world trade rules. The government provides impetus by developing national quality policies and establishing the regulatory framework for the NQI.

National quality policy is a government instrument for establishing and overseeing the NQI. It sets out the objectives of the NQI and can use the development of the NQI as an opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of the NQI and how the different national actors can benefit from it. It can do this by inviting broad stakeholder dialogue and participation to draft quality policies.

Technical regulations and standards set out specific characteristics, functions, production process, performance, labelling, packaging and more. In certain cases, the way a product is produced can affect these characteristics, and it may then prove more appropriate to draft technical regulations and standards in terms of process and production methods.

Standards are developed by technical committees established by national standards bodies, regional and/or international standardization organizations. Standards are generally divided into public standards and private standards. Figure 5 outlines the types of standards and certification system.

Private standards are developed by specific non-government groupings, i.e., sectoral organizations including non-governmental organizations, consortia, certification bodies or major retailers.

A technical regulation is a document or legislation that lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods.

The most common international standards are those published by ISO, the International Organization for Standardization. National systems most commonly seek to harmonize their standards to ISO standards.

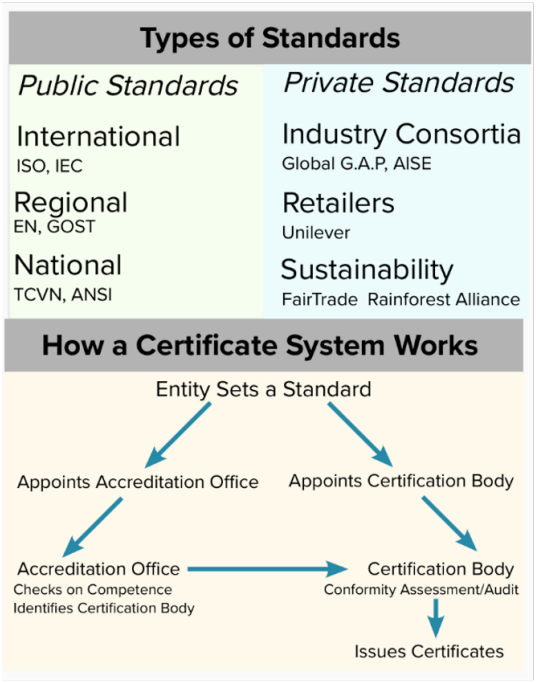
An ISO standard is essentially an internationally recognised way of doing something. ISO standards are internationally agreed by experts and can be understood as a formula that describes the best way of doing something. It could be about making a product, managing a process, delivering a service or supplying materials, standards cover a huge range of activities.[3]

The difference between a standard and a technical regulation lies in compliance. While conformity with standards is voluntary, technical regulations are by nature mandatory. They have different implications for international trade. If an imported product does not fulfil the requirements of a technical regulation, it will not be allowed to be put on sale.[4]

The decision to obtain certification of a standard is always a business decision, depending on requirements and profitability.

Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) are standards specifying requirements that producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers may be asked to meet, relating to a wide range of sustainability metrics, including respect for basic human rights, worker health and safety, the environmental impacts of production, community relations, land use planning and others.

Figure 6: Types of standards and how a certification system works



Source: *ITC, modified in 2022.*

Regulatory framework. Government bodies need to ensure that the nation implements standards and technical regulations consistently with world trade rules, established by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Because of the mandatory nature of technical regulations, they have the potential to become technical barriers to trade (TBT) that prevent or hinder the flow of goods and services between nations.

Standards become mandatory when referenced in government regulations. The inconsistent use of standards and regulations can create technical barriers. This can happen because technical regulations in a country may be introduced by different ministries.[5]

The terminology of standards, technical regulations and SPS measures is frequently a source of confusion. Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement measures are requirements imposed on goods by governments to control certain kinds of risks to human, animal or plant life and health. A technical barrier to trade (TBT) agreement includes three types of measures: technical

3.– ISO definition of a standard
4.– World Trade Organization
5.– UNIDO, Quality Infrastructure: Building Trust for Trade

regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures aimed at avoiding unnecessary barriers to trade.

Market requirements. For some markets, it may be important to have a product certification mark to convince consumers that the product is of good quality. In some markets, environmental and social certification may also be important to penetrate the market.

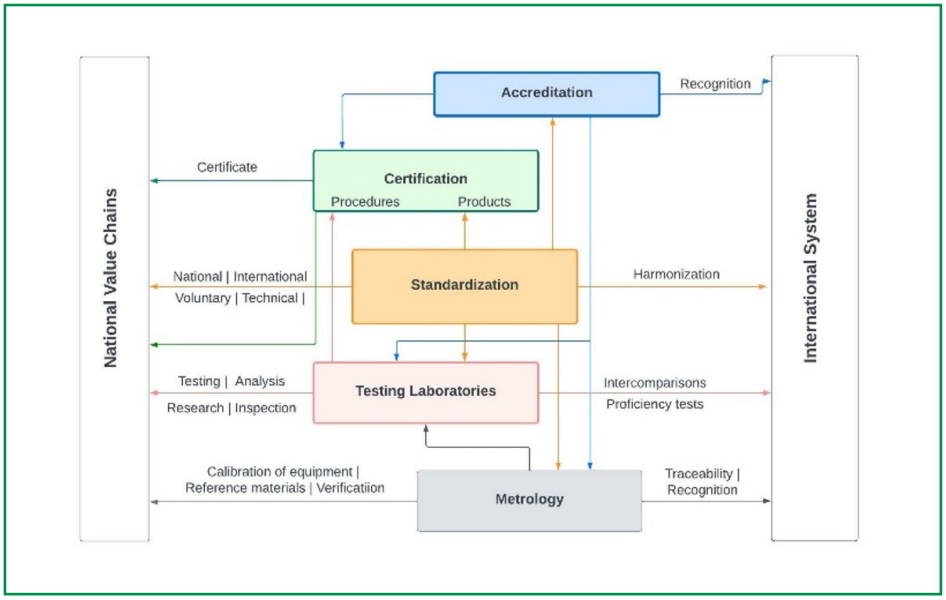
In case of certification of standards, non-complying imported products will be allowed on the market, but then their market share may be affected if consumers prefer products that meet local standards such as colour standards for textiles.

Buyer requirements are the international standards, national standards, private standards, any one of these or a combination stipulated by a buyer in a contract.

Commercial buyers, large retail chains for instance, may have quality requirements beyond the safety demands of the regulator, so both interests need to be accommodated. Clearly, without regulator acceptance, no product can be sold to anyone, but the demands of the commercial market must also be considered.

Services to Enterprises

Figure 7: Five main components of the NQI Institutions and Services



Source: *ITC, updated in 2022.*

Awareness of foreign product regulation and standards as well as compliance with them are one of the most common barriers to trade, especially for SMEs. In practice, producers need to understand local requirements to be able to manufacture, market and place their products on the market. This is even more complex when it comes to exporting goods to foreign markets. The list of requirements may vary significantly from the domestic rule and exporter will not be able to sell their products if they don't comply.

Enterprises need to be able to use testing laboratories to determine compliance of their products, these laboratories should have access to metrology and calibration services to ensure that their test equipment are giving reliable results.

Conformity assessment services are technical procedures such as testing, verification, inspection and certification, which confirm that products fulfil the requirements laid down in regulations and standards. Conformity assessment can be performed on products, services, processes, systems and even persons.

The products/systems may be certified by third parties to give confidence to the buyers and regulatory bodies that the relevant requirements are being consistently met. The certification bodies and laboratories must be accredited to demonstrate their technical competences.[6]

6.– ITC Export Quality Management Guide (EQM)

Any recognition of a test report, whether it is domestic or foreign, requires its acceptance by all regulatory authorities having an interest in the product and by the buyer in the intended market.

Metrology and calibration institutions ensure the validity of measurements. Accreditation bodies ensure the technical competency of the conformity assessment service providers.

Figure 7 outlines five main components of NQI services: standardization, testing, metrology, certification, and accreditation, which are closely related and depend on each other.

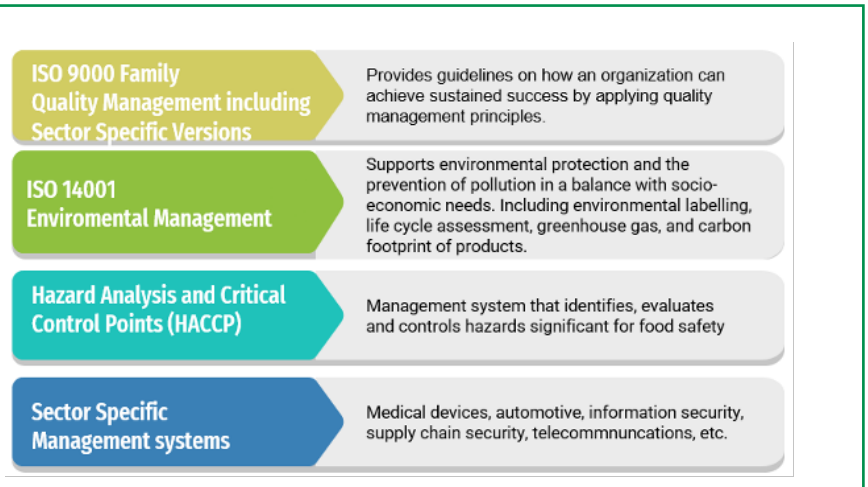
Key International Certifications for Export

Management system certification is considered as the minimum to gain market acceptance and opens the door for further trade negotiations. Management system certification deals with the processes and procedures of the manufacturer, producer, supplier, or service provider.

Management system certification is usually a business-to-business requirement while products standard could vary from customer to customer. The management system can be assessed against the requirements of the relevant standards and, if found to conform, certified by a certification body.

Certification to the ISO 9000 family of quality management system is considered the minimum for compliance sought by potential buyers, followed by sector-specific systems (Figure 7).

Figure 8: Key International Certifications for Export



Source: *ITC 2020.*

Key Takeaways on concepts and definitions:

- Quality can be understood as conforming with costumer requirements or being fit for purpose.
- Quality management (QM) refers to the coordinated activities to direct and control an organization regarding quality.
- Quality management system can be a powerful tool for enterprises to innovate.
- Technical regulations and standards set out specific characteristics, functions, production process, performance, labelling, packaging and more.
- The difference between a standard and a technical regulation lies in compliance. While conformity with standards is voluntary, technical regulations are by nature mandatory.
- The decision to obtain certification of a standard is always a business decision.
- Management system certification is considered as the minimum to gain market acceptance.
- Conformity assessment services are technical procedures such as testing, verification, inspection, and certification, which confirm that products fulfil the requirements laid down in regulations and standards.

International best practices

Features of a functional, efficient, and enabling NQI system

There is no single system, covering all products and sectors, to ensure that test reports from an exporting country will be accepted in the importing market. It is therefore the responsibility of the exporter, manufacturer or importing agent to ensure that the rules of the market for the particular product have been satisfied.

A well-functioning and enabling quality management system requires structured and coordinated interactions between institutions and their functions.[7]

Some features of a functional, efficient, and enabling NQI system include:

- National quality policy development involves the inputs of various stakeholders across different ministries and agencies, regulatory bodies, trade and industry associations, chambers of commerce, consumer associations, and providers and users of calibration, testing, certification, and inspection services.
- Coordination across ministries and regulators to operate a common regulatory framework. Their inputs help ensure that the quality policies meet the needs of the country, while their participation will encourage implementation of the policy.
- Harmonization of local standards to internationally recognized standards, along with consistent use of standards and regulations to prevent technical barriers to trade.
- The NQI is prioritized as a catalyst for competitiveness and global market access. Improving the quality of products and services on a national scale helps to stimulate demand for these products and services, which invigorates individual businesses and the economy.
- Direct support to SMEs on compliance with international requirements. Supporting the national industry to meet the requirements of export markets increases the competitiveness of the nation's economy and its ability to participate in global trade and in value chains.
- Promotion of innovation and competitiveness through NQI services. Since manufacturing and service delivery are strengthened in terms of quality, safety, and compatibility, which ultimately leads to higher customer desirability, suppliers who can take advantage of NQI services are empowered to become more innovative and competitive.
- The NQI supports meeting national objectives and other industries. Assists regulatory bodies responsible for enforcing governmental health, safety, and environmental legislation.

Quality management as a tool to support innovation and productivity

There is a positive association between export diversification and quality upgrading of products. Several studies have demonstrated that total quality management systems may enhance the operational performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.[8]

Below are some examples of quality management tools have been used by national governments to promote innovation and by the private sector to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

7.– ITC Export Quality Management Guide (EQM)

8.– Total Quality Management and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises' (SMEs) Performance: Mediating Role of Innovation Speed. Sustainability 2022. https://doi.org/10.3390/u14148719

The Kaizen is model of Japanese origin that involves quality control and product development. It means improvement and refers to a process of innovation in firms involving the entire workforce. The Kaizen model has been applied by around the world, notably across Asia and Africa by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).[9]

An important advantage of Kaizen is that it normally does not require additional investment by firms, although it is based on strong commitment by top management. For example, Kaizen targets firm level productivity enhancement through the application of multiple efficiency enhancing tools, such as Quality Circles 7 tool (Figure 8).

Figure 9: The Kaizen Quality Circles Tool

Source: *Kaizen*

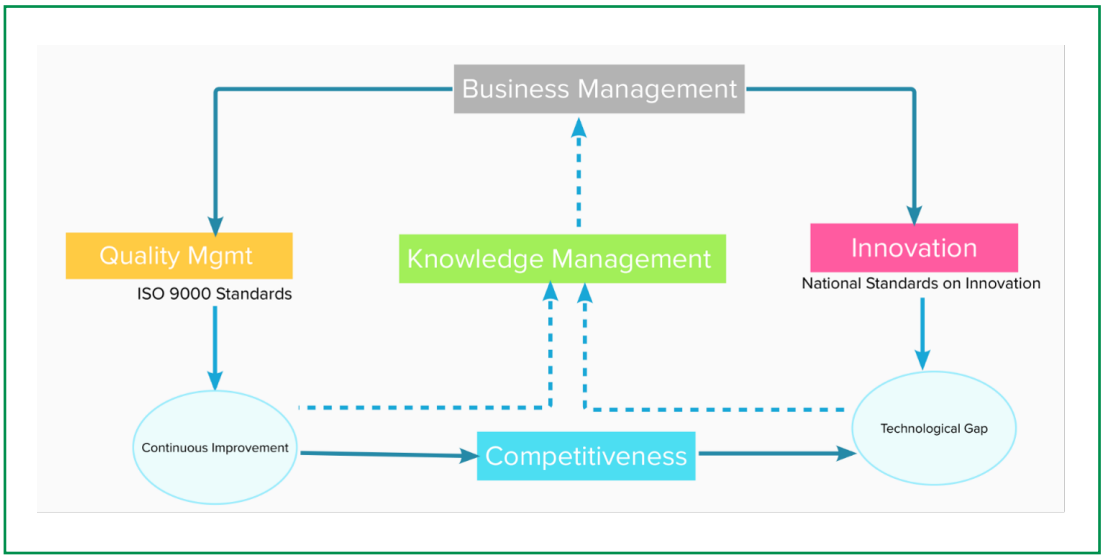
In recent years, Kaizen applications are shifting from a private sector led implementation (as was originally the case with Japanese firms who first started using it) to one led by the public sector. Similarly, the process has also grown to not only use Kaizen for industrial development but also to improve productivity in public services and utility management such as energy or healthcare.

The Kaizen approach was introduced in Singapore at the country's request and is now studies as a model that supported its economic transformation.[10] The initiative in Singapore has a three-way process involving the government, industry and labour organisations and benefitted from strong commitment from the Singaporean Prime Minister. In Thailand the approach was also implemented between 1994 and 2001, though the Quality and Productivity Improvement Project. [11]

Similarly, Spain, Brazil, and Mexico have used the quality management system to integrate national standards to promote innovation in the SME community. Figure 9 visualizes the model that the Spanish construction industry introduced to assist Spanish companies in innovation. [12]

9.– The role of Kaizen in economic transformation. The Overseas Development Institute, 2016.
10.– The role of Kaizen in economic transformation. The Overseas Development Institute, 2016.
11.– Ibid.
12.– Universitat Politècnica de València, Standardizing Innovation in the Spanish Construction Industry, 2006.

Figure 10: Spain's use of quality for innovation in the construction industry



Source: *Universitat Politècnica de València, redesigned by ITC 2022.*

Environmental management systems

The Plan, Do, Check, Act is a simple yet widely used tool for quality management that also been adapted as a tool for environmental management. It can be used by national, regional and/or local governments to provide its business community a practical tool for the implementation and monitoring of environmental goals.

For example, it has been adapted by several industries and organizations, such as the European Union Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) by the European Commission for the use of companies and other organisations to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance, together with the ISO Environmental Management System (Figure 10).

Figure 11: European Union use of the Environmental Management System

Source: *The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)*

Key takeaways

- There is a positive association between export diversification and quality upgrading of products.
- Several studies have demonstrated that total quality management systems may enhance the operational performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Quality management tools have been used by national governments to promote innovation and by the private sector to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
- The Kaizen is model of Japanese origin that involves quality control and product development.
- An important advantage of Kaizen is that it normally does not require additional investment by firms.
- In recent years, Kaizen applications are shifting from a private sector led implementation (as was originally the case with Japanese firms who first started using it) to one led by the public sector.
- The Kaizen approach was introduced in Singapore at the country's request and is now studies as a model that supported its economic transformation.
- Similarly, Spain, Brazil, and Mexico have used the quality management system to integrate national standards to promote innovation in the SME community.
- National quality policy development involves the inputs of various stakeholders.
- The Plan, Do, Check, Act is a simple yet widely used tool for quality and environment protection.
- The European Union Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) by the European Commission for companies and other organizations to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance, together with the ISO Environmental Management System.

National Context

Policies and Development Plans on Quality

The Vietnam National Export and Import Strategy 2021-2030 has stressed firmly the need on improving the enterprise's ability to meet regulations, quality standards, food hygiene and safety, social responsibility, and environment standards, proactively adapting and overcoming trade barriers and trade remedies in foreign markets.[13]

To achieve the objectives, the Strategy specifies to (1) capacity building and strengthening of monitoring, market research, forecasting and updating of changes in trade policies, non-tariff barriers of export markets, (2) stepping up the development and application of National Standard's system in harmony with international and regional standards, including technical standards, product quality standards, social and environmental standards and (3) guiding and supporting enterprise to apply and obtain certificates of green growth, sustainable growth, in line with international standards and standards of targeted foreign markets.[14]

The Strategy has also mentioned to enhance the capacity of Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) including testing organizations, certification organizations, and national laboratories to meet international standards as a basis to serve conformity assessment with national standards, international standards, regional standards, and private standards for exported goods.[15]

Legal and regulatory regime

The Vietnam legal framework for the NQI has three foundational laws: The Law on Standards and Technical Regulations (2006), Law on Product Quality (2008), Law on Metrology (2012) and other related laws and regulations. The 2006 Law on Standards and Technical Regulations[16] remains the main legal basis for standards and technical regulations and seeks to promote harmonization of national standards with international ones. International, regional, and foreign standards must be used as the basis for the formulation of technical standards and technical regulations, unless they are not suitable to Vietnam (because of its geography, climate, and technical or technological characteristics), or they affect its national interests.

The Government has also approved the National Program to Support Enterprises to Improve Productivity and Quality of Products and Goods in the period of 2021–2030. The National Program is designed to supporting enterprises to improve the productivity and quality of products and goods based on applying solutions on standards, technical regulations, and management systems.[17]

In this programme, the government has set several specific targets for the coming period. Specifically, in the 2021-2025 period, it is targeted to have the harmonisation rate of the national standard system with international standards and regional standards reach about 65 per cent. It also targets training and certifying about 600 quality productivity experts at ministries, agencies, localities, and enterprises.[18]

In the 2026-2030 period, Vietnam is striving for the harmonisation rate to 70-75 per cent and training and certifying standards for about 1,000 experts, of which about

13.– Vietnam National Export and Import Strategy 2021-2030

14.– Ibid.

15.– Ibid.

16.– Law No. 68/2006/QH11, as amended by Law No. 35/2018/QH14.

17.– National Program to support enterprises to improve productivity and quality of products and goods in the period of 2021 – 2030.

18.– Vietnamese Prime Minister Phuc launches nationwide campaign to support businesses. Asia News Network, 2020

200 experts are certified with regional and international qualifications.

In addition, The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) is now also drafting General Plan for Development of National Standards System (TCVN) to 2025, Orientation to 2030, with the objectives: (1) Improve productivity, quality and competitiveness of Vietnamese products and goods, (2) Meet the standard requirements of the general socio-economic development strategy as well as the development strategy of specific economic sectors and fields, (3) Satisfy state management requirements in each field, (4) Improve the harmonization of TCVN with international Standards and regional Standards.[19]

Standardization

Vietnam's standards system consists of over 9,500 national standards (TCVN, in the Vietnamese language). Currently, over 47 percent of Vietnamese national standards are harmonized with international and regional standards.[20]

The 2006 Law on Standards and Technical Regulations marked a turning point for standardization activities in Vietnam and comprehensively reformed the system. Under this law, standards and technical regulations were simplified to two levels: national standards (TCVNs) and organization's standards (TCCSs); national technical regulations (QCVNs) and local technical regulations (QCDPs). The law also clearly identified MOST as the responsible agency for issuing and managing national standards, while line ministries are responsible for developing national technical regulations.[21]

The Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEQ) under MOST is the national standardization body. MOST is responsible for announcing the publication of national standards on the STAMEQ's website, keeping an updated repository of valid standards in Viet Nam, and coordinating the development of standards and technical regulations with the other ministries for products and services in its areas of competence.[22]

Up to now, the National Technical Regulation (QCVN)'s system has issued more than 800 technical regulations (QCVN) and 30 local standards (QCĐP) which

Links, Lab of SGS.jpg

increasingly confirm its role, position is a modern management tool, in accordance with international practices in management of development by socialist-oriented market economy, support the state management agency in effectively planning, building and implementing public policies and national target programs (cars, motorbike, iron and steel, biofuel, network security, food safety, domestic water, environmental pollution control, etc.).[23]

According to the report of the WTO's Trade Policy Review (TPR) Vietnam in 2020, Viet Nam has totally 12,888 TCVNs in effect, of which 60% were harmonized with international, regional, or foreign standards (up from 40% in 2013), covering most of the fields of socio-economic life[24]. Table 1 provides a list of Vietnam National Standards (TCVN) by sectors and number harmonized to the ISO standards.

19.– Draft on General Plan for Development of National Standards System (TCVN) to 2025, Orientation to 2030, STAMEQ, 2022
20.– Vietnam Country Commercial Guide, United Stated Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, 2021
21.– Ibid.
22.– Ibid.
23.– STAMEQ
24.– Vietnam TPR 2020

Table 1: Vietnam National Standards (TCVN) by sectors

Sector Number	Total of Standards (updated on 8_7_2022)	ISO,ISO/IEC, ISO/ASTM
65 - AGRICULTURE	908	216
67 - FOOD TECHNOLOGY	1704	616
21 - SYSTEMS&MECHANICAL STRUCTURE	411	125
39 - EXACT MECHANICS	21	14
25-PROCESSING INDUSTRIES	528	345
77 - METALLURGICAL	470	282
71 - CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY	430	224
73 - MINING&MINERALS	285	138
75 – OIL & OTHER RELATED TECHNLOGY	383	118
59 - TEXTILE & LEATHER TECHNOLOGY	415	293
61 - GARMENT	102	80
31 – ELECTRONICS	141	
33 – TELECOMMUNICATIONS	179	3
27 - ENERGY & HEAT TRANSMISSION	167	102
13 - ENVIRONMENT&PROTECT HEALTH	1252	753
11 - HEALTH CARE TECHNOLOGY	431	191
91 - CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES	834	153
03 - SERVICES, ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY, ADMINISTRATIVE. SOCIOLOGY	267	235

Source: *Draft on General Plan for Development of National Standards System (TCVN) to 2025, Orientation to 2030, STAMEQ, 2022.*

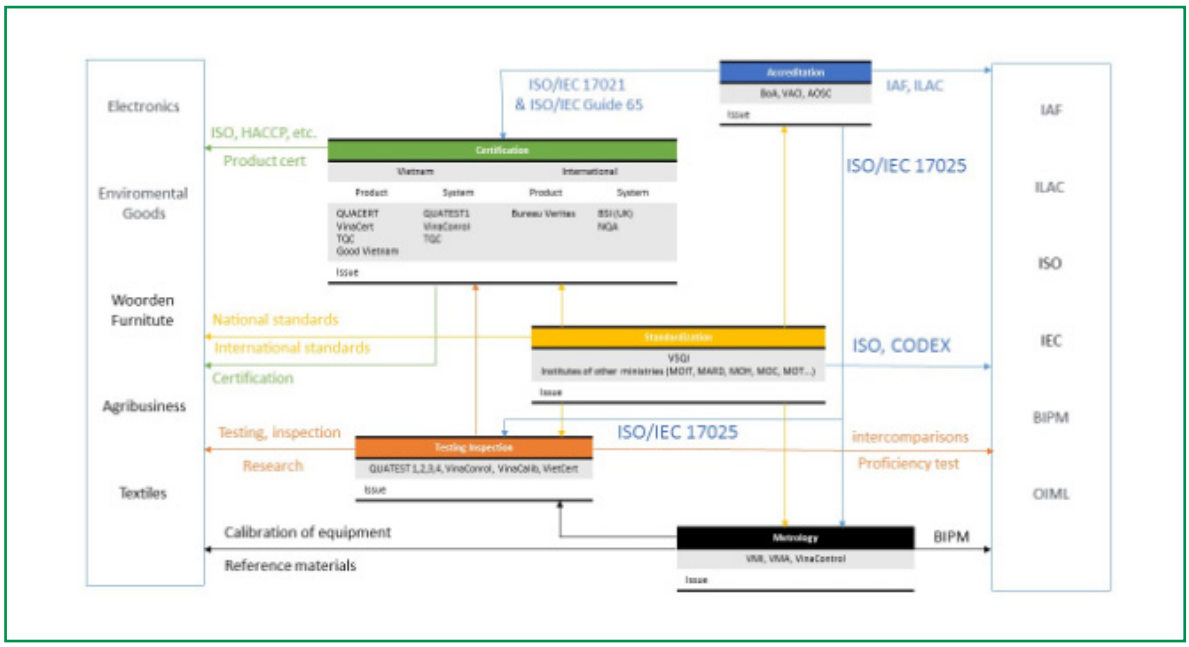
Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)

Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) has so far become a solid foundation, not only to help Vietnamese enterprises, especially SMEs, overcome technical barriers to trade in foreign markets, but also to enhance their production and exporting capabilities in term of improving product quality, saving costs, stimulating innovation and productivity.[25]

Generally, Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) has shown active participations of private, public and international stakeholders in the ecosystem including government agencies, business associations, service providers, and research institutions.

25.– Hi□p, H. M. (2022). Chuy□n đ□i s□ v□ đo l□□ng trong NQI. Hà N□i: NXB Chính tr□ Qu□c gia S□ th□t, 2022.

Figure 12: Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure



Source: *Vietnam's National Quality Infrastructure, 2022 based on authors' survey, validated by VSQI's inputs*

The Vietnam Standards and Quality Institute (VSQI) is the subsidiary of STAMEQ and is responsible for organizing national technical committee (TCVN/TC) activities - developing, publishing, and issuing national standards and providing other related services. It coordinates with relevant domestic ministries/agencies, as well as international and foreign national standardization organization.

Under STAMEQ, there are four product certification bodies: QUATEST1, QUATEST2, QUATEST3 and QUACERT (Vietnam Certification Centre). QUACERT provides certification services for organizations and individuals who have complied with internationally recognized standards or other technical specifications, including certifications for management systems and product certification. STAMEQ has also established 139 technical standards committees (TSCs), with more than 1,100 experts engaged in the building of national and international standards in various areas.[26]

The Bureau of Accreditation (BoA) was established in 1995 under the Directorate for Standards, Metrology, and Quality (STAMEQ) under MOST. All conformity assessment bodies (CAB) operating in Vietnam register at STAMEQ.

Conformity Assessment Services

In the field of conformity assessment and accreditation, Vietnam has issued more than 40 legal documents to guide and organize the implementation of the Law on Product and Goods Quality.

Vietnam has also stepped up the socialization of conformity assessment activities. Currently, Viet Nam has 731 testing organizations, 179 certification organizations including product certification organization and management system certification bodies. About 79 inspection organizations and 116 verification organizations of Viet Nam have been granted registration license according to the provisions of the related law.[27] By 2020, the Viet Nam Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (VILAS) has accredited about 1,326 laboratories including 7 foreign laboratories. The Certification Body Accreditation Scheme (VCAS) accredits 72 certification bodies, and the Viet Nam Inspection Scheme (VIAS) accredits 84 inspection bodies[28].

Following the implementation of the Law of Metrology and other government's decrees and resolutions, so far, the MOST has issued various circulars, organized the formulation and approval of 32 national measurement

26.– en.nhandan.com.vn. (2020). Around 60% of Vietnam's national standards are harmonised with international and regional standards.
27.– WT/TPR/G/410 • VietNam
28.– WT/TPR/G/410 • VietNam

standards, as well as developed 332 Vietnamese metrological technical documents on the process of inspection, calibration, testing of measuring instruments, and measurement standards.[29]

Currently, Vietnam Metrology Institute (VMI) has constructed and formulated a network of inspection, calibration and testing service providers including 520 designated organizations with more than 4000 metrology testers, provided services of calibration and testing of measuring instruments and measurement standards for Vietnamese enterprises, which contributing to improving production and business capacity and performance toward the goal of nation's industrialization and modernization[30].

In addition to public institutions, there are also several private service providers of conformity assessments, such as the British Standards Institution and SGS from Switzerland. Table 2 provides a list of all major institutions, services, and a broad ranking on their perception/reputation on certain areas of operation, ranging from low (L), medium (M), and high (H), based on consultations with stakeholders.

Table 2: Vietnam NQI Institutions and Services

Name of Ministries	Name of Institutions	Description of functions and services provided	Coordination	Human Capital	Financial Sustainability	Communication
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Vietnam Standards and Quality Institute (VSQI)	Standardization, Certification, Testing	M	M	L	M
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Vietnam Certification Center (QUACERT)	Certification, Testing	M	M	L	L
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Technical Center of Standardization, Metrology and Quality 1,2,3 (QUATEST 1,2,3)	Testing	M	M	L	L
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Vietnam Metrology Institute (VMI)	Metrology	M	M	M	M
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Vietnam Productivity Institute (VNPI)	Quality Management System	M	M	H	M
STAMEG, Ministry of Science and Technology	Small and Medium Enterprises 1,2 (SMEDEC 1,2)	Quality Management System	M	M	M	M
Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)	Bureau of Accreditation (BOA)	Accreditation	H	M	M	H
TBT Office Vietnam, Ministry of Science and Technology	TBT Office Vietnam	National Enquiry Points on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Training, Information on export markets	H	M	M	H
Vinacontrol Group	VinaControl (originally the Department of Import-Export Goods Inspection under the Ministry of Commerce, now is MOIT)	Inspection, Testing & Analysis, Assessment and Certification Verification & Calibration	H	H	H	H
Vietrade, Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT)	Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency (Vietrade)	Export promotion activities, training, Information on export markets	H	H	H	H
SPS Office Vietnam, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	SPS Office Vietnam	National Enquiry Points on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Training, Information on export markets	H	M	M	H
Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry	VCCI	Training, Information on export markets	H	H	H	H
BSI Group	BSI Vietnam	Standardization, Training, Testing, Assessment and Certification	H	H	H	H
SGS Group	SGS Vietnam	Testing, Inspection, Certification	H	H	H	H
BUREAU VERITAS Group	BUREAU VERITAS Vietnam	Testing, Inspection, Certification	H	H	H	H

Source: *ITC, based on stakeholder consultations, 2022.*

29.– Hi□p, H. M. (2022). Chuy□n đ□i s□ v□ đo l□□ng trong NQI. Hà N□i: NXB Chính tr□ Qu□c gia S□ th□t, 2022.
30.– Ibid.

Competitiveness constraints

Overview of constraints

ENTERPRISE LEVEL ISSUE

- Young firms are marginally less likely to obtain quality assurance certificates;
- Sustainability and/or environment protection certificates are least popular across sectors
- Firms are unaware and/or lack access to information tools on standards, technical regulations and import requirements of foreign markets due to language and technical proficiency barriers.
- SMEs are not proactive on quality management as they mainly acquire certifications to meet buyer requirements on an ad hoc basis.
- SMEs are not active participants in drafts of national standards and regulations (TCVN, QCVN) and other related laws and policies.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

- Scarcity of public programmes on quality management and environment management.
- Existing initiatives and programs on quality improvement do not reach the majority of SMEs.
- Public institutions have limited capacity and resources to offer affordable advisory and coaching services on quality, standards, and certification to SMEs.
- Limited cooperation between private and public sector to inform, train and coach.
- National bodies lacking international accreditation or recognition.
- Testing site availability and procedures vary across the country and credibility of testing is not reliable across sites.

NATIONAL LEVEL ISSUES

- The NQI ecosystem lacks stronger links to support national goals on green growth and circular economy.
- Outdated foundation laws and regulations

Enterprise level issues

Young firms are marginally less likely to obtain quality assurance certificates.[31] Starts-up and new established companies generally lack knowledge and awareness of the importance of standards, quality, certification, and the utility of quality management systems for export related growth. Vietnamese businesses, especially private SMEs, have not paid much attention to the issues of technical barriers and requirements in export markets, notably because most SMEs produce goods for domestic consumption, are sub-contractors for foreign direct investment (FDI) manufacturers or opt to export to easy markets with low value-added content.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.1.1, 2.2.2

Sustainability and/or environment protection certificates are least popular across sectors. As a result, they are not well guided or focused on investing on activities of production innovation, quality improvement, and safety, health, and environmental requirements, which eventually hinder them to enhance the added value and to penetrate deeper into the strictest foreign markets.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.2.2., 1.3.1

Firms are unaware and/or lack access to information tools on standards, technical regulations and import requirements of foreign markets due to language and technical proficiency barriers. There are various trade information tools/portals on market information and requirements provided by Vietnam authorities, such as the MARD SPS portal and the MOST TBT portal. However, SMEs are often inactive or unaware or unable to utilize these effective tools, especially as they are mainly available in English and not sector or product specific. The main reason is often due to SME's lack of human capabilities of language or technical proficiency.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.3.1, 2.3.2

SMEs are not proactive on quality management as they mainly acquire certifications to meet buyer requirements on an ad hoc basis.[32] To export, SMEs mainly rely on hiring internationally recognized third-party organizations for conformity assessments based on buyer requirements. SMEs with limited resources and capabilities find it challenging to afford services beyond the needs of their buyers or to explore potential new market segments. There is also limited access of conformity assessment services at firm-site and/or in rural areas.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 3.2.2

SMEs are not active participants in drafts of national standards and regulations (TCVN, QCVN) and other related laws and policies. SMEs are generally inactive as a participatory role on supporting the government authorities to draft and build system of "National standards and regulations" (TCVN, QCVN) and other related law and regulations.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.1.1

Business environment issues

Scarcity of public programmes on quality management and environment management. While there are a few programmes sponsored by the Government or foreign organizations, they are still limited since they are not covering the majority of a large SMEs that need coaching to implement "A to Z" solutions. For example, firms are not equipped well with new knowledge of using EMS for innovation and sustainability.

Existing initiatives and programs on quality improvement do not reach the majority of SMEs. Although various ministries are annually deploying many technical training projects on improving capacity of SMEs on quality management system, production and exporting activities, the efficiency and sustainability of these projects are still limited since they are not covering the majority of SMEs. These projects are often not be able to consult SMEs to implement an "A to Z" solutions. Additionally,

31.– ITC SME Competitiveness Survey in 2022 of 500 firms across the priority NES sectors.
32.– ITC SME Competitiveness Survey in 2022 of 500 firms across the priority NES sectors.

SMEs often find it difficult to remain active and lack of guidance once assistance projects are completed.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.1.1, 2.1.3

Public institutions have limited capacity and resources to offer affordable advisory and coaching services on quality, standards, and certification to SMEs. Even though public business support organizations have established a full ecosystem of conformity services for firms (i.e., those under STAMEG), they could not cover all different needs of SMEs (quality and quantity) due to lack of resources (number of testing and calibration facilities) and capabilities (certified experts/auditors).

Public services tend to support enterprises primarily on only obtaining domestic certifications (TCVNs, QCVNs) which are not favoured in the foreign markets. Since international service providers full range of premium services, Vietnamese public service providers generally focus on supporting enterprises to obtain domestic certifications (TCVNs) which are not recognized in the foreign markets. Meanwhile, international BSOs with relatively higher costs of certification and training/coaching are more suitable for bigger manufactures and exporters.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.1.1 to 2.2.1

Limited cooperation between private and public sector to inform, train and coach. Private service providers are more active and flexible to satisfy demands in the market but still they lack resources and capabilities and somewhat rely on public BSOs in some respects such as testing, inspection, and accreditation. The linkages and cooperation between these sectors or even within the public sector in the NQI are still limited or loose.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 2.1.2

National bodies lacking international accreditation or recognition. Even, much progress has been made, Vietnam is lacking internationally accredited experts and organization bodies. In general, there are a few numbers of domestic organization bodies are internationally accredited. Most of Vietnamese service providers are accredited by Bureau of Accreditation (BOA) but lacks Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with other international accreditation bodies. In addition, public and private domestic BSOs still lack of internationally certified experts with in-depth knowledge and practical experience on applying export standards to support businesses in targeted foreign markets.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.3.1 to 1.3.2.

Testing site availability and procedures vary across the country and credibility of testing is not reliable across sites. The results of testing between domestic and international laboratories on the same sample have large differences. Even, the test results of product samples between domestic units also give very different results, test results of different laboratories on the same sample might differ by a large number. As the consequence, Vietnamese manufacturers or exporters, especially SMEs have to send their product samples to international well-recognized labs for testing activities with higher cost.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.3.2.

National level issues

The NQI ecosystem lacks stronger links to support national goals on green growth and circular economy. The existing regulatory framework needs to develop and/or harmonize national standards and guidelines that can support the implementation, assessment and monitoring of green growth and circular economy activities. The lag is partly due to the recent emergence of international standards on these concepts that require national governments to update and harmonize accordingly.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.2.1

Outdated foundation laws and regulations on quality, standards, and certification, which have been issued for 10-15 years. Partly outdated, they have not adapted the needs and requirements of the new international integration context toward green growth, sustainable development and circular economy.

- Plan of action reference: Activities: 1.1.2

The way forward

This section lays down the strategic framework of the standards, certifications and quality strategy, comprising the vision statement, and the strategic and operational objectives that provide the backbone to the Plan of Action (PoA).

Vision

To guide the implementation of the strategy in the next five years, the vision statement set out below has been formulated and agreed upon by stakeholders who participated in the consultations for the design of the strategy.[33] It also represents the ambitions of the country as well as a consensus among stakeholders over the role of exports in the economy.

"Vietnamese SMEs quality management practices and the national quality governance are equipped to support the implementation of new environmental sustainability initiatives."

The standards, certifications and quality strategy falls squarely under the second strategic objective of the national level trade strategy. This strategic objective aims to diversify and extend the presence in the range of export destinations with an operational objective aimed at:

… promoting the quality of products and services by ensuring that Vietnamese companies are aware of certification requirements of target destination markets and enabled to obtain relevant support. The awareness about internationally recognised or private product standards is a significant factor in assessing feasibility and commercial viability of export activities.

Strategic framework

Awareness of foreign product regulation and standards as well as compliance with them are one of the most common barriers to trade, especially for SMEs. In practice, producers need to understand local requirements to be able to manufacture, market and place their products on the market.

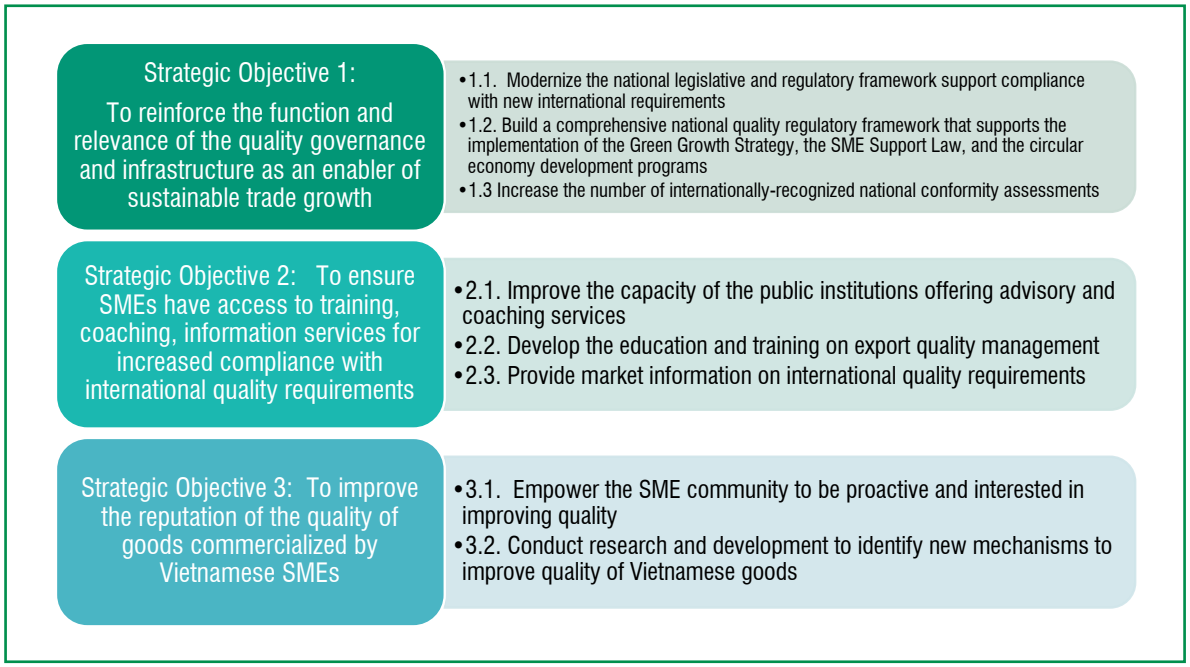
This strategy aims to contribute to the country's export competitiveness by improving awareness, knowledge, skills and support services in quality management in a cost-effective approach for both enterprises and public services. It also aims to support the development of sustainable trade by modernizing the national quality governance and enhancing the capacity of the operational infrastructure to meet international requirements of environmental sustainability and support national programs on green-growth.

The strategy is framed around low-cost quality management practices that can be achieved at the enterprise level, upgrading the national quality governance, and improving public business services.

The strategic objectives define the main thrusts that will guide the strategy implementation to achieve the vision laid out. The PoA will respond to the vision by addressing the innovation constraints and leveraging opportunities in a comprehensive manner. To this end, as shown in the following three strategic objectives have been identified during the consultation with national stakeholders:

33.– These consultations took place online and in-person between July 2020 and September 2022.

Figure 13: Strategic and operational objectives



1. TO REINFORCE THE FUNCTION AND RELEVANCE OF THE QUALITY GOVERNANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN ENABLER OF SUSTAINABLE TRADE GROWTH

This strategic objective focuses on building strong links between quality and trade development, with an emphasis is on private-public working together to respond to new international market requirements that are not captured in laws from over ten years ago.

At the operational level, there are three objectives:

1.1. M,odernize the national legislative and regulatory framework support compliance with new international requirements

This operational objective consists of ensuring that the development of national quality policies is reactive to trade development and private sector needs by improving the collaboration between MOST and MOIT for obtaining inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, notably those from the SME community. It also focuses on updating the legislative framework that governs the national quality infrastructure the new international requirements on environmental sustainability.

1.2. Build a comprehensive national quality regulatory framework that supports the implementation of the Green Growth Strategy, the SME Support Law, and the circular economy development programs.

This operational objective consist building the capacity of policymakers and public institutions to develop new standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessments for the new goods and services that are developed under several new development programs.

1.3 Increase the number of internationally-recognized national conformity assessments

This operational objective consists of ensuring the national quality infrastructure is aligned with the regulatory and legislative framework, as well improving its capacity to absorb export growth. It also focuses on addressing the constraints on access, credentials, and affordability of conformity assessments by increasing the supply of accredited experts.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: TO ENSURE SMES HAVE ACCESS TO TRAINING, COACHING, INFORMATION SERVICES FOR INCREASED COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

This strategic objective consists of building an enabling business support environment for SMEs. The emphasis is on the effectives, affordability, and access to services.

At the operational level, there are three objectives:

2.1. Improve the capacity of the public institutions offering advisory and coaching services.

This operational objective consists of providing support to SMEs starting to export at small scales via e-commerce platforms and it also focuses delivering more coaching and business support services that follow an "A to Z" approach tailored to the needs of SMEs.

2.2. Develop the education and training on export quality managements.

This operational objective consists of increasing the supply of quality management professionals available to work with aspiring entrepreneurs and SME, as well as ensuring that quality management systems become a foundational module for students pursuing careers in business management.

2.3. Provide market information on international quality requirements.

This operational objective consists of developing an online platform that serves as a one-stop-shop for SMEs to discover relevant quality requirements for priority products in targeted markets, obtain guidance on quality-related topics, share best practices, and connect with relevant institutions or individuals who can offer assistance and gain insight from other exporting SMEs.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: TO IMPROVE THE REPUTATION OF THE QUALITY OF GOODS COMMERCIALIZED BY VIETNAMESE SMES

This strategic objective focuses on building the quality of goods through other mechanisms aside from certifications. It emphasizes what SMEs can do on their own to improve on quality and how they can be incentivized to be more proactive in implementing quality improvements.

At the operational level, there are two objectives:

3.1. Empower the SME community to be proactive and interested in improving quality.

This operational objective consists of ensure that SMEs are informed and trained issues of packing and labelling, which are often disregarded or not prioritized as critical for exporting, as well as incentivizing SMEs to improve and compete for quality awards by rewarding them with international exposure through national programs on trade promotion.

3.2. Conduct research and development to identify new mechanisms to improve quality of Vietnamese goods.

This operational objective consists of informing policymakers on the untapped opportunities of geographical indications in the unique value proposition of Vietnamese goods, aside from the coffee and tea registry.

Photo: <No intersecting link>, <No intersecting link>

Plan of action

To achieve the vision and strategic objectives discussed above a robust, actionable, and realistic strategic plan of action is required. The plan of action is structured along the three strategic objectives and their respective operational objectives. For each objective, the plan outlines detailed activities and their implementation modalities, which include:

- Timeframe: The envisaged timeframe for the activity. Short term (first year), Medium term (second and third year), and Long term (fourth and fifth year).
- Implementing partners: One to two accountable lead institution per activity and several supporting partners. The institutions can have a coordination role but also a technical role.

Strategic Objective 1: To reinforce the function and relevance of the quality governance and infrastructure as an enabler of sustainable trade growth			
Operational objective	Activities	Implementation Partners	Timeframe and targets
1.1. Modernize the national legislative and regulatory framework support compliance with new international requirements	1.1.1. To establish a new public-private mechanism for developing national quality policies that are more responsive to the needs of SMEs to engage in international trade		Short-term
	• Organize a forum led by a joint-team from MOIT and MOST.	MOST/MOIT MPI/VCCI	Quality policies are better aligned to trade development goals, with MOIT support.
	• Identify and invite stakeholders involved in new initiatives related to trade and SMEs.		
	• Clarify the roles and responsibilities of various public institutions and assess their effectiveness.		
	• Review the current process for gathering inputs from stakeholders to identify needs.		
	• Conceptualize and agree on a mechanism that is feasible and monitored by both MOIT and MOST.		
	• Organize a communication campaign to disseminate information about the new mechanism.		
	This activity is an initial step towards ensuring that the development of national quality policies is reactive to trade development and private sector needs by improving the collaboration between MOST and MOIT for obtaining inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, notably those from the SME community.		
	1.1.2. To update the 2006 Law on Standards, the 2008 Law on Product Quality, and the 2012 Law on Metrology focused on the needs of the SME community to become more compliant to environmental sustainability		Medium-term
	• Organize working groups between national authorities and private sector units to review and assess updates needed for each law as well as how the laws complement each other.	MOST/MOIT/ National Assembly/ MARD/MONRE	The quality legal framework is assessed and revised
	• MOIT should be actively involved in the process to ensure trade issues are addressed.		
	• Updates should aim to reflect and satisfy the specific needs addressed by private sector groups on international market compliance. Special attention should be placed on sustainability compliance.		
	• Provide capacity-building to the staff of public and private sector operators to address the regulatory implications based on changes to the laws.		
	• Set periodic targets and key performance indicators, and the sector coordination team should monitor achievement of targets, determine causes of variances, and propose appropriate action.		
	This activity aims to review and update the three foundational laws that govern the national quality infrastructure based on stakeholder consensus that are in need of updates that respond more adequately to the new international requirements on environmental sustainability seen over the last fifteen years, in addition to updating them though coordinated approach with different ministries and public sector.		
	1.2.3. To outline the process and resources needed for the implementation of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)		Short-term
	• Establish a task force that includes technical experts in trade and private sector leaders.	Bureau of Accreditation MOST/ MOIT/ MARD/VCCI/	Line ministries have a clear plan for pursuing MRAs negotiations
	• Analyse the procedural, negotiations process, and legal requirements based on the streamlined guidance provided by the 2021 World Customs Organization's Strategy Guide on best practices for the efficient and effective implementation of MRAs.		
	• Formulate a petition and roadmap for the implementation of the MRA process, including target countries.		
	This activity aims to take firm action in outlining the feasibility, coordinated approach, and resources needed to negotiate and sign MRAs on conformity assessments.		

Strategic Objective 1: To reinforce the function and relevance of the quality governance and infrastructure as an enabler of sustainable trade growth			
Operational objective	Activities	Implementation Partners	Timeframe and targets
1.2. Build a comprehensive national quality regulatory framework that supports the implementation of the Green Growth Strategy, the SME Support Law, and the circular economy development programs	1.2.1. To develop and/or harmonize standards and technical regulations based the needs of the national programmes		Medium-term
	• Establish a task force that includes the focal points leading the implementation of activities under the National Program to Support Enterprises to Improve Productivity and Quality of Products and Goods, Circular Economy Development Scheme, the Green-Growth Strategy, and the SME Support Law.	MOST/MPI/ MOITMARD/ VCCI/ ITC	A plan with a timeline for the development and validation of new standards is prepared
	• Define the standards and conformity assessment services needed to support the internationally-recognized certification of new goods and services developed under these programs.		
	• Working group should identify how each program can pool funding and resources required to implement, including seeking support from international cooperation partners.		
	This activity responds to requests raised by the stakeholders of the listed development programs on the urgent need to development new standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessments for the new goods and services that are developed under their respective programs.		
	1.2.2 To improve the enforcement of regulations, standards and certifications related to environmental protection		Medium-term
	• Establish a multi-stakeholder consultative group, including relevant ministries and agencies, associations, exporting manufacturers, R&D institutions, trade lawyers, etc., to advice on standards and technical barriers to trade based on environmental production, sourcing, and value chains.	MOST/MOIT	Regulatory bodies are better equipped with enforcing environment protection regulations required by international markets
	• Conduct a gap analysis of the enforcement of Vietnamese environmental protection standards and regulations, based on regional and bilateral FTAs, and those in key potential export markets.		
	• Implement a systematic plan to eliminate and reduce such gaps in regulations and standards over a period, ensuring appropriate prioritisation of those that have higher impact on potential exports.		
	• Promote technical cooperation activities and strengthen dialogues/negotiations at all levels to eliminate/reduce technical barriers due to environmental protection and production requirements.		
	This activity is designed to evaluate and reduce technical barriers to trade due to environmental protections standard and regulations.		
	1.2.3. To create awareness among policymakers on the best practices for an effective and efficient national quality infrastructure		Short -term
	• Provide training to policymakers on the linkages between quality and trade.	VSQI/MOIT/MPI/ MOST/VCCI/ITC	Policymakers complete training and a repository of best practices is prepared.
	• Develop a repository of best practices on export quality policies to support sustainable trade.		
	• Conduct research and development (R&D) based on capacity gaps identified by policymakers		
	This activity aims to develop a long-term coherent approach to strengthening the national quality infrastructure.		

Strategic Objective 1: To reinforce the function and relevance of the quality governance and infrastructure as an enabler of sustainable trade growth			
Operational objective	Activities	Implementation Partners	Timeframe and targets
1.3 Increase the number of internationally-recognized national conformity assessments	1.3.1. To establish new or improve conformity assessments based updates made to national legal and regulatory framework		Medium-term
	• Assess the current capacity and effectiveness of public conformity assessments services to determine the resources needed to make improvements to their business models and services	Task force established in activity 1.2.1. MOST/ MPI/MOIT MARD/ VCCI	Increased number of conformity assessments
	• Pool funding and technical support to improve the business model of public services aimed at addressing issues affordability and access to the SME community.		
	This activity is designed to ensure that conformity assessments are implemented following the developments under Activity 1.2.1.		
	1.3.2. To increase the pool of internationally accredited experts and auditors.		
	• Provide training for national experts and auditors to obtain internationally accreditations. This should subjects on Halal food standards and those related to environmental sustainability requirements.	VSQI/QUACERT/ QUATEST/ITC	At least 200 experts and auditors are internationally accredited
	• Upgrade the skills and ability through regular capacity-building courses, practical training, and regular proficiency testing of capacities, as well as sending them to relevant training courses sponsored by regional/international organizations.		
	• Ensure the curriculum for newly formed university-trained laboratory technicians includes compulsory on-the-job training.		
	This activity aims to address the constraints on access, credentials, and affordability of conformity assessments by increasing the supply of accredited experts.		
	1.3.2 To increase the number of domestic laboratories offering internationally-recognized and affordable services to SMEs		Medium-term
	• Encourage the development of private–public partnerships to create a loan program for testing equipment through possible joint ventures with international testing labs or testing services.	VSQI/QUACERT/ QUATEST	Increased capacity and number of testing labs
	• Support relevant public laboratories to seek collaboration with international technical partners to elaborate a 'business plan' of services to be provided aimed at making services more affordable for SMEs.		
	• Allocate required financial resources to increased capacities and/or set up laboratories in rural regions		
	This activity is designed to address constraints related to access and availability of laboratories equipped with the capacity to conduct internationally recognised tests.		

Strategic Objective 2: To ensure SMEs have access to training, coaching, information services for increased compliance with international quality requirements			
Operational objective	Activities	Implementation Partners	Timeframe
2.1. Improve the capacity of the public institutions offering advisory and coaching services	2.1.1. To develop a coaching network to provide relevant advice to start-ups, SMEs, and aspiring entrepreneurs		Medium term
	• Pilot a programme to identify, select and train a group of candidates that can become qualified professional coaches labelled quality champions for SMEs.	MOST/VSQUI/ ITC	Pilot programme on quality champions is launched
	• Establish the network of the quality champions under selected public business support organizations		
	• Develop a business model that allows SMEs to gain access to these coaches at an affordable rate		
	• Ensure the pilot can train at least 20-30 new quality champions and can double the number of SMEs trained by national service providers.		
	This activity aims to ensure that the services provided by national business support organizations is tailored to the needs of SMEs, is affordable, and useful.		
	2.1.2. To establish new partnerships between national BSOs and private e-commerce providers		Short term
	• Follow-up on proposals raised by private sector stakeholders, such as Alibaba Vietnam, in establishing a partnership to offer joint training to aspiring exporters joining the e-commerce platform target for exporting	VSQUI/MOST	SMEs exporting at small-scares via e-commerce platforms receive training
	• Identify the training needs of SMEs looking to export via e-commerce platforms		
	• Ensure SMEs exporting via Alibaba and other online platforms are well-targeted for receiving trainings on international quality requirements and improving their readiness to export		
	This activity is designed to support SMEs starting to export via e-commerce platforms are specifically targeted to receive training to boost their export readiness.		
	2.1.3. To improve the design, effectiveness, and coverage of existing training programmes.		Medium term
	• Assess the effectiveness of existing programmes by running a survey to past and prospective SMEs.	MOST/VSQI	Existing programmes are better suited to support SMEs
	• Identify the best way to incorporate feedback from stakeholders responses in the survey		
	• Provide training to national BSOs and other institutions offering trainings to SMEs on how to improve their training programmes following an “A to Z” approach.		
	This activity is designed to improve existing training programmes.		
2.2. Develop the education and training on export quality management	2.2.1. To improve the career track and training of prospective quality management professionals		Medium-term
	• Develop or make improvements to the curriculum t	MOST, MOET	Increased supply of quality management professionals
	• Promote the demand for quality management professionals to incentivize students to the career track		
	• Collaborate with consulting firms on piloting apprenticeship opportunities, particularly those offering business consultant services for exporting firms.		
	This activity aims to increase the supply of quality management professionals available to work with aspiring entrepreneurs and SMEs.		
	2.2.2. To mainstream quality management systems in technical and vocational education and training (TVET)s		Medium-term
	• Develop or modernize modules export quality management for business management courses	MOST, MOET	
	• Provide practical learning exercises on the different tools of quality management systems		
	• Collaborate with business consulting to deliver presentations on the importance of quality management systems in business management and international trade		
	This activity aims to ensure that quality management systems become a foundational module for students pursuing careers in business management.		

Strategic Objective 2: To ensure SMEs have access to training, coaching, information services for increased compliance with international quality requirements			
Operational objective	Activities	Implementation Partners	Timeframe
2.2. Develop the education and training on export quality management	2.2.3. To mainstream quality management systems as a tool to support innovation and product upgrading for exporting		Short-term
	• Organize workshops with stakeholders from the innovation ecosystem to hold discourse on how to integrate and promote quality management systems as a tool for innovation.	MPI, MOST, VCCI/ITC	Linkages between quality and innovation are discussed amongst stakeholders
	• Explore opportunities to merge training activities proposed in the NES innovation strategy.		
	• Pilot a training workshop with start-ups and young SMEs to assess potential benefits and next steps		
	This activity aims to define concrete opportunities on how to enhance the use of quality management systems as practical tool for promoting innovation.		
2.3. Provide market information on international quality requirements	2.3.1. To launch a single-window online information platform in the Vietnamese language available across priority sectors		Short-term
	• Develop an online platform that serves as a one-stop-shop allowing users to discover relevant quality requirements for priority products in targeted markets, obtain guidance on quality-related topics, share best practices, connect with relevant institutions or individuals who can offer assistance and gain insight from those who have already experienced success.	MOST/MOIT/ ITC	A new online platform is launched.
	• Ensure the platform has a tool that allows users to discover specific quality-related requirements, including mandatory legal requirements, key standards and market preferences for identified priority products in targeted destination markets.		
	• Ensure the platform has a tool that serves to connect a global network of national pools of quality experts and houses an online service provider institution directory. Users should be able to locate relevant institutions who offer the services they need on their quality journey.		
	• Ensure the platform has a tool to build a repository for training materials, practical guides and quality-related technical materials developed under projects, allowing for the sharing of best practices and relevant materials across countries. The breadth and depth of the repository should grow over time allowing users to browse materials or search for materials based on topic, product, or country.		
	This activity aims to develop a platform that can addressed the constraints faced by SMEs in exporting successfully to foreign markets given that requirements often vary from sector-to-sector, product-to-product. The platform and tools recommended can be developed in partnership with ITC.		
	2.3.2. To increase the role of cooperatives in the dissemination of information on the structure and importance of quality requirements.		Medium-Term
	• Establish a mechanism to collate comments from the private sector on notified SPS and technical regulations based on sector concerns.	MOST/MOIT	SMEs have access to information in-person and through other channels other than online tools
	• Create a feedback loop to streamline information to the online platform tool under Activity 2.3.1.		
	• Organize peer-to-peer information sharing and other collaborative activities.		
	• Communication information verbally and through general public channels such as radio and television		
	This activity aims to ensure there a mechanism to disseminate information to SMEs in rural areas and those with challenges using online tools.		

Annex I:
Participants engaged during the consultations

Name	Designation
MOIT - Ministry of Industry and Trade	Agency for Foreign Trade
MOST (Ministry of Science and Technology)	Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEG) - Tổng cục tiêu chuẩn đo lường chất lượng
MARD - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	SPS Authority and Enquiry Point (VIETNAM SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY NOTIFICATION AUTHORITY AND ENQUIRY POINT)
VCCI (Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Center for WTO and International Trade
VASI (Supporting industries)	VIETNAM ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORTING INDUSTRIES HIỆP HỘI CÔNG NGHIỆP HỖ TRỢ VIỆT NAM
Alibaba.com Vietnam	Mr. Vu The Tung - Director of Market Dev
British Standard Institution (BSI) -Vietnam	Viện Tiêu Chuẩn Anh (BSI Việt Nam)
Vietnam Standard and Quality Institute (VSQI)	General Director
QUATEST 1: testing	Trung tâm kỹ thuật 1 - Quality Assurance and Testing Center 1 (QUATEST1)
QUACERT: Vietnam Certification Center	Trung tâm chứng nhận phù hợp
Export: EUBIZ VIET NAM JOINT STOCK COMPANY	Công Ty Cổ Phần Eubiz Việt Nam https://eubizfood.com/
An Dinh Technology Development and Investment Company Litmited	Công ty TNHH Đầu tư và Phát triển công nghệ An Đình https://andinh.com.vn/en/about-us/
GOOD VIET NAM NATIONAL CERTIFICATION JOINT STOCK COMPANY	Công ty CP Chứng nhận Quốc gia Good Việt Nam