Viwang
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TBS, The Home of Standards



The Minister for Industry and Trade, Hon. Judith Kapinga, presents an award to Mr. Benedict Mwobahe, former TBS Director General (1977–1992), during the climax of the TBS 50th Anniversary celebrations held at Njedengwa, Dodoma.

Minister Kapinga commends TBS for putting Tanzania on the quality map



The Minister of Industry and Trade, Hon. Judith Kapinga, displays the book documenting TBS's 50-year history, which was launched during the 50th Anniversary celebrations held at Njedengwa, Dodoma.

By Neema Mtemvu

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has been commended for its significant achievements over the past 50 years, with a call to continue adapting to technological advancements and global market changes to enhance the competitiveness of Tanzanian products internationally.

Speaking during the 50th Anniversary celebrations held at the TBS headquarters in Njedengwa Dodoma, Honourable Judith Kapinga, Minister for Industry and Trade, praised TBS for its role in protecting consumer health and safety while contributing to the growth of production, trade and industry in the country.

"As we celebrate 50 years of TBS, we are witnessing the institution's significant contribution to building

confidence in Tanzanian products. However, it is important to continue investing in technology, innovation, and collaboration with the private sector to ensure that our products meet international standards," she said.

The event also featured the launch of a book documenting the history, achievements and contributions of TBS in improving the quality of products and services in Tanzania.

For her part TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi, said that over the past half-century, TBS has been a key pillar of industrial and trade development in the country by ensuring that products manufactured and sold comply with the required standards. This has increased consumer confidence and opened up business opportunities in various markets around the world.

She noted that the anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements and develop new strategies to modernize the institution.

She emphasized that TBS will continue strengthening laboratories, expanding digital technologies, and investing in human resources to deliver faster and more reliable services.

Meanwhile, Honourable Mariam Ditopile Mzuzuri, Vice Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industries, Trade, Agriculture and Livestock, underscored the need for a comprehensive review of the Product Quality Policy to reflect changes in science, technology and trade.

The celebrations also highlighted Tanzania's forthcoming milestone in July 2026, when the country would become the seventh African nation to obtain the Africa Quality Mark, joining Rwanda, Togo, Senegal, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

According to Dr. Hermogene Nsengimana, Secretary General of the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), this development will strengthen Tanzania's access to continental markets under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

"Quality is everyone's responsibility"



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TBS urges processed-product manufacturers to certify the quality of their products

By Denis Mzamilu

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has called on manufacturers of processed products to certify the quality of their goods in order to secure access to both domestic and international markets.

The appeal was made by Mr. Rodney Alananga, TBS Manager for the Southern Highlands Zone during the Mbeya City Expo held at Uhindini Grounds from May 22 to 30, 2026.

Speaking to journalists, Mr. Alananga said the expo provided an important opportunity for TBS to educate manufacturers, particularly entrepreneurs, on the benefits of certifying their products so they can bear the TBS Quality Mark. He explained that the Government allocates substantial funds to ensure these services are provided free of charge.

"The Government, through TBS, provides this service of certifying the quality of entrepreneurs' products without charging them any fees," he said.

Mr. Alananga emphasized that obtaining the TBS Quality Mark enables entrepreneurs to sell their products in wider markets, ensuring they do not remain mere spectators in the marketplace. He highlighted the East African Community (EAC) mutual recognition agreement, under which products certified in one member state do not need to undergo retesting when exported to another.

He urged manufacturers, especially entrepreneurs, to avoid producing uncertified products, warning that failure to meet standards would prevent them from accessing regional and international markets.

"Our emphasis is that manufacturers, especially entrepreneurs, should not produce products that have not been quality-certified by TBS. Otherwise, they will fail to access regional and international markets. That is why the Government allocates substantial funds to certify their products," he said.

EDITORIAL



Fifty Years of Inspiring Quality and Safety: Reflecting on the Journey, Shaping the Future

On 19 June 2026, the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) marked its 50th Anniversary, celebrating five decades of commitment to quality, safety and national development. The Golden Jubilee celebrations were presided over by the Minister for Industry and Trade, Hon. Judith Kapinga, who underscored the vital role of standards in improving the quality and competitiveness of Tanzanian products, protecting consumers, and supporting the country's industrial development agenda.

The anniversary was not merely a celebration of an institutional milestone; it was an opportunity to reflect on five decades of service, acknowledge the contribution of generations of TBS leaders and staff, and renew the commitment to building a stronger national quality infrastructure for the future.

As Tanzania continues to pursue industrialization, value addition, innovation and greater participation in regional and international markets, quality remains fundamental to the country's economic ambitions. For five decades, TBS has been at the centre of this national quality journey, promoting standards, protecting consumers and supporting industry, trade and innovation.

Established under the Standards Act No. 3 of 1975 and becoming operational in 1976, TBS has evolved from the National Standards Institute into a comprehensive national

quality infrastructure institution. Under the Standards Act No. 1 of 1977, the institution became the Tanzania Bureau of Standards, with responsibilities that include standards development, testing, certification, inspection, calibration and other quality assurance services.

The Golden Jubilee therefore represents much more than an anniversary. It is a moment to celebrate the achievements of the past, recognize those who have contributed to the Bureau's development, and look ahead to the opportunities and responsibilities that will define the next fifty years.

Over the years, TBS has contributed significantly to Tanzania's industrial and economic development. The Bureau has developed more than 4,000 national standards, many harmonized with regional and international frameworks, helping Tanzanian products compete in local, regional and global markets. Its product certification programme has also supported manufacturers in demonstrating conformity and building consumer confidence.

The Bureau's technical capacity has continued to grow. Its internationally accredited laboratories provide testing services across areas including food, microbiology, chemistry, electrical, mechanical, building and construction, textiles and leather, packaging and metrology. Investments in new laboratory infrastructure in Dodoma, Mwanza and Arusha demonstrate TBS's commitment to taking quality services closer to stakeholders throughout the country.

Equally important has been the transformation of service delivery through technology. Digital systems, including OAS and i-SQMT, have helped streamline processes, reduce bureaucracy and improve transparency for producers and traders. Continued investment in modern technology, laboratory infrastructure and skilled personnel will be essential as Tanzania responds to rapid technological change and increasingly demanding global markets.

The achievements of TBS have also attracted national, regional and international recognition, demonstrating the growing strength of Tanzania's quality infrastructure and its contribution to international trade, consumer protection and industrial competitiveness.

Yet, the celebration of fifty years must also be a moment of renewed commitment. The continued presence of substandard products, changing technologies and evolving international trade requirements remind us that quality is not a destination but a continuous journey. Stronger collaboration among TBS, manufacturers, traders, regulators, consumers and other stakeholders is essential to ensure that quality and safety remain integral to production and trade.

As TBS looks towards the next fifty years, innovation, digital transformation, scientific excellence and strategic partnerships will become increasingly important. The institution's future role will not simply be to enforce standards, but also to enable businesses to understand, adopt and benefit from them. Standards should continue to serve as tools for innovation, market access, efficiency, safety and sustainable economic development.

The theme of the Golden Jubilee, "Inspiring Quality and Safety for Better Livelihood," captures this responsibility. Quality ultimately has a human purpose: protecting health and safety, strengthening livelihoods, creating confidence in products and services, and enabling Tanzanian businesses to compete with confidence.

Perhaps one of the most powerful messages for the future is contained in the symbolic "Letter from 2025 to the Guardians of 2075," featured in the TBS 50th Anniversary Commemorative Book. The letter reflects on the institution's

beginnings, when the pioneers of TBS embarked on their journey with limited resources but with a clear conviction that a sovereign nation must define and protect its own standards of quality. Their legacy challenges the present generation not only to preserve what has been built over the past fifty years, but also to be bold, innovative and forward-looking in shaping the next chapter of the institution.

The next fifty years will undoubtedly bring technologies and challenges that today's generation can scarcely predict. Artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, digital trade and increasingly sophisticated global supply chains will transform how quality is defined, assessed and assured. Yet, despite these changes, the fundamental values upon which TBS was founded—safety, integrity, competence and trust—will remain unchanged.

As we celebrate fifty years of TBS, therefore, we celebrate more than an institution. We celebrate the people, partnerships, dedication and national aspirations that have shaped its journey. We honour the pioneers who laid the foundation, recognize those who have carried the mandate forward, and look with confidence to the generation that will take TBS into its next fifty years.

The message to the Guardians of 2075 is, ultimately, a message of continuity and responsibility. The technologies may change, the challenges may evolve, and the tools of quality assurance may become increasingly sophisticated, but the purpose will remain the same: to protect people, promote quality, strengthen industry and build trust in Tanzanian products and services.

The standard has been set. The journey continues. The future is ours to measure.

"For safety and higher efficiency, always buy TBS-marked/ certified electrical appliances"

Government warns importers of substandard goods



The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ambassador Waziri Rajab Salum, visits the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) laboratories during his recent familiarization tour of TBS offices in Dar es Salaam..

By Deborah Haule

The Government has issued a stern warning to importers of substandard goods, pledging to intensify its crackdown and impose stiff penalties to safeguard consumers and support local industries.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ambassador Waziri Salum made the statement in Dar es Salaam during his recent visit to the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) headquarters.

"Substandard goods pose a serious risk to public health and undermine the growth of our local industries. The Government will not hesitate to take firm action against those involved," he said.

Ambassador Salum emphasized that the Government is strengthening

regulatory controls through its institutions to curb the circulation of substandard goods. He noted that substantial investment in upgrading TBS infrastructure particularly its laboratories has enabled the Institution to acquire modern, high-value equipment and enhance its testing capacity.

"This underscores the Government's commitment to ensuring TBS operates efficiently and meets international standards, while recognizing its vital contribution to the economy and enforcing compliance with quality standards," he added.

The Permanent Secretary expressed satisfaction with the professionalism of TBS laboratories, affirming their role in ensuring the quality of products consumed by the public.

On her part, TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi reiterated the institution's mandate to ensure that all locally produced and imported goods meet established quality standards. She noted that the Permanent Secretary's visit had encouraged staff and demonstrated the Government's commitment to overseeing products quality.

"TBS has modern laboratories that test products to international standards. Government investment has strengthened our capacity to deliver accurate, timely results that protect the health and safety of Tanzanians," she said.

Dr. Katunzi added that TBS continues to strengthen inspection of goods both in the market and at border points to control substandard products. Despite ongoing efforts, she acknowledged challenges such as attempts by some traders to bypass official channels, but assured that the institution is working closely with other agencies to address the issue.

She urged manufacturers and traders to comply fully with registration and certification requirements before placing goods on the market.

"The bitterness of poor quality remains long after low price is forgotten! Always use TBS-certified products."

Government urges TBS to continue infrastructure investment



The Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Hon. Dennis Londo, addresses TBS staff and invited guests during the Gala Dinner held at Mlimani City, Dar es Salaam, as part of the Bureau's 50th Anniversary celebrations.

By Neema Mtemvu

The Government has called on the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) to strengthen its institutional capacity in order to keep pace with rapid global technological change and intensifying international competition.

Speaking at a Gala Dinner marking the 50th Anniversary of TBS, Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade, Honourable Dennis Londo, emphasized the need for a modern, knowledge-driven Bureau as Tanzania looks ahead to the next 50 years.

"As global markets become increasingly driven by technology, innovation, and

stringent quality requirements, TBS should increase investment in modern laboratories, highly skilled experts and efficient digital systems," he said.

Honourable Londo underscored the importance of strong quality assurance systems to protect the domestic market through testing services and the issuance of certification marks. He noted that this approach will serve as a catalyst for promoting local industries, boosting consumer confidence and enabling Tanzania to fully benefit from opportunities in large markets, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The event also featured the presentation of awards to current and former employees in recognition of their contributions to building a strong foundation for the Bureau's mandate.

Honourable Londo reaffirmed the Government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for economic growth through improvements in transportation infrastructure, energy, and digital systems. He highlighted ongoing policy and legal reforms aimed at attracting investment and strengthening the private sector.

He urged TBS to ensure that increased domestic production is matched with compliance to internationally recognized standards, describing this strategy as a key foundation for achieving the goals of the National Development Vision 2050, which seeks to transform Tanzania into a modern, inclusive economy driven by high-value production.

"Effective management of product safety and quality will make Tanzanian goods and services more readily accepted in regional and international markets," he said.

The Deputy Minister also called on the private sector, manufacturers, and traders to continue working closely with TBS to build a sustainable culture of standards compliance and productive manufacturing.

"TBS mark of quality: An assurance that you are buying a quality product"

TBS donates medical equipment to Chamwino District Hospital as part of 50th anniversary CSR initiatives



The Prime Minister's wife, Mama Neema Mwigulu Nchemba, presents a wheelchair during a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative involving the donation of medical equipment to Chamwino District Hospital as part of TBS's 50th Anniversary celebrations.

By Neema Mtemvu

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has donated medical equipment and essential supplies to Chamwino District Hospital in Dodoma Region as part of activities marking its 50th Anniversary.

The donation forms part of TBS's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, through which the institution supports the Government's efforts to improve healthcare services across the country.

The donated items included 20 wheelchairs, five delivery beds, five examination beds, five hospital beds, one modern

stretcher, three medical equipment storage cabinets, and 30 basins containing supplies for mothers who have given birth.

Speaking during the handover ceremony on June 16, 2026, in Dodoma, the Prime Minister's wife, Mama Neema Mwigulu Nchemba congratulated TBS on reaching its 50th anniversary, noting that the milestone reflects the institution's significant contribution to ensuring product and service quality for Tanzanians.

"Today, TBS has recognised the importance of providing essential equipment to support medical services and assist mothers at Chamwino District Hospital. This supports the Government's efforts to improve healthcare services," she said.

Mama Nchemba commended TBS for its genuine commitment to supporting communities, particularly in the health sector, which she described as critical to national development. She expressed hope that the equipment would improve service efficiency, ease the burden on healthcare workers and enhance the welfare of families and communities.

For her part, the Minister for Industry and Trade, Honourable Judith Kapinga said the donation demonstrated TBS's commitment to supporting Government efforts to strengthen the health sector and ensure citizens have access to quality services.

"I commend TBS for reaching its 50th anniversary while continuing to prioritize the community, particularly the health sector, which directly affects people's lives in a unique way," she said.

TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi emphasized that the health sector remains a priority area in the Bureau's CSR activities due to its importance to citizens' lives and welfare. She noted that TBS has supported hospital infrastructure, provided medical equipment, and contributed to patient care across the country.

Dr. Katunzi added that TBS also supports vulnerable groups, including people with physical disabilities, persons with visual impairments, the deaf, and people with albinism, by providing assistive devices and essential support.

"These efforts have enabled the Bureau to be recognised for its contribution to people with disabilities. In 2025, we received an award from the Foundation for Disabilities as a role-model institution for our efforts to support people with disabilities," she said.

She explained that the CSR programme reflects TBS's commitment to serving the community beyond its regulatory responsibilities, with the aim of building solidarity, strengthening relationships, and supporting vulnerable groups.

Dr. Katunzi concluded by affirming that TBS will continue implementing social programmes alongside its core mandate of regulating standards and product quality, contributing to sustainable social and national development.

"Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten. Always use TBS-certified products"

Chalamila — Standards are the foundation of health, business and strong economy



The Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, Mr. Albert Chalamila, addresses participants during the Viwango Marathon, one of the events organized to mark TBS's 50th Anniversary celebrations

By Neema Mtemvu

The Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, Honourable Albert Chalamila has underscored the importance of adhering to standards in the production of goods and services, noting that compliance is essential for protecting public health, promoting trade, strengthening local industries and building a sustainable national economy.

Speaking at the Viwango Marathon, organized by the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) as part of its 50th Anniversary celebrations, Chalamila said the event carried a broader message of public health, social solidarity, institutional accountability, and national development.

"Organizing the Viwango Marathon is a major innovation aimed at raising public

awarenessabouttheimportance of standards while also promoting health and national solidarity. Without standards, we cannot build a strong and sustainable economy," he said.

He emphasized that industrial and business sectors cannot thrive without effective standards that protect public health and safety while enabling businesses to compete internationally.

He urged manufacturers, traders, and the public to use products certified by TBS, while calling on marathon participants to become ambassadors for promoting standards-compliant products in families, businesses, and society at large.

Chalamila further assured that the Government will continue strengthening an enabling environment for institutions such as TBS to perform their duties more effectively and support local industries in producing quality goods that meet international standards.

Meanwhile, Professor Othman Chande, Chairman of the TBS Board, highlighted that over the past 50 years, TBS has fulfilled its core responsibility of developing and enforcing standards to protect consumer health and safety, create a level playing field in trade, and enhance the competitiveness of Tanzanian products.

For her part, Dr. Ashura Katunzi, Director General of TBS said the Marathon also aligns with the TBS Strategic Plan, particularly in promoting employee and community well-being.

She noted that the initiative addresses non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease, which are often linked to sedentary lifestyles.

"We believe that good health is a national asset, and a healthy employee is the foundation of productivity, innovation, and the delivery of quality services," she said.

Dr. Katunzi added that the Marathon carried the theme "Quality for Every Step, Safety for Every Stride", symbolizing TBS's commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for Tanzanians. meet required quality standards.



The Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, Mr. Albert Chalamila, leads participants in the Viwango Marathon, one of the events organized to mark TBS's 50th Anniversary celebrations

TBS reminds dairy producers to obtain quality mark before market distribution



TBS Quality Assurance Officer, Mr. Timotheo Mwendi, visits dairy producers during the National Dairy Week event held in Iringa.

By Gloria Mgomberi

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has reminded dairy producers and processors to follow all required procedures to obtain the TBS Quality Mark before distributing their products to the market, in order to safeguard consumer health and safety.

Speaking during the National Milk Week celebrations in Iringa Region, Mr. Timotheo Mwendi, TBS Quality Assurance Officer, emphasized that the Standards Act, Cap. 130, and its regulations require all producers and processors to secure the quality mark prior to releasing products to consumers.

“The responsibility of ensuring that safe products are available in the market requires cooperation between TBS, the public and various stakeholders in the sector,” he said.

Mr. Mwendi stressed that compliance with packaging and processing requirements is essential to ensure products meet established standards.

On their part, some milk processors highlighted challenges in the sector, noting that many livestock keepers still hesitate to deliver milk to factories, preferring instead to sell it informally on the streets.

They explained that this has necessitated continuous education for farmers to demonstrate the importance of formal processing systems. Encouragingly, they reported that responses from livestock keepers are improving as awareness grows.

Processors also noted that some facilities have begun using milking machines instead of hand milking, reducing the risk of bacterial contamination and improving hygiene during milking. efforts to empower local producers.

TBS trains chips vendors to strengthen food safety

By Neema Mtemvu

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has conducted specialised training for chips vendors and other stakeholders involved in preparing fried potatoes, as part of efforts to safeguard consumer health and strengthen food safety practices.

Opening the training session at the TBS Dar es Salaam Zone offices, TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi emphasized the importance of equipping vendors with knowledge on proper preparation methods and compliance with food safety requirements. “Chips are consumed by the entire community, particularly young people, women, and children. It is therefore crucial to ensure they are prepared in hygienic environments that do not pose health risks,” Dr. Katunzi said.

She noted that in many areas, chips are prepared informally, often in unhygienic conditions which can expose consumers to health hazards.

The training therefore focused on proper use and storage of raw materials, especially cooking oil, assessing oil quality to ensure safety for consumption, correct application of food colours and maintaining the quality of fried foods while minimizing health risks.

Dr. Katunzi further explained that the programme, which began in Dar es Salaam, will be extended to other regions to raise awareness among food business operators nationwide about the importance of adhering to food safety standards.

Government reaffirms commitment to working with private sector to uphold standards



TIRDO Director General, Prof. Mkumbukwa Mtambo, delivers remarks on behalf of the Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Hon. Dennis Londo, during the Business Forum held at Mlimani City, Dar es Salaam, as part of TBS's 50th Anniversary celebrations.

By Neema Mtemvu

The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the private sector to ensure that standards are maintained at every stage of production and service delivery in the country. The statement was made in Dar es Salaam by the Director General of Tanzania Industrial Research and Development Organization (TIRDO), Professor Madundo Mtambo, who represented the Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade, Honourable Dennis Londo, at the Viwango Business and Standards Forum, which was held alongside the 2025/2026 National Quality Awards.

Professor Mtambo said the move is crucial to achieving the country's ambition of building a

competitive industrial economy, as outlined in the National Development Vision 2050.

He said the forum provided an important platform for discussing ways to improve business and other economic activities in the country through the proper application of standards and quality management systems.

He also commended President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan for her strong leadership and firm directives, which continue to strengthen the industrial and trade sectors, particularly in ensuring the quality and safety of products and services for the benefit of citizens.

Professor Mtambo further congratulated manufacturers, service providers, as well as public and private institutions that participated in the forum, saying their involvement demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting quality in their day-to-day operations. He said the forum was being held at an important time as the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) approaches the conclusion of its 50th anniversary celebrations.

For her part, TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi, said the Viwango Business Forum was being held for the first time as part of efforts to strengthen the quality of products and services and enhance the competitiveness of Tanzanian products in both domestic and international markets.

She said the forum coincides with the 2025/2026 National Quality Awards and the 2026 World Food Day celebrations, providing an opportunity for various stakeholders to come together and discuss issues related to quality and standards. Dr. Katunzi said the forum gives stakeholders from the industrial and business sectors an opportunity to exchange experiences, learn different approaches and identify solutions to challenges facing the sector in the country.

She added that TBS considered it appropriate to bring together these important events on one platform in order to strengthen discussions on quality, standards and the development of productive sectors. She also expressed appreciation to President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan for continuing to create an enabling environment that promotes economic growth and national development.

Dr. Katunzi stressed that quality is everyone's responsibility. She said TBS will continue to protect consumers' health, enhance the competitiveness of Tanzanian products in regional and international markets, and improve service delivery systems to ensure that services are provided more quickly, transparently and efficiently.

"To beat your competition, make quality your mission"

TBS empowers bakery operators to improve food quality and safety

By Neema Mtemvu

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has provided specialized training to bakery operators in Dar es Salaam Region to strengthen their understanding of standards, improve food safety, and enhance the competitiveness of their businesses while safeguarding consumer health.

Opening the training on May 26, 2026, TBS Director General Dr. Ashura Katunzi said the initiative aims to equip bakery operators with knowledge of quality and safety requirements while also enhancing entrepreneurial skills to support sector growth.

She emphasized that the programme aligns with Government efforts to improve livelihoods through the economic empowerment of women and young people, noting that bakery businesses provide significant employment opportunities for those groups.

Dr. Katunzi explained that the bakery sector has grown rapidly in Dar es Salaam due to lifestyle demands, with many residents relying on bakery products as snacks or daily meals. However, she cautioned that products produced without observing food safety requirements pose serious health risks, particularly to children who are more vulnerable to foodborne illnesses.

She stressed that compliance with standards is not only a public health issue but also a foundation for business success, improving product quality, customer satisfaction, and fair competition.

In March 2026, TBS conducted inspections at approximately 200 bakeries in Dar es Salaam, identifying shortcomings that underscored the need for training to increase voluntary compliance and improve the business environment.

Dr. Katunzi also urged bakery operators to adopt clean energy solutions, noting that the shift would reduce production costs, protect the environment, and safeguard the health of consumers and workers.

She further reminded stakeholders of preparations for World Food Safety Day, observed annually on June 7, emphasizing that every stakeholder has a responsibility to ensure food safety across the entire value chain.

"TBS mark of quality: An assurance that you are buying a quality product"

Management of chemicals of concern in recycled plastics for protecting human health and promoting safe and sustainable recycling



Miraji Kambangwa

Plastics are among the most versatile and widely used materials in the world. Their durability, lightweight nature, relatively low cost and ability to be moulded into almost any shape have made them essential across numerous sectors, including packaging, agriculture, construction, transport, electronics, healthcare and many others. However, plastics are not made solely from polymers. They may also contain additives, stabilizers, plasticizers, colourants, flame retardants, processing aids and other substances that provide specific technical properties and functionality.

Despite these benefits, the production, use and disposal of plastics can contribute to environmental pollution, with potential impacts on human health and well-being. While plastics recycling is an important component of the circular economy and provides opportunities to reduce plastic waste and conserve resources, increasing attention is also being given to ensuring that recycling processes and recycled materials meet appropriate chemical-safety considerations, particularly with regard to chemicals of concern in plastics [1].

The growing emphasis on recycling has created an important additional consideration regarding how to ensure that chemicals of concern present in plastic waste are not unintentionally transferred into recycled



Bales of compressed plastic waste collected for recycling (Picture by OECD)

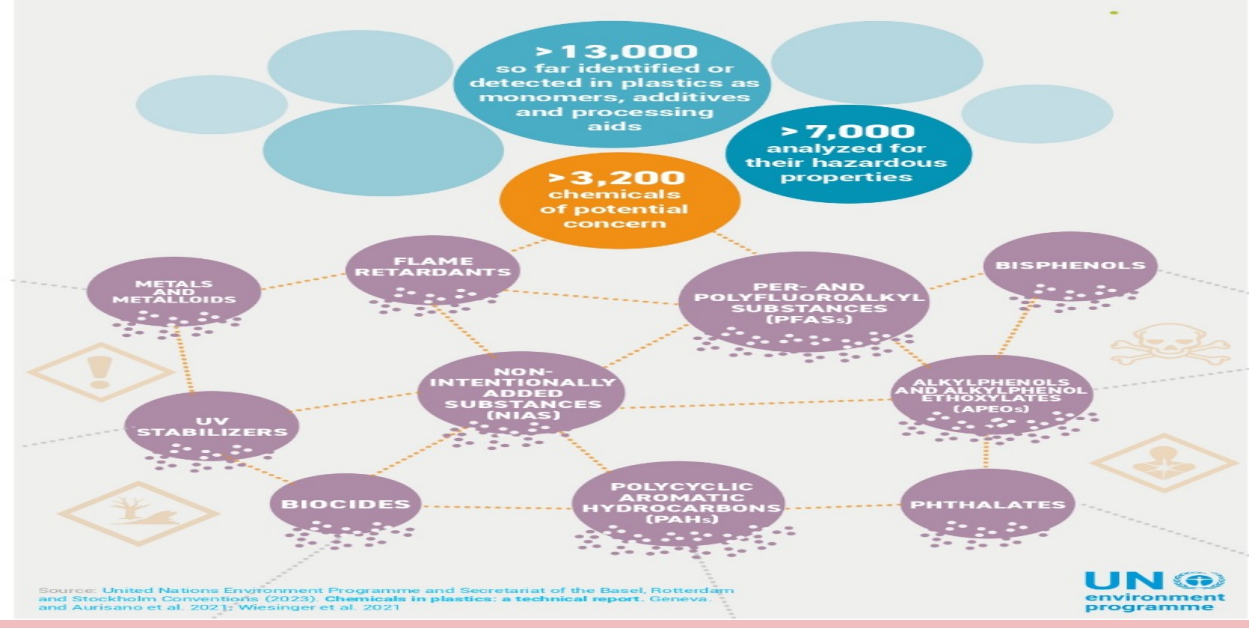
Recycling is an important component of the circular economy because it can reduce waste, conserve resources and decrease dependence on virgin raw materials. However, increasing recycling rates alone do not guarantee that recycled plastics are chemically safe. The safety and quality of recycled plastics depend on the composition of incoming waste, effective sorting and segregation, appropriate recycling processes, chemical testing and controls on the final recycled material [1].

The potential health risks throughout the plastics lifecycle, including production, use, recycling and disposal. It has also highlighted concerns regarding exposure to hazardous chemicals associated with plastics [3].

Chemicals of concern in plastics

The term **"chemicals of concern"** refers broadly to substances that may present significant risks to human health or the environment because of properties such as toxicity, carcinogenicity, mutagenicity, reproductive toxicity, endocrine-disrupting effects, persistence or bioaccumulation.

Plastics may contain a wide range of such substances. UNEP reports that more than **13,000 substances have been associated with plastics**, while more than 3,200 substances associated with plastics have one or more hazardous properties of concern [2].



Chemicals of concern (Picture by UNEP)

The presence of a chemical does not automatically mean that a recycled product is unsafe. Risk depends on the **hazard of the substance, its concentration, potential exposure and the intended use of the recycled material.** Chemical management should therefore be based on appropriate risk assessment rather than assumptions based solely on the presence of a chemical

Challenges associated with recycling

One of the major challenges in

recycling is the loss of information about the chemical composition of plastic products once they become waste. Different products, manufacturers and applications may be mixed together, particularly in collection systems where source segregation is limited. .

Recycled plastics may therefore contain chemicals intentionally added during original manufacture, legacy substances remaining from previous uses, contaminants acquired during use, residues from inks, adhesives and coatings, substances introduced during collection and storage and, new formed through degradation or chemical reactions during processing.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has highlighted incomplete chemical information across plastic value chains as an important challenge. It has also identified the possibility of new contaminants and reaction products emerging during recycling. This means that chemical safety cannot be assured simply by knowing the polymer type, such as polyethylene, polypropylene or polyethylene terephthalate. The chemical history and intended application of the recycled material must also be considered.

Legacy chemicals and chemicals generated during recycling

An important concern is also the presence of **legacy chemicals.** A substance may have been legally used when a plastic product was manufactured but may subsequently have been restricted or identified as a chemical of concern. When the product becomes waste and enters recycling, the substance may remain in the material.

Recycling processes can also involve heating, melting, extrusion and other operations that may cause chemical transformations. Existing additives or contaminants may degrade or react and potentially form other substances.

Therefore, chemical safety assessment should consider not only the original ingredients of a plastic product but also substances that may remain after use or be generated during recycling.

Key ways to manage chemicals of concern in recycled plastics

Effective management of chemicals of concern in recycled plastics requires a life-cycle and value-chain approach, covering product design, manufacturing, use, collection, sorting, recycling, production of recycled materials, and their subsequent applications. It is important to note that chemical safety in recycled plastics is particularly challenging because information about chemical composition can be incomplete or lost along value chains, while contaminants, degradation products and reaction products may also emerge during use and recycling [2].

Various approaches may be used to manage chemicals of concern in recycled plastics, as shown hereunder.

Identification and assessment of chemicals of concern

Chemicals present in plastic products should be identified and assessed according to their potential impacts on human health and the environment. Particular attention should be given to substances such as heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), endocrine-disrupting chemicals, plasticisers, flame retardants, and other hazardous additives that may remain in plastics during use and recycling. UNEP (2023) highlights the need to identify and prioritize chemicals of concern in plastics based on their hazardous properties and potential exposure pathways.

Control of hazardous substances at the design and production stage

The use of chemicals of

concern should be reduced or eliminated at the source through safer product design and the substitution of hazardous substances with safer alternatives. Manufacturers should consider chemical safety and recyclability throughout the life cycle of plastic products. Such an approach can prevent hazardous substances from being introduced into recycling streams in the first place and supports the development of a non-toxic circular economy [2,3].

Improved collection and segregation of plastic waste

Effective collection, sorting, and segregation systems are important for preventing hazardous or unsuitable plastics from entering recycling streams. Plastic waste should, where practicable, be segregated according to polymer type, source, previous application, contamination level, and the potential presence of chemicals of concern. The use of appropriate waste-management practices, including the proper handling and sorting of plastic waste before recycling, can help promote environmentally sound management of plastic waste [4].

Strengthening testing and quality control of recycled plastics

Recycled plastic materials should be tested for relevant chemical contaminants before being introduced into new products, particularly where the recycled material may result in human or environmental exposure. Appropriate sampling procedures, analytical methods, specifications, and conformity-assessment procedures should be established to verify that recycled materials meet applicable health, safety, and environmental requirements.

The chemical-content validation of recycled plastics requires robust analytical techniques because chemical information may be incomplete or lost along the value chain, while contaminants, degradation products, and reaction products may emerge during use and recycling [2].

Promotion of safer recycling technologies

Recycling processes should be designed and operated to minimize the transfer, concentration, formation, or release of hazardous substances. Depending on the type and contamination profile of the plastic waste, improved sorting, washing, decontamination, purification, and other appropriate recycling technologies may help improve the safety and quality of recycled plastics.

Strengthening standards, regulations, and enforcement

Government institutions, standards bodies and other regulatory authorities play an important role in developing, implementing and continuously strengthening standards, regulations and guidelines addressing chemicals of concern in plastic products and recycled materials. These measures may include requirements for restricted substances, specifications for recycled materials, appropriate testing methods, sampling procedures, product requirements and conformity-assessment procedures.

Stakeholder collaboration and information sharing

Effective management of chemicals of concern requires collaboration among government institutions, standards bodies, manufacturers, importers, recyclers, waste-management operators, research institutions, civil society organizations, NGOs and consumers. Sharing information on research findings, chemical composition, material properties, recycling practices, contamination risks, and emerging hazards can support evidence-based decision-making.

Capacity building and awareness

Government institutions,

standards bodies, manufacturers, recyclers, waste handlers, laboratories, research institutions and other stakeholders can continue strengthening awareness and capacity-building initiatives on the identification, handling, testing and management of chemicals of concern in plastics. Such initiatives can support stakeholders in understanding applicable requirements, appropriate waste-segregation practices, chemical-testing approaches and safe recycling practices, thereby contributing to the development of a safe and sustainable circular plastics economy.

Tanzania's Advancing Non-Toxic Circular Economy Initiative

The ultimate objective should be to move towards a circular plastics system in which materials remain in circulation without compromising human health or the environment. Achieving this objective requires integrating chemical safety into sustainable product design, waste management, recycling, standards, regulations, market surveillance, and circular-economy policies.

Therefore, the success of a circular plastics economy should not be measured only by the amount of plastic waste recycled, but also by **the safety and quality of the recycled materia**l. Recycling should contribute to resource efficiency and waste reduction without perpetuating or increasing exposure to hazardous chemicals. On 19 August 2026, Tanzania held an inception meeting for the Advancing Non-Toxic Circular Economy in Tanzania Project, initiated by AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The meeting brought together representatives from government institutions, ministries, producer responsibility organizations, private-sector manufacturers and recyclers, research institutions, and civil society organizations to discuss the project and explore opportunities for advancing a safe and sustainable circular economy in Tanzania

The 18-month project aims to engage Tanzanian stakeholders, review the existing legal and policy landscape relating to plastics and hazardous waste, and gather stakeholder input to inform project implementation.

During the meeting, participants emphasized that recycling should be accompanied by measures that ensure the safety and quality of recycled plastics, highlighting the importance of integrating chemical safety into circular-economy approaches.



Mafuru Juma, a senior official from the Vice President's Office (Environment Division), officially opening the inception meeting for the Advancing Non-Toxic Circular Economy in Tanzania Project. Photo: The Guardian.

Conclusion

In conclusion, achieving a safe and sustainable circular economy for plastics requires that recycling be accompanied by effective management of chemicals of concern throughout the plastics life cycle. Continued cooperation among government institutions, industry, recyclers, researchers, civil society organizations, NGOs and consumers can help strengthen chemical safety while promoting resource efficiency and sustainable recycling.

Ultimately, the objective should be **"not only to recycle more plastics, but to recycle plastics safely,"** ensuring that recycled materials provide environmental and economic benefits without compromising product safety, human health and the environment.

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