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# THE MONTHLY NEWS LETTER



## KEBS READY TO SUPPORT BUSINESS RECOVERY AS ECONOMY REOPENS

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## BUSINESSES AFTER THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC WHAT NEXT?

# KEBS ready to support business recovery as the economy reopens

*By Evans Ongwae and Janet Kamau*

Kenya Bureau of Standards' (KEBS') business continuity plan has seen it ride the COVID-19 storm that precipitated a global decline in economic activity.

With President Uhuru Kenyatta having reopened the economy, the standards' watchdog is prepared to handle more business in support of manufacturers and traders.

KEBS Managing Director Bernard Njiraini says the organization has been able to conduct its operations even at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The standards body has been holding online ISO Zoom meetings to develop standards for Covid-19 products such as hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (PPEs) and masks. These standards are available to the public free of charge as KEBS' contribution to the fight against the pandemic.

KEBS has certified over 130 firms for the

production of face masks; over 540 firms for instant hand sanitizers; two firms for hospital beds; more than 80 firms for other PPEs such as coveralls and gloves; and two firms for critical care ventilators. The product certification programme is a continuous activity at the agency with the aim of ensuring consumer safety.

KEBS also reviewed its product certification process to allow for online applications and remote assessment of production processes to allow for faster turnaround time in issuance of product permits.

Further, it implemented a 24-hour working plan for the testing laboratories to ensure that the turnaround time for samples, especially for Covid-19-related products, was drastically reduced to allow for faster decisions.

KEBS monitors the quality of imported products under the Pre-Shipment Verification of Conformity (PVoC) Programme. Goods are inspected, tested and certified in the country of origin by KEBS-contracted partners who issue the goods with a Certificate of Conformity (CoC).

However, KEBS recently commenced to undertake destination inspection of goods in the quest of easing the ability of doing business in Kenya. Under destination inspection, goods categorised as less risky are shipped into the country without a CoC, inspected and tested locally for compliance to standards and issued with a local CoC before they are released into the market.

Lt Col (Rtd.) Njiraini says while the institution facilitates trade through the development and enforcement of relevant standards, it also seeks to protect consumers and handlers of goods.

KEBS exists as a service provider to facilitate industrial growth in the country and as a regulator to protect consumers from substandard goods.

That is why it will never hesitate to withdraw permits of companies whose products do not conform to set standards.

“To grow the economy, we must entrench

**KEBS exists as a service provider to facilitate industrial growth in the country and also as a regulator to protect consumers from substandard goods**

the culture of compliance to standards,” says Lt Col (Rtd.) Njiraini.

He says KEBS is encouraging micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to get the Standardization Mark certification for their products to access regional markets under the mutual recognition of quality marks in accordance to common market protocol.

The KEBS MD points out that, the East

African Community, with a population of more than 170 million, is a big market that local MSMEs need to tap.

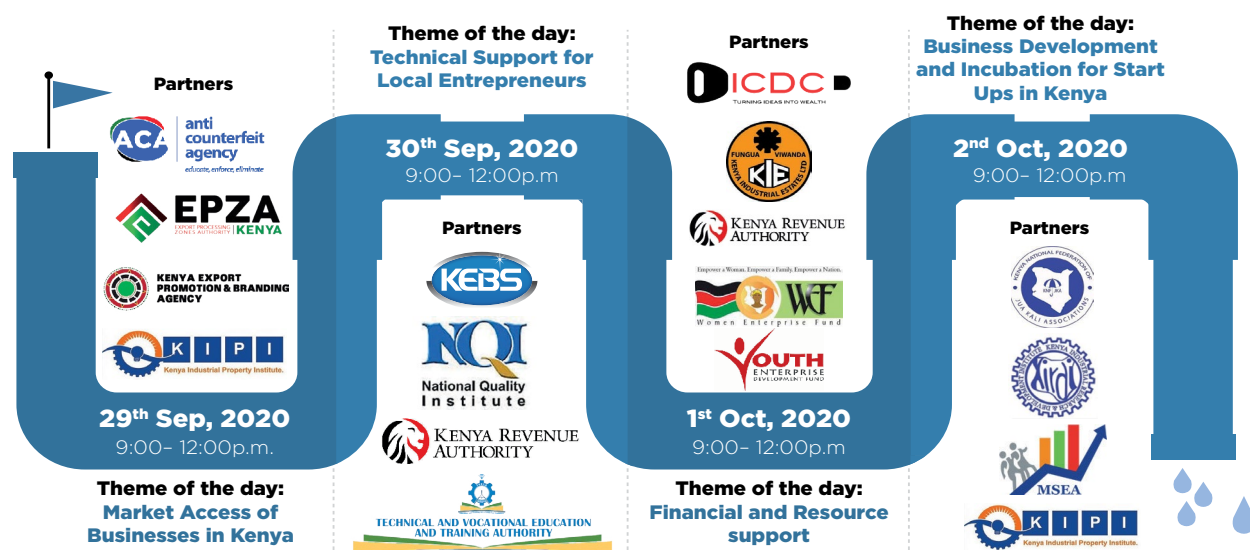
“They should seek the KEBS Marks of Quality,” says Lt Col (Rtd.) Njiraini, revealing that the standards watchdog has subsidised the certification fees for MSMEs which is currently at Kshs 5,800.

KEBS is implementing a Business Continuity Management System based on the ISO 22301:2019 standard which has enabled the organisation to weather the storms of Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, KEBS realises the practical importance of having in place a robust business continuity plan to be able to provide its essential services even in the wake of any disruption. KEBS urges manufacturers and business owners to seek for certification to such systems and other related systems like the ISO 9001:2015 - a risk-based quality management system that can help organisations identify and mitigate risks before they occur.

To protect consumers, KEBS has established a fully-fledged Market Surveillance Directorate to enforce compliance with standards at the retail level. The directorate works closely with other government agencies in the fight against illicit trade.

# Local entrepreneurs and innovators meet at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Innovation Pipeline webinars



By *Luiza Kiguta*

In a move to recover from the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, stakeholders in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector congregated at the third annual intergovernmental innovation pipeline webinar series to deliberate how to access local and international markets, receive technical, financial and resource support, as well as business development and incubation skills.

Organised under the theme, thriving through the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's innovation pipeline webinars highlighted initiatives by various government agencies to aid in kick starting, cultivating business prospects and overcoming barriers hindering the growth of MSMEs in the country.

“COVID-19 has had a great impact on the economy and significantly changed how we conduct business. The Innovation Pipeline webinars contain crucial information on business processes, standardization and industrialization that will aid businesses to regain their competitive edge both in local and global markets,” said Lt Col (Rtd.) Bernard Njiraini, Managing Director, KEBS.

Since the first case was reported,

COVID-19 has affected several industrial, manufacturing and financial sectors, causing a downward impact on the country's economic growth curve due to decreased production of goods, disrupted supply chains, massive unemployment and loss of income. A recent study by the University of Nairobi indicates that the country's GDP growth is likely to range from 1.2% to 2.2% by the end of 2020.

“The innovation pipeline is a one-stop shop where manufacturers, entrepreneurs, innovators, MSMEs, the civil society and other industry players learn about business registration, product certification, financial and resource support, business development and incubation and access to markets as the country slowly starts to recover,” he added.

Spearheaded by KEBS, other organisation

that participated in the webinars include the Anti-Counterfeit Agency (ACA), Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA), Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA), Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI), the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC), Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE), Kenya Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Association ((KNFJA), Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI), Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (MSEA), Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) among others.

The innovation pipeline series ran from 29th September to 2nd October 2020.





# KEBS warns against illegal repackaging of food products

Traders involved in the sale of repackaged food products without a Standardization Mark Permit risk seizure of their stock and prosecution in a court of law, warns the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS).

“We have noted with concern that various trading outlets, especially supermarkets, are illegally repackaging food products such as sugar, rice and cooking fat without the KEBS quality mark. This is in contravention of the Standards Act, Cap 496, Laws of Kenya that requires persons involved in repackaging of products to acquire the KEBS Standardization Mark permit,” warned Lt Col (Rtd.) Bernard Njiraini, Managing Director, KEBS.

The Standardization Mark (SM) permit or the Diamond Mark of Quality (DM) is issued under the KEBS product certification scheme to products that comply with the relevant Kenya Standard. Imports are also issued with a Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) number.

“It is through this process that consumers are assured of the safety and quality of the repackaged products. Therefore, KEBS cannot vouch for products without this mark,” he added.

All repackaged products are also required to comply with the labelling specifications of the respective Kenya Standards.

Important information that must be incorporated on food product labels include - the name of the product, list of ingredients, net content, name and address of manufacturer, country of origin, date marking, and instructions for use and storage conditions.

To check the validity of the Standardization Mark permit on products sold or purchased one should send the code (numbers) underneath the Standardization Mark logo to 20023 (i.e. type message SM#Code and SMS to 20023) to get product manufacturing

All repackaged products are also required to comply with the labelling specifications of the respective Kenya Standards.

details and permit validity status or ISM#code for imported products. If the details are different, retailers should not purchase, stock, or offer for sale the products but report to KEBS Toll Free Number 1545 during official working hours 8.00 AM to 1.00 PM and 2.00 PM to 5.00 PM, Monday to Friday.

# HARMONIZATION OF EAC STANDARDS FOSTERS REGIONAL TRADE

By Paul Kimeto



**Harmonization is the process of minimizing redundant or conflicting standards that may have evolved or developed independently by the respective Partner States**

There was considerable variation of standards within the East African Community (EAC) Partner States before the concept of harmonization came into being. As a result, businesses that wished to trade in the region were to comply with more than one set of standards for the same items. The EAC Common Market Protocol provides for “accelerated economic growth and development of EAC Partner States through the attainment of free movement of goods”. To support this, the EAC Customs Union Protocol Article 13 provides a legal structure for the development of an EAC mechanism to identify, monitor and remove Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) in the EAC. This was done by enactment of the East African Standard Quality Assurance Metrology and Testing Act (SQMT Act of 2006) which forms the legal framework for standards harmonization and implementation as well as guidelines on the entire conformity assessment spectrum in EAC. It provides for the harmonization of East African standards to reduce cost of production, enhance compliance and develop trade opportunities and it also provides for EAC Partner States to have quality marks and recognize them as equal to their own which facilitate free movement of certified products in the EAC.

Presently, standards harmonization in EAC is realized through the regional technical committees (TCs). There are currently 60 TCs spanning almost all the conventional disciplines such as engineering, chemical, food, agriculture among others. KEBS is secretariat to 17 TCs and the remaining are shared by the rest of the Partner States except South Sudan. EAC has been successful in standards

harmonization in comparison to other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. This is due to the adoption of principles and procedures of developing EAC standards, which guides the entire harmonization process from start to finish. To-date, a total of 1668 standards have been harmonized, 532 indigenous and 1136 international standards endorsed for Partner States to adopt.

Harmonization of standards has brought benefits to East Africans. For instance, certification of products based on harmonized East African Standards has reduced the conformity assessment clearance time from approximately 21 days in 2014 to less than 7 days in 2019. In essence, this reduces the cost of doing business, improves business competitiveness and enhances trade.

The harmonization of standards in the EAC has benefited several stakeholders. The manufacturers and traders can now comply with only one common standard; regulators are able to assess the products based on one standard which saves on resources; and Partner States have seen improved trade facilitation. In order to further cut costs of harmonization in EAC, a Regional Standardization Plan is being developed. This will prioritize standardization subjects based on the needs of Partner States that will significantly save the duplication costs that have been witnessed in developing national standards first, and later taking them through the harmonizing process.

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*NSC Chair Bernard Ngore (2nd left), KAM CEO Phyllis Wakiaga (center) KEBS MD Bernard Njiraini (2nd right) skim through the KAM Manufacturing Agenda 2020 document together with KAM Vice chairman Rajan Shah (right) during a meeting at the KEBS Hqs*



*National Standards Council meeting with Kenya Association of Manufacturers*



*National Standards Council meeting with the Taskforce on Standards and Quality Infrastructure in Kenya*