

Quality for Trade Platform

An integrated online toolbox for the MSME Quality Journey



THE CHALLENGE

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Established in 1964, ITC is fully dedicated to assisting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

Quality-related issues often represent major challenges preventing large numbers of SMEs from exporting successfully to foreign markets. Requirements often vary from sector-to-sector, product-to-product. Having to comply with many different regulations, standards and buyer requirements can be a challenge, particularly for producers and exporters in developing countries.

The International Trade Centre's surveys on Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) indicate that specific challenges often include:

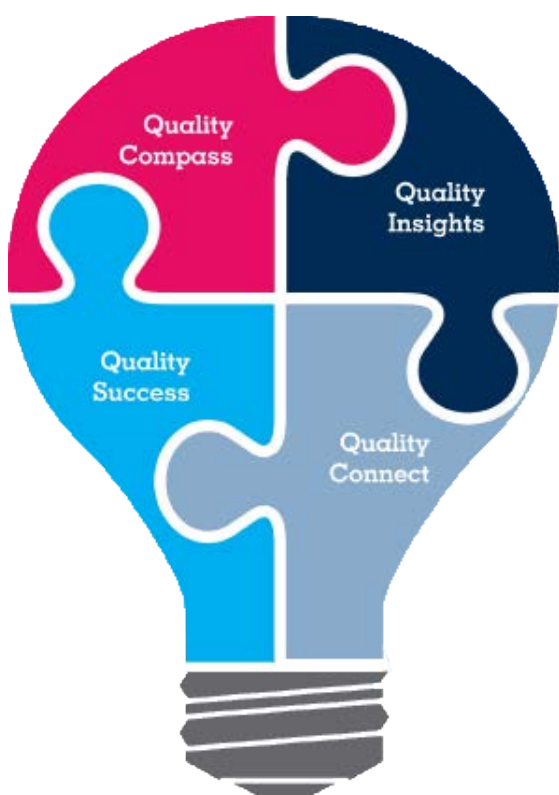
- Insufficient or unclear understanding as to what quality requirements and standards are required to access specific markets
- Insufficient knowledge and skills related to how to comply with such requirements
- Lack of internal quality assurance and control
- Lack of awareness of/access to testing and certification services

Given the increasing pressure on exporting SMEs in developing countries to comply with a multitude of market access requirements, standards and customer demands while remaining cost competitive, there is a need for efficient and effective transfer of quality-related knowledge to SMEs. This is where the Quality for Trade Platform can create a genuine impact.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY FOR TRADE PLATFORM?

The Quality for Trade (Q4T) Platform serves as a one-stop-shop allowing users to discover relevant quality requirements for priority products in targeted markets, obtain guidance on quality-related topics, share best practices, connect with relevant institutions or individuals who can offer assistance and gain insight from those who have already experienced success. The Quality for Trade Platform supports SMEs, national experts and institutions being developed or strengthened by ITC in the context of the projects, in addition to serving as a tool for public outreach.

The Quality for Trade Platform comprises four integrated and complementary tools:



1) **Quality Compass:** The Quality Compass tool allows users to discover specific quality-related requirements, including mandatory legal requirements, key standards and market preferences for identified priority products in targeted destination markets. The tool offers user-friendly insights into not only what is required, but also provides sensitization information on quality requirements to the user as well as streamlined deep linkages to guidance available elsewhere on the web.

2) **Quality Connect:** The Quality Connect tool serves to connect a global network of national pools of quality experts, often developed under ITC projects. Registered users can view profiles and make connections with other users who may be able to offer guidance or services, or those who are in need of guidance or services. Using an online service provider institution directory, users will be able to locate relevant institutions who offer the services they need on their quality journey.

3) **Quality Insights:** The Quality Insights tool will be a go-to resource for learning more about different quality-related topics, serving as digital library for training materials, practical guides, quality-related technical materials. The breadth and depth of the repository will grow over time allowing users to browse materials or search for specific materials based on needs.

4) **Quality Success:** The Quality Success tool aims to inspire readers with a variety of success stories as told by those who, through quality improvements, managed to access new markets, grow their markets, or overcame quality hurdles which brought new opportunities. The collection of success stories is searchable by country, topic or product, allowing for users to find success stories most relevant to them. As a participatory element, users are able to submit their own success stories for publishing consideration.

A SUSTAINABLE MODEL FOR SCALING

The Quality for Trade Platform holds the principle of sustainability at its core. While various platform versions have been developed on the national and regional level to benefit project-focused activities, all versions share a common, underlying database allowing for spillover effects and additional synergies across projects. All versions benefit as features and functions of the platform undergo continuous improvement over time. Decentralized contributions to the platform are possible, which will facilitate the capturing of expertise regardless of geography and permit local ownership of select areas of content.

The Quality for Trade Platform proudly supports ITC's Quality Champions Programme via ongoing access to information, enhanced outreach for Quality Champions and service provider institutions, and opportunities to share successes, all beyond project timelines.