

ACCREDITATION: SUSTAINABILITY IN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Accreditation: Sustainability in Economic Growth and the Environment is the theme for 2022 World Accreditation Day which will be celebrated worldwide on the 9th of June 2022. The theme highlights how accreditation supports 9 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the provision of a trusted platform for defining, developing and verifying requirements for products and services while helping to ensure and demonstrate that products and services meet specified requirements. Whether through environmental protection performance, helping manage climate change, developing the circular economy or providing tools to measure performance, accreditation and conformity assessment are constantly reviewing and evolving to ensure that the right tools are available to support the SDGs both now and moving forward.

Accreditation is an attestation of the competence and impartiality of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. These bodies include but not limited to calibration laboratories, testing laboratories, inspection bodies, providers of proficiency testing, producers of reference materials, and bodies that certify management systems, products and persons, or undertake verification and validation. Accreditation benefits both a country's domestic economy and its international trade. It helps governments and organizations to meet regulatory and legislative responsibilities and reduce uncertainties in decisions affecting the protection of human health and the environment.

The prioritization of sustainability in economic growth and the environment is echoed in the SADC Vision 2050, which was approved during the 40th SADC Summit held in August 2021. Amongst other objectives it strives for an industrialized regional economy that sustainably exploits its natural resources. Industrialization is one of the main drivers of economic growth and sustainable development. Manufacturers need to ensure products are of consistent high quality, comply with regulators and standards, and meet specification. Accreditation enables consumers, suppliers, purchasers and regulators to have confidence that products placed on the market are safe and meet the manufacturers claims made about them.

Rapid economic growth may exhaust resources and create environmental problems for future generations, including the depletion of natural resources, and global warming. To support sustainable economic growth, countries worldwide are shifting from a linear to a circular economy. A circular economy disconnects economic activity from the consumption of finite resources by focusing on repair, reuse, remanufacturing and recycling, thus reducing the production of waste and the use of resources.

Accreditation bolsters regulations that implement principles of circular economy by assessing and verifying the claims of conforming companies and organizations.

A sustainable environment for communities in the future needs cleaner energy, reduced pollution, and more effective chemical and waste management solutions to benefit from increased industrialization while safeguarding people and the environment. Accredited testing, certification, and inspection provides assurance that waste management and recycling are being managed effectively.

World Accreditation Day 2022 enables the International Accreditation Forum (www.iaf.nu), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (www.ilac.org) and their members to highlight how accreditation is delivering sustainability in economic development and the environment. From some of the earliest testing laboratory accreditation activities supporting environmental standards and regulations, to the accreditation of certification bodies for ISO 14001, a sector specific standard focused on environmental performance, and the introduction of standards for validation and verification, IAF and ILAC are seeking to help organizations measure, manage and/or report sustainable economic growth and environmental performance.

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.

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. SADCAS provides accreditation services to organizations that perform calibration, testing including medical testing, inspection, certification (personnel, product and management systems) and those that provide legal metrology services against international standards.

SADCAS is signatory to the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) and the International Laboratory Accreditation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) for the testing and calibration laboratories accreditation schemes in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025 achieved in November 2015, and medical testing in accordance with ISO 15189 and inspection in accordance with ISO/IEC 17020 achieved in October 2017. SADCAS is also signatory to the AFRAC MRA and the International Accreditation Forum's Multi-Lateral Arrangement (IAF MLA) under the Main scope Management Systems Sub-scopes:

- ISO/IEC 17021-3 QMS in accordance with ISO 9001 achieved on 9 November 2019.
- ISO/IEC 17021-2 EMS in accordance with ISO 14001 achieved on 19 June 2020.
- ISO/IEC TS 17021-10 OHSMS in accordance with ISO 45001 achieved on 19 June 2020.
- ISO/TS 22003 FSMS in accordance with ISO 45001 achieved on 14 October 2021.

Hence the accreditation certificates issued by SADCAS for all the above accreditation schemes are internationally recognized.

SADCAS is now in its 14th 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. As at 31 April 2022, SADCAS has issued 257 accreditation certificates to 207 accredited facilities in 13 SADC Member States and two (2) non-SADC countries (Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire). At the same time, SADCAS had 74 accreditation applications from 12 SADC Member States at the various stages of processing. SADCAS has cumulatively conducted 225 training courses in most 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 sustainable development in selected value chains as identified in the SADC Industrial Policy.

For more information, please visit the SADCAS website www.sadcas.org

OR

Contact The National Accreditation Focal Point in your country