

Quality assurance in Tea Industry

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Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) is a statutory organization of Government established in 1974 under Standards Act, Cap. 496, Laws of Kenya. Currently KEBS is under the Ministry of Industrialization and Enterprise Development (MOIED). KEBS is a member of: ISO (International Organization for Standardization), ARSO (African Regional Organization for Standardization), International Electro Technical Commission (IEC), Bureau International Des Poids et Mesures (BIPM) and, National contact point for CODEX Alimentarius Commission. The main functions of KEBS are Standards Development; Quality Assurance and Inspection; Metrology and Calibration; Testing; and Certification and Training.

KEBS facilitates development of standards/ specifications through technical committees that bring together all stakeholders. The following are the departments under standards development division at KEBS: Food and Agriculture Department; Chemical Department; Service Standards Department; Engineering Department; Standards Information and Resource Section; and Publishing Section.

KEBS provides testing services for a wide range of products such as Engineering, Chemical Food and Agriculture. KEBS laboratories are accredited to UKAS for purposes of international recognition. Samples tested at KEBS include: Quality control samples, privately submitted samples, complaint samples, standards development samples, and import samples.

KEBS is a member of International Organization of Legal Metrology and the custodian of the National Primary Standards of Measurements in the country. It offer services in calibration of instruments and equipment for industries, government organizations, research institutions and accredited centres. Fields covered include mass, force, length, pressure, time and frequency, electricity, volume among others. KEBS also advises repair and testing of instruments used in measurement.

KEBS undertakes Quality Assurance and Inspection in the following: ensuring that all products in the market comply with relevant Kenya/Approved Standards; Technical advice to manufacturers on how to comply with the standards; Enforcement of standards on both locally produced products and imported ones; Market surveillance; and Investigation of consumer complaints.

Standards are formulated by Technical Committees constituted by experts from: Industry, Relevant Government Ministries, Research Institutions, for instance, the universities, Consumer organizations, Non-Governmental Institutions (NGOs) and KEBS serves as the secretariat. A standard is an object of comparison or a document describing characteristics/requirements of a commodity for fitness of purpose. Applicable tea standards include: KS EAS 28:2000 East African Standard Specification for Black Tea, KS 65:2013 Kenya Standard Specification for Black Tea, KS 2469:2013 Kenya Standard Specification for Flavoured Tea, and KS 1187:2011 Kenya Standard Specification for Green Tea. Code of Practice for Tea Industry is "KS 2128-Code of practice for Tea Industry."

Large organizations manufacturing less than the 10 products Standardization Mark Certification Fees is as follows: Factory inspection fee of Ksh 20,000+ 16% VAT and and Ksh 7,500 Per product + 16% VAT. Large organizations manufacturing more than ten products pay Factory Inspection fee, Ksh 20,000 + 16% VAT and Ksh 5,000 per product + 16% VAT; SMEs with Ksh

200,000-Ksh 500,000 annual sales turnover-Ksh 10,000 + 16% VAT; and SMEs with up to Ksh 200,000 annual sales Turnover-Ksh 5,000 + 16% VAT. All payments are annual.

There many benefits for use of standards including: Provide confidence to consumers and other stakeholders; Allow for a level playing ground for all enterprises; Assure consumers that products are safe, reliable and of good quality; Provide best practices, performance and safety reference points for regulators, researchers and industry; Reduce technical barriers to trade; Raise quality awareness in the Kenyan market; Raise efficiency and level of quality of products by manufacturers; Reduce incidence of sub-standard products of locally manufactured / imported goods in the market; and, Facilitate fair trade practices and opportunities for Kenyan products within the East African Community member states through mutual recognition of standardization marks.