



RWANDA

Building the capacity of the Rwanda Standards Board to increase regional and international exports

Rwanda is Africa's most densely populated nation and one of the African mainland's smallest countries.

Encouragingly, Rwanda's annual GDP growth has averaged about 7 per cent since 2003, but to bring more widespread prosperity to its 12.6m people, the government wants to reduce Rwanda's balance of trade deficit. While exports totaled an estimated £495m (US\$726m) in 2015, imports reached £1.3bn (US\$1.9bn).



“This partnership will enhance the effectiveness of RBS and help facilitate trade in the East African Community. By helping businesses to move into processing and exporting, it will be an important driver of competitiveness.”

Mark Priestley
Former TMEA Country Director of Rwanda
Current TMEA Senior Director, Country Programmes

Improving quality

We've been working with the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) since January 2012 on a Trade Mark East Africa-funded project to improve Rwanda's quality infrastructure.

The project's first phase involved providing strategic assistance and training, with RSB staff welcomed to London to find out more about our work and how quality infrastructure is structured in the UK. The organizational structure of RSB (which was only set up in 2002) has been greatly improved and its services extended.

We also delivered countrywide standards awareness-raising workshops for Rwanda's SMEs and training courses on (food safety management standard) HACCP. “Under phase one of the project, eight Rwandan SMEs were certified to HACCP and that number has since increased to 13. On phase two of the programme, we're working with eight HACCP-certified SMEs to upgrade them to ISO 22000, the international food safety management standard. We want them all to become certified to ISO 22000,” explains Charles Davies, BSI Principal Consultant.

International accreditation

The project's second phase also seeks to further raise awareness of the business benefits of standardization and encourage many more Rwandan SMEs to become certified to ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 22000 so they can grow their sales in the region.

We're already working closely with another nine Rwandan SMEs seeking to achieve ISO 9001 certification, including businesses involved in cement and steel production, construction equipment manufacturing, as well as a Rwandan University and government department.

And our experts have also been helping to improve Rwanda's testing laboratories, strengthening their capacity to carry out quality and safety tests to international accreditation standards. As Davies explains: “This will speed up regional and international export times for Rwandan businesses.”

“We want to build a sustainable model, so Rwandan businesses go to RSB for certification services, not elsewhere, which will enable RSB to grow its customer base, while saving Rwandan businesses money.”

Long-lasting benefits

We have a consultant based in India, with more than 30 years' experience as an assessor and expert at preparing organizations for ISO 9001 certification, who visits Rwanda every few months. Two regional experts also work with him to support the SMEs and five consultants in Rwanda who work closely with the enterprises and who have been trained in assessing to ISO 9001:2015 under the project.

A key aim is to ensure that when the project comes to an end the infrastructure in Rwanda has been improved and businesses have the support they need to benefit from standardization.

“Over a five-year period, we've established a close relationship with RSB,” Davies adds. “It's not about short-term commercial gains, but long-lasting benefits for Rwanda. It's been a highly enjoyable project, not least because you can actually see the significant progress that has already been made.”

Did you know?

Landlocked Rwanda is bordered by Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and DR Congo.

Did you know?

Key Rwandan export commodities include coffee, tea and tin ore and export partners include China, DR Congo, Malaysia, Thailand, the USA, Swaziland, Germany and Pakistan.

Did you know?

Tourism is a fast-growing sector in Rwanda, with many visitors attracted by the chance to see the country's famous mountain gorillas.

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