



Creating awareness and increasing the use of food standards in Uganda

The Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN) is a collaborative network launched by BSI in 2018. The network supports trade, economic growth and prosperity throughout the Commonwealth by promoting increased awareness, development and use of international standards and enabling standards experts to collaborate and share best practice. BSI is proud to hold the CSN Secretariat and to deliver its ambitious network development and technical assistance programmes.

Standards play an important role in promoting productivity and efficiency, reducing costs, removing barriers to trade, and driving economic growth. The CSN is therefore highly relevant to national standards bodies from Commonwealth members that want to boost their international trade capabilities.

Through its delivery of the CSN, BSI is helping developing countries throughout the Commonwealth work towards reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).



In Uganda, under the CSN programme, BSI has successfully led several CSN initiatives to increase use of standards in the agriculture and horticulture value chains. Smallholder farmers in Uganda have welcomed training and implemented best practice techniques, with a positive impact on the quality of their produce.

“Our approach focused on demystifying standards and bringing it closer to those who need it the most – namely the farmers. Quality starts at the inception of the product, so having access to the knowledge encapsulated in a standard is invaluable. This approach has proven to be successful and we have replicated it in Rwanda. There is almost unlimited scope for expansion in other developing economies.”

Cindy Parokkil

Project Manager (Africa),
Commonwealth Standards
Network

The CSN's challenge: smallholder farmers

One CSN challenge was to help Uganda's smallholder farmers access formal markets by improving the quality of their products through the use of standards.

About 70% of Uganda's population of 42 million are smallholder farmers, and most have never received any formal training, meaning that farming techniques remain largely unchanged for generations. With little understanding of quality, food safety and market requirements, the produce will not reach the supermarket or export markets, and therefore attracts poor prices.

Standards for food products are largely unpublicized amongst this population, meaning that they go unused and their potential to be enablers of business expansion is unrealized. A key barrier to use of the standards is that they are written in technical English so needed to be simplified and translated to make them more accessible.

Solution

The CSN Programme, funded by the UK government and implemented by BSI, worked with the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) and the Uganda National Farmers' Federation (UNFFE) to create awareness of food standards. Focusing on five key cash crops – avocados, pineapples, rice, soybeans and shea nuts – grown in various regions throughout the country, the three organizations drew farmers and food scientists together to identify the most important good and bad practices for each crop from relevant standards. These 'do's and don'ts' were drawn into brochures with clear illustrations and simplified text and translated into 13 languages. The CSN also trained local individuals on how to deliver food standards training within their communities.

Through applying the techniques detailed in the brochures and training, smallholder farmers gained the potential to attract better prices and, by complying with international standards, to export their produce. This enabled them to access wider markets and improve their profit margins.

The CSN produced over 100,000 brochures, trained 32 trainers, and trained over 1,800 farmers. The success of this project enabled the CSN to replicate the approach in Rwanda, working with the Rwanda Standards Board and Farmers' Association, IMBARAGA.

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Why BSI?

BSI shares knowledge, fosters innovation and instils best practice globally as the UK's national standards body. BSI works to inspire trust for a more resilient world.