

## ACCREDITATION: IMPROVING FOOD SAFETY



Accreditation: Improving food safety is the theme for 2020 World Accreditation Day which will be celebrated worldwide on 9 June 2020. This theme highlights the role of accreditation in improving food safety.

Accreditation has a crystal-clear objective: it aims to assure businesses, end users and regulators that a conformity assessment body (CAB), such as a testing, calibration or medical laboratory, certification or inspection body, has the required technical competence and operates impartially. This competence is assessed by accreditation bodies against international standards and requirements.

Simply applied to food, accreditation helps improve food safety. Building on World Accreditation Day 2019 which highlighted the role of accreditation in adding value to supply chains, the 2020 World Accreditation Day spotlights accreditation's role in improving food safety.

It does this across the whole of the food supply chain from farm to fork, through food production, processing and packaging, storage and transportation, to retail and catering, helping build layers of assurance in the supply chain.

Accreditation bodies assess CABs in a variety of different key functions, assessing them against standards which have been developed by the global community through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electro technical Commission (IEC). These standards cover functions such as inspection, certification and testing. With inspection bodies, certification bodies and laboratories accredited to these standards, they have been independently checked as being able to deliver competent and impartial inspection, certification and testing services in all parts of local, national and international food chains.

In April 2019, a Joint Statement issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), highlighted the toll on humans of foodborne diseases. Accreditation aims to help support the reduction of these incidences through enhancing the performance of organizations in the food supply chain. Accreditation is used across the globe to help meet this goal: from the use of accredited certification in Australia through the PrimeSafe scheme for meat and seafood supply; to the European Union using the accreditation of laboratories to support food security in Europe; to accredited inspection to help commercial catering establishments deliver safer food in France.

World Accreditation Day 2020 whose theme is Accreditation Improving Food Safety, sets out to illustrate how in just the one area, food safety, accreditation contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 3 of Good Health and Well-Being. World Accreditation Day 2020 comes just two days after the second ever World Food Safety Day which aims to highlight the need for safe food <https://www.who.int/news-room/initiatives/world-food-safety-day-2020>. Through accreditation bodies and subsequently accredited certification bodies, inspection bodies and laboratories, the conformity assessment community continuously strives to help deliver safer food.

World Accreditation Day 2020 enables the International Accreditation Forum ([www.iaf.nu](http://www.iaf.nu)), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation ([www.ilac.org](http://www.ilac.org)) and their members to highlight how accreditation is improving

food safety. IAF and ILAC provide a range of information to explain accreditation's role in improving food safety, including further illustrations of its use <https://publicsectorassurance.org/topic-areas/food-safety-agriculture/>

The Southern African Development Community Accreditation Service (SADCAS) is a multi-economy accreditation body established in terms of Article 15 B of the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Annex to the SADC Protocol on Trade with the primary purpose of ensuring that conformity assessment service providers operating in those SADC Member States which do not have national accreditation bodies are subject to an oversight by an authoritative body. Typically, in the developed world, each country has its own accreditation body but within the SADC region considering the cost of establishing and sustaining such a body and further taking into account the limited financial and human resources, the region decided to establish one accreditation body which services the accreditation needs of a number of countries. Over the years, SADCAS the first multi economy accreditation body in the world has proved to be a viable, cost effective and sustainable model which optimizes limited financial and human resources. A number of other regions in the world such as the Gulf region, Economic Community of West African States (UEMOA), have benchmarked on the "home grown" SADCAS model, a concept developed by a group of experts from the SADC region.

SADCAS services the accreditation needs of 14 SADC Member States namely: Angola; Botswana; Comoros; Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Eswatini; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mozambique; Namibia; Seychelles; Tanzania; Zambia; and Zimbabwe. Although Angola has launched its national accreditation body and Zambia has indicated its intention to establish a national accreditation body, both these national accreditation bodies are not yet operational let alone achieved international recognition hence conformity assessment bodies in these countries will continue to be serviced by SADCAS in the foreseeable future. SADCAS is now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation and accreditations continue to grow in terms of field and scope of accreditation, sectorial coverage and also in terms of geographical diversity having issued 168 accreditation certificates to 136 accredited facilities in 13 SADC Member States and 2 non SADC Countries Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire by 30 April 2020. At the same time, SADCAS had 41 accreditation applications from 11 SADC MS at the various stages of processing from Tanzania (11), Malawi (8), Botswana (5), Zimbabwe (4), Namibia (4), Zambia (3), Madagascar (2), DRC (1), Eswatini (1), Mozambique (1) and Seychelles (1). SADCAS had cumulatively conducted 189 training courses in 13 SADC Member States as part of its efforts to develop capacity of conformity assessment bodies for accreditation. SADCAS services are focused on the priority sectors for development in selected value chains as identified in the SADC Industrial Policy.

Seven (7) out of the eight (8) accreditation schemes offered by SADCAS are internationally recognized with SADCAS having extended its international recognition to the Management Systems certification bodies accreditation scheme in November 2019. This means that the certificates issued by SADCAS accredited calibration/testing/veterinary/verification/medical laboratories, and certification and inspection bodies are recognized in 102 countries worldwide thus removing the need for repetitive conformity assessment checks. Effectively this means that through internationally recognized accreditation SADC Member States serviced by SADCAS have better access to 103 foreign markets – A truly global reach.

For more information please visit the SADCAS website [www.sadcas.org](http://www.sadcas.org)

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Contact

The National Accreditation Focal Point in your country

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