

# Viwang

## E-Newsletter



ISSUE NO: 020 APRIL- JUNE 2021

TBS, the Home of Standards



**TBS Director General Dr. Athuman Y Ngenya (centre) chats with a client during a grant of licence ceremony held at TBS headquarters recently. He is flanked by the Director of Quality Management, Mr. Lazaro Msasalaga (left).**

### 1. Editorial

**iSQMT a big leap towards enhanced service delivery**

**140 food, cosmetics premises registered in Mlimba, Ulanga districts**

**iSQMT, e-learning portal**

**TBS conducts training to spices stakeholders**

### 2. Articles

**Understanding date labels on products, food packaging**

**Health sector stakeholders urged to observe standards**

**TBS reaches more than 27,000 people in three districts**

**TBS imparts knowledge on standards to Local Government officials**

**Industrial food processing and food safety**

**Produce more quality goods, government counsels SMEs**

**TBS hands over fuel marker laboratories to EWURA**

**TBS urges traders in Sikonge to adhere to standardsA**

### 3. News in Brief

**Government commends TBS for implementing its functions**

**10 students win TBS essay competition**

**TBS services go online through**

## Government commends TBS for implementing its functions

By Gladness Kaseka

The Government has commended Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) for ensuring that citizens have access to locally produced and imported products in good quality and in an acceptable manner.



**Prof. Kitila Mkumbo**

The statement was made by the Minister for Industry and Trade, Hon. Prof. Kitila Mkumbo, during his recent visit to TBS Headquarters, Dar es Salaam immediately after his meeting with stakeholders and traders at the port.

“Before I arrived at the Bureau, I met with some of its stakeholders, they told me you are doing a great job on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania in ensuring that all imported and locally

produced products are of acceptable quality,” he stressed.

“Of course, this success is huge in Tanzania. And in fact, for a long time, we do not have a record of products that are not suitable for human consumption, that means that someone is working to control the products that are not suitable and that person is called TBS,” he added, expressing his congratulations to the Bureau.

He cited the second reason for praising the organization was that when he met with stakeholders from various institutions that do business at the port, TBS was mentioned, but to a lesser extent. He explained that this has encouraged him that the organization is doing well, although there is always room for improvement.

“There are areas which have been articulated by stakeholders, one is bureaucracy, so I urge TBS to increase their efforts to ensure that their employees provide the same quality service, good customer care but much faster so that clients can be provided

with services as soon as possible,” said Prof. Mkumbo.

“In terms of challenges that are on the Government’s side, we will continue to work on them, including the amendments to the law that are needed to further improve the Bureau’s performance,” he explained.

The third thing the Minister touched on was the issue of the Board of Directors, saying for two years, TBS has been without the Board of Directors and its responsibilities have been carried out by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

“That is our responsibility. We have taken it and we will work on it soon so that the TBS Board can exist and function well on behalf of the Government,” he said.

He promised to provide all kind of cooperation to ensure that TBS and other government institutions are involved in facilitating business in the country through existing laws and to the required quality.

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<b>1. Articles</b>	<b>3. News in Brief</b>	<b>10 students win TBS essay competition</b>
ISQMT a big leap towards enhanced service delivery	Government commends TBS for implementing its functions	TBS services go online through ISQMT e-learning portal
<b>2. Editorial</b>	<b>140 food, cosmetics premises registered in Mlimba, Ulanga districts</b>	<b>TBS conducts training to spices stakeholders</b>
Understanding date labels on products, food packaging	Health sector stakeholders urged to observe standards	TBS imparts knowledge on standards to Local Government officials
Industrial food processing and food safety	TBS reaches more than 27,000 people in three districts	TBS hands over fuel marker laboratories to EWURA
	Produce more quality goods, government counsels SMEs	TBS urges traders in Sikonge

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# 140 food, cosmetics premises registered in Mlimba, Ulanga districts

By Staff Reporter

Officials of Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) have continued with the exercise of registration of food and cosmetics premises in Mlimba and Ulanga districts, Morogoro region, where by a total of 140 buildings have been registered within the area.

Registration of the premises which deals with food and cosmetics has been conducted parallel with inspection of goods and educating traders on the importance of standards and quality.

Speaking during the exercise, TBS Quality Assurance Officer Daniel Kahabi said that the Bureau has directed its efforts to reach all areas countrywide in registering premises and educating traders on preservation of their goods and ensuring that the premises meet required standards.

“Apart from registration and inspection of premises and food and cosmetics, we urge shop owners to inspect their goods every time to ensure that they sell products which are not expired, and preserve them in hygienic and safe places,” said Kahabi.

On her part, TBS Marketing

Officer Deborah Haule, urged food and cosmetic traders to have their premises registered in a system to avoid unnecessary disturbances once inspectors visit their areas.

“Registration is done electronically through TBS website and you can do so anytime, anywhere. What you are required to have is a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and a business licence in order to complete the procedure,” she said.

She also urged the public to continue reporting to the authorities in case they meet expired goods being sold in the market and called upon the public to visit any nearby TBS offices or make a free call for any information regarding food and cosmetics products quality.

The roles of food and cosmetics products and premises registration was assumed to TBS in June 2019 after the dissolution of the former Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA).



## iSQMT a big leap towards enhanced service delivery

**O**n 30th April 2021, Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) launched a system that automates the standardization and quality control of products and services, named the Integrated Standardization, Quality Assurance, Metrology and Testing (iSQMT) system. The system was launched in an event held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre in Dar es Salaam and graced by the Bureau's Director General, Dr. Athuman Y Ngenya and TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) Country Director Mr. John Ulanga.

Speaking at the event, the two leaders stressed on the importance of automating services in reducing waiting and processing times and costs for standardization and conformity assessment services. They noted that stakeholders would no longer be required to travel long distances, print and submit documents, thus saving time and reducing errors and costs. They further noted that use of automated systems in provision of government services would catalyse trade growth by providing efficient market linkages

and enhancing business operations; and that digitalization would provide a strong avenue for industrialization and economic development for Tanzania.

Through iSQMT, TBS has automated its core processes, namely standards development, product certification, system certification, imports inspection, metrology and testing. The system has also been integrated to the eGovernment Payment Gateway platform which guarantees fully automated processes from application, payment and acquisition of the final product (certificate/permit).

Some of the benefits of the system include reduction in time and transaction costs as stakeholders no longer need to visit TBS offices for services related to standards and quality control, training, collection of permits and certificates. Eventually, this will significantly reduce incidences of loss and duplication of records since all the information



required to process requests from stakeholders will be hosted within one system. The data collected via the system will inform better decision making in the regulation and administration of TBS processes.

This development by the Bureau is highly commendable as it is in line with the policy of the Sixth Phase Government, which calls for efficiency in delivery of services to the public. It is further in line with the Government's desire to improve trade facilitation by building an enabling environment to support businesses.

Some may argue that the introduction of the system is long overdue, which is understandable, owing to its usefulness. However, the Bureau deserves commendation for exercising the will to develop and put into

use such a system at this material time. The system will, no doubt, solidify gains made in the provision of standardization and conformity assessment services and enable the attainment of more achievements.

Data indicates that since the launching of iSQMT, the Bureau has been gradually migrating from paper work to automation in its various activities, which means that all services will be fully automated in the near future. It is estimated that by the end of the financial year 2021/2022, iSQMT will be in full swing, thus enabling the Bureau and its stakeholders to fully enjoy its immeasurable benefits.

iSQMT provides safe and secure records keeping and eliminates the security risks that come with manual han-

dling of documents, while cutting down expenditures in paper and postage for both the Bureau and its stakeholders. The benefits to be gained from the system are, thus, mutual on the part of the Bureau and its various stakeholders.

Once again, we would like to commend TBS Management for embarking on the use of iSQMT. The benefits enumerated above have already been experienced in this short period. Although some challenges still exist, we believe those are normal bottlenecks which usually happen at the beginning of implementation of any project. We believe that when it finally stabilizes, iSQMT will enhance the Bureau's service provision and smoothen its path towards realizing its strategic objectives.

***“To beat your competition,  
make quality your  
mission”***

## Health sector stakeholders urged to observe standards



*Mbeya Region's Acting Administrative Secretary, Ms. Mwajabu Nyamkomora addresses participants of an awareness seminar on the science of measurements in the health sector administered by TBS in Mbeya. Others are TBS Manager for Southern Highlands, Mr. Abel Mwakasonda (left) and Head of Metrology Laboratory, Mr. Joseph Mahilla.*

By Neema Mtemvu

Stakeholders in the health sector have been urged to take appropriate measures in ensuring that standards are observed in accordance with local and global guidelines.

This was said in Mbeya by the region's Acting Administrative Secretary, Ms. Mwajabu Nyamkomora, during a seminar organised by the Tanzania Bureau Standards (TBS) aimed at providing awareness on the science of measurements in the health sector.

The seminar was a continuation of the World Metrology Day 2021 celebrations nationally held in Dodoma on 2021-05-20.

Ms. Nyamkomora said measurements are important in the manufacturing of medicines and pharmaceuticals and that when they are integrated in production the health society can increase its contribution on economic growth.

She urged all Tanzanians to make use of formal health services, emphasising: "Tanzanians should avoid using informal health services like taking medicines without making diagnosis and get to know the proper treatment that suit the problem."

She also used the opportunity to remind health service providers namely medical doctors, nurses and pharmacists to observe standards while providing health services as a way to protect citizens' health. She said health services providers should ensure that the medical facilities used for diagnosis and treatment of the people are inspected and registered by appropriate government authorities.

She further emphasized calibration of medical facilities used in the medical laboratories so that the medical services provided meet health and safety standards.

takes appropriate measures to make sure the health of Tanzanians is protected by ensuring that medical facilities and equipment are calibrated," she added.

On his part, the TBS Manager for Southern Highlands, Mr. Abel Mwakasonda, said the medical facilities used in diagnosing various diseases should meet appropriate national measurement standards.

He urged owners of hospitals, medical laboratories and pharmacies to make sure quality is strictly observed in the provision of health care services to Tanzanians.

Mr. Mwakasonda said TBS through the National Metrology Laboratory is the custodian of national measurements and provides this service to industries, medical institutions and other stakeholders in the country.

## TBS reaches more than 27,000 people in three districts

By Staff Reporter

Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has imparted knowledge on issues related to products quality and standards to 27,776 residents in three districts that would ultimately help in the war against sub-standard goods in the market.

The districts reached are Kilosa in Morogoro Region, Bagamoyo in Coast Region and Mkinga in Tanga Region.

The TBS Corporate and Public Affairs Officer, Ms Neema Mtemvu, said recently at the winding up of the campaign, that out of the people reached in the districts, 15,526 were students and 12,250 were other people.

“We decided to impart knowledge on products standards and quality to primary and secondary school students because they can be good ambassadors and help influence other people to use goods with TBS quality mark,” she said.

She added that the biggest thing they have done is to educate primary and secondary school students on the importance of us-

ing TBS certified and registered products, including giving them a number for free call to contact the Bureau in case they experience challenges with products.

“We have been able to provide education in various areas such as stands, markets, auctions and shopping centres in Kilosa District in Morogoro Region, Bagamoyo District in the Coast Region and Mkinga, Tanga Region,” said Mtemvu.

She said TBS has conveyed the education to the students by recognizing that they are going to be good ambassadors for parents and guardians regarding the importance of using TBS-certified products.

In terms of crowded areas, Ms Mtemvu said the education was provided in Mkinga at the Horohoro Stand and Duga Market, while in Kilosa the education was provided in India, Sabasaba and Kimamba.

Regarding the response of the people in those areas with public gatherings, Ms Mtemvu said many were happy

with the education and have asked for it to be sustainable.

“Citizens have thanked the organization for seeing the need to provide them with such information on standards because they have been facing major challenges, but they did not know what to do.

“But for now, they have promised to get into war against cheap goods because they are able to contact TBS, as they know we are there,” explained Ms Mtemvu.

She said among the things the masses were educated on through the campaign are the responsibilities of TBS and the importance of checking the expiration date of the products they want to buy. Another area on which people were educated was the importance of buying products certified or registered by TBS.

Ms Mtemvu cited some of the benefits of buying products certified by the TBS as including protecting their health and ensuring value for their money.



## Produce more quality goods, government counsels SMEs



*TBS Certification Manager, Mr. Gervas Kaisi, enlightens the Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade Hon. Exaud Kigahe on the Bureau's mandate to assist Small and Medium Entrepreneurs in attaining the quality of their products.*

By Deborah Haule

The government has encouraged Small and Medium Entrepreneurs to continue producing quality products that would enable them to fight competition in local and foreign markets.

This was said in Babati District, Manyara Region over the weekend by the Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade Hon. Exaud Kigahe, when opening an exhibition organized by Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) held at Kwaraa Grounds.

Deputy Minister Kigahe who was speaking at the TBS pavilion said only quality products would make SMEs survive in the markets, hence more efforts were needed to achieve that end.

He also asked residents in the northern regions to participate in the exhibition and get various services from different exhibitors.

On his part the Certification Manager of Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) Gervas Kaisi, told reporters that the exhibition was an opportunity for the Standards Body to educate and inform SMEs on issues regarding standards, listen to their challenges and look for solutions.

“Our participation in this exhibition has enabled us to meet industrialists, residents and SMEs where we get a chance to inform them on various standards issues and listen to their challenges,” Kaisi said.

Meanwhile, the TBS Northern Zone Manager, Happy Brown, urged SMEs living in the area not to hesitate to issue any information regarding goods so that they can get professional advice in order to produce quality products.

Speaking at the same event,

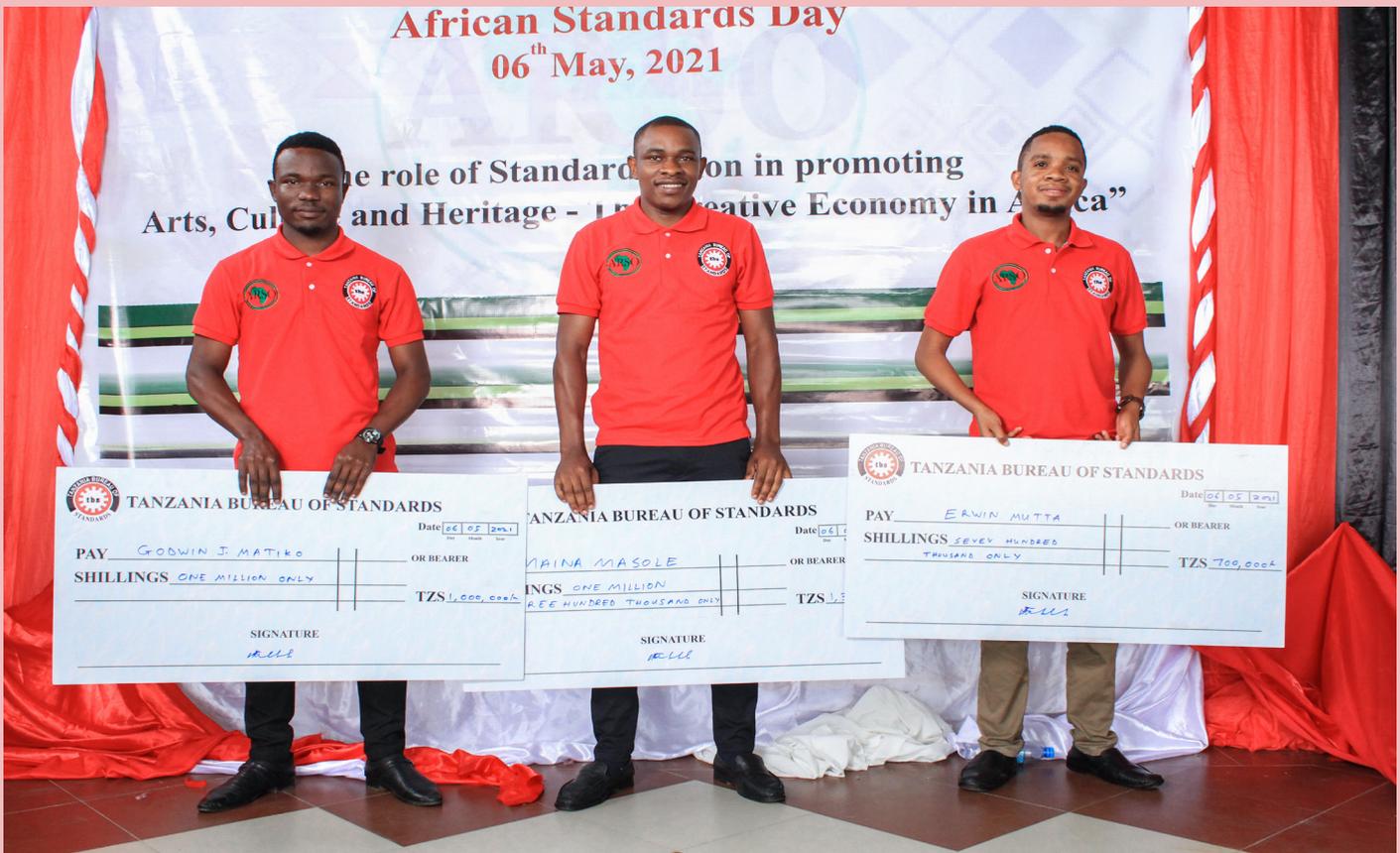
the TBS Senior Food Safety Officer, Francis Mapunda, said there was a good response during this year's exhibition, where many SMEs turned up to get more information regarding certification procedures.

He said certification services for SMEs were free of charge, but they are required to route their application through SIDO. After getting certified, they can reach different markets particularly those in the East Africa community without problem, he said.

According to him, TBS insists on SMEs to produce quality products which would enable them to protect their capital and manage competition in national and international markets.

The four-day exhibition attracted a good number of participants and exhibitors.

## 10 students win TBS essay competition



Three best students in the 8th African Standardization Organisation (ARSO) essay competition show their prizes.

By Gladness Kaseka

TEN students from various higher learning institutions have received various awards after becoming winners of the 8th African Standardisation Organisation (ARSO) continental essay competition.

The competition attracted 214 students from 32 higher learning institutions in the country and was held in March this year at national level.

The theme of this year's ARSO essay competition was "the Role of Standardisation in promoting Arts, Culture and Heritage –The Creative Economy in Africa".

Speaking during the event on behalf of the

TBS Director General, the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) Director of Standards Development, Mr. David Ndibalema called upon stakeholders in arts, culture and heritage to take part effectively during the process to prepare standards for development of the economy.

Mr. Ndibalema said preparation of national standards is supposed to involve the community and that involvement of the community in standards formulation and considering their requirements would help to minimize challenges facing the arts, culture and heritage sector.

He said this year's theme reminds the nation

to ensure that the process to prepare standards and manage their implementation at various sectors is done by involving stakeholders including those in culture, arts and heritage.

“It is through participation, the standards would contribute to improve products and services and assist to reach the main Africa’s and Tanzania’s innovation goal,” he said.

Ndibalema congratulated students who took part during the essay competition and those who emerged winners.

He said the Bureau has decided to involve students in higher learning institutions to participate in the essays on standards due to their importance.

He said the day was taken seriously by the Bureau through creating awareness among students on matters related to adherence to standards.

“We mark the Africa Standards Day by organising various activities, including essay writing competitions among students from higher learning institutions as a way of creating awareness on the importance of standards,” he explained.

The 10 students who emerged winners and were awarded various prizes including certificates and cash ranging between 300,000/- and 1.3 m/- are Maina Masole (SUA), Godfrey Matiko (SUA), Kija Migele (MUST), Erwin Tadeu (Mzumbe), Helena Ambele (TUDARCO), Jami-la Licholile (UDOM), Frank Joseph (UDOM), Elizabeth John (UDSM), Mbonea Mbwambo (MUHAS) and Godrick Bunga (UDOM).

Speaking at the event, the Acting Director of

Standards Development, Mr. Hamisi Mwana-sala said the major aim of marking the day was to educate people on the importance of standards in improving their lives through the quality of their assets, health and safety among others.

He said the Bureau has been organising essay competitions using the theme of the specific year with the aim of measuring the understanding of students on issues related to standards.

He added that the competition helps TBS measure the extent at which citizens understand the importance of standards and what should be done in capacity building, especially for students to understand the importance of standards in their lives.

Speaking on behalf of all winners, the overall winner, Maina Masole from the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) commended the Standards Body for introducing the idea, adding that the essay competition promotes and increases understanding of matters related to standards.

“I take this opportunity to encourage my fellow students to take part in such competitions,” he said, thanking TBS for promoting issues related to standards from the grassroots.

Earlier, the Chief Judge of the competition, Dr Michael Karani, said they experienced some challenges including some essay participants failing to bring their entries on time, while others copied materials from their friends.

However, he said this year the response was good, urging TBS Management to extend such competition to pupils in primary schools.

***“Misuse of TBS quality mark is a criminal offence punishable under the Standards Act No. 2 of 2009”***

## TBS services go online through iSQMT, e-learning portal

By Gladness Kaseka

**T**anzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) with support from TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) has developed and launched online systems to be used for standardization, quality assurance, training and customer complaints handling.

One of the systems integrates TBS core functions which are standards formulation, quality assurance, metrology and testing (iSQMT) and the other system is the e-learning web portal for training purposes.

TBS Director General, Dr. Athuman Ngenya stated during the inauguration held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre in Dar es Salaam recently that the systems would benefit all the stakeholders in the business and manufacturing sectors such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and traders. He said the provision of these systems has largely reduced waiting and process time and costs for the Bureau's stakeholders

to secure various services.

For instance, the e-learning portal will enable trainees to re-read materials and reduce costs in terms of time and money as the stakeholders will be attending learning sessions online from wherever they are. Through this portal TBS will reach and train a good number of entrepreneurs, he noted.

"There is no need for the customers to visit the Bureau's offices in need of standardisation, quality assurance, metrology, testing and training services as iSQMT and e-learning web portal can do everything for you," he noted.

The iSQMT system has been integrated with the e-Government Payment Gateway platforms which guarantee fully automated process from application, payments to acquisition of certificates/permits, explained Dr. Ngenya.

The TMEA Country Director, Mr.

John Ulanga said the use of automated systems in provision of government services has catalysed trade growth by providing efficient market linkages and enhancing business operations.

"The support to TBS is meant to ensure that locally manufactured products and imported ones meet the required standards. Thus, digitization will reduce trade costs and time, providing a strong avenue for industrialization and economic development to be realised in Tanzania," said Mr. Ulanga.

He reiterated TMEA's continued support for the government's effort to create jobs and reduce poverty, noting that they are planning to commit 9 bn/- to TBS in the coming three years.

The development of iSQMT portal cost 600,000 US dollars while the e-learning platform cost 350,000 US dollars under support from TMEA.

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

## TBS conducts training to spices stakeholders

By **Mussa Luhombero**

**M**orogoro based producers, processors and traders in spices are set to boost their earnings after the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) imparted them with skills to improve quality of their products.



**Mr. Hamisi Mwanasala**

TBS Research, Training and Market Surveillance Manager, Hamisi Mwanasala said during the training held in Matombo, Morogoro Region recently that the training was aimed

at equipping producers, processors and entrepreneurs with skills to enhance productivity.

The beneficiaries of the training were those dealing with spices like cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and others produced in the region.

“The government is emphasising need for producers, processors and entrepreneurs in spaces to improve quality and productivity so that their products fetch more revenues from the market,” he said.

He said products of high quality that meet required standards easily penetrate both local, regional and global markets.

“Through the training, participants were given skills on both health and environmental regulations as well as the need to register food and cosmetic premises,” he noted.

He said the obligations of registering food and cosmetic premises currently under TBS were formerly under the now defunct Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA).

He said reaching and training producers, processors and entrepreneurs in spices is one of the major obligations of the Bureau aiming at raising the quality of products to meet domestic and global standards.

He added that sometimes, stakeholders including entrepreneurs do make requests to TBS for training on various issues related to quality and standards that would ultimately increase the value of the products and boost their earnings.

“It is our obligations to conduct such training to various groups including producers and business people and sometimes we are being invited to participate in exhibitions like Saba Saba and Nane Nane fairs,” he said.

He added that at times institutions like Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) and Tanzania Trade and Development Authority (TanTrade) do conduct training to entrepreneurs.

## TBS imparts knowledge on standards to Local Government officials



*Morogoro Regional Administrative Secretary Emmanuel Kalobero speaks during training for Local Government officials in Morogoro.*

By Deborah Haule

Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has offered training on standards and quality assurance to government officials from Morogoro Region so that they can better impart the knowledge to entrepreneurs engaging in various activities in their respective areas.

The TBS Manager of Research, Training and Market Surveillance Mr. Hamisi Mwanasala said recently that the training is the implementation of the instructions given by the Minister for Industry and Trade Prof. Kitila Mkumbo.

Recently, Prof. Mkumbo ordered the Bureau to train Local Government officials countrywide on standards and quality assurance so that they can become ambassadors of the knowledge and skills for entrepreneurs.

“We have provided training to government officials from the district councils so that they may in turn transfer the knowledge to entrepreneurs in their respective areas,” he noted.

He said TBS has opened zonal offices but it has been difficult to reach all people and thus the training of council officials would be fundamental in serving better entrepreneurs so that their products can meet required standards.

Speaking at the event, Morogoro Regional Administrative Secretary Emmanuel Kalobero said the region has many entrepreneurs most of whom produce low quality goods due to lack of knowledge on stand-

ards and quality assurance.

One of the participants who is a Health Officer from Ifakara Town Council Jafari Hamisi and Acting Agriculture Officer from Mvomero District Suzy Mazengo said the training will enhance performance in the implementation of their daily obligations to help producers produce high quality goods that meet national standards.

“We will meet and provide education to entrepreneurs undertaking manufacturing activities in the councils where we work in order that they may produce high quality goods that meet the required standards,” Mr. Jafari said, a sentiment echoed by Ms. Suzy.

## TBS hands over fuel marker laboratories to EWURA



*Fuel marker testing machine operator poses after demonstrating fuel testing*

By **Mussa Luhombero**

**T**anzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has handed over two mobile laboratories and two machines to the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority (EWURA) to test fuel marker before being sold in the retail pumps in the market.

The handing over event was held in Dar es Salaam recently and witnessed by TBS and EWURA officials.

The TBS Head of Fuel Making Operations, Mr.

Florian Batakanwa said they handed the two mobile laboratories and machines to EWURA to make sure that there is a stand-by laboratory and machine in case one gets technical fault.

He said the process of testing markers in fuel started when TBS was given the mandate to put the marker in fuel and this was the reason the Bureau handed the equipment to EWURA for testing the fuel marker in the market.

“We have vehicles with laboratories for testing fuel marker in the market to make sure quality of fuel supplied is strictly observed,” he said.

According to Batakanwa, in addition to the mobile laboratories and machines, also there is a computer for operating the equipment.

“We want to inform the public that the exercise is sustainable because after putting the marker you should have the high technology equipment for testing whether the amount is proportional to the standards set for use in our market,” he noted.

He said TBS and EWURA are working together guided by laws, making use of the mobile laboratories. In future, the institutions plan to

enhance efficiency by increasing more mobile laboratories and machines, he noted.

He said at TBS headquarters there is quality assurance laboratory for testing the quality of the marker before being put in the fuel.

On his part, EWURA Technical Manager, Shaban Seleman said they will use the mobile laboratories and machines to make sure fuel supplied countrywide meet the required quality standards to avoid damaging vehicles.

The laboratories and machines will help curb illegal fuel business including those dishonest dealers who evade paying taxes. and trading venues (shops).

***“The bitterness of poor quality remains long after low price is forgotten!  
Always use  
TBS-certified products”***

## TBS urges traders in Sikonge to adhere to standards

By Mussa Luhombero

**T**anzania Bureau of Standards (TBS), has urged the business community to adhere to rules and regulations on standards aimed at protecting the health of consumers.

The call was made recently by the TBS Quality Assurance Officer Ms. Zena Mushi after conducting an inspection and registration of food and cosmetics in Sikonge District in Tabora Region.

Some of the premises inspected and registered were restaurants and milling machines. The activity took place from March 29 to April 9 this year.

During the inspection and registration of food and cosmetic premises, TBS provided more than 100 permits to business people. Ms. Mushi noted that business people have been responding positively on the initiative geared at registering all food and cosmetics premises in the country.

Ms Mushi said one of the benefits of registering food and cosmetic premises is that businesses are legally recognised while giving confidence to consumers. “The permit granted to business people after meeting the conditions has been an added advantage while seeking

and accessing bank loans,” she said, adding that the permits granted by TBS to business people have helped them in winning tenders to provide food to institutions like schools.

She said most business people in Sikonge District are aware that the food and cosmetic premises regulations are being spear-headed by TBS instead of the now defunct Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA). The roles of food and cosmetics products and premises registration was assumed to TBS in June 2019 after the dissolution of TFDA.

Ms. Mushi said TBS targets to reach business people in all districts in Dodoma Zone and encouraged business people to make sure they get TBS registration and permits for food and cosmetic business before starting a new business.

On the other hand, TBS Quality Control Officer Sileja Lushibika urged entrepreneurs to take advantage of the ongoing inspection by TBS in their areas to register their businesses.

*“To beat your competition, make quality your mission”*

## Understanding date labels on products, food packaging



Zena Chijoriga

Information about dates on pre-packaged product/food is a valuable source of information for consumers. A basic understanding of what terms are used can help the consumer to better understand these labels. Consumer uncertainty about the meaning of the dates that appear on the labels of packaged foods is believed to contribute to about 20 percent of food waste. That is not surprising when considering the variety of terms used with date labels, such as “use before,” “sell by,” “expires on,” and many more.

There are different kinds of date markings, depending on the product. The most common terms are “**best-before**” dates, “**packaged on**” dates,

and **expiration dates**. Knowing what these terms mean will help to understand the labels, which in turn will help to make informed choices about the product/food you buy.

For the company that is responsible for the product, usually the manufacturer or packager determines its expected durability time. Date labels are often linked to storage instructions. Everyone who handles the food product, from the manufacturer to the retailer, is responsible for making sure that it is safe and that it is shipped and stored according to the instructions. Manufacturers generally apply date labels at their own discretion and for a variety of reasons. The most common is to inform consumers and retailers of the date up to which they can expect the food to retain its desired quality and flavour. The key exception to this general rule is for infant formula products. These products are required to bear a “Use By” date, up to which the manufacturer has confirmed that the product contains no less than a minimum amount of each nutrient identified on the product label, and that the product will

be of an acceptable quality.

### “Best-before” date

A “best-before” date, also known as a durable life date, tells when the durable life period of a pre-packaged food product ends. This information is usually found on the label with the words “best before” and “meilleur avant”.

Durable life means the anticipated amount of time that an unopened food product, when stored under appropriate conditions, will retain its:

- freshness;
- taste;
- nutritional value; or
- any other qualities claimed by the manufacturer.



The best-before date indicates to consumers that if the product has been properly handled (stored under conditions appropriate to that product), the unopened product should be of high quality until the specified date

Best-before dates do not guarantee product safety, follow storage directions, and use the guidelines for storage conditions to keep the food safe to eat. Aim to eat foods especially perishable ones sooner rather than later for the best quality and to lower the chance of food going bad. This date label does not refer to safety but to how long the product will retain its quality (flavour, colour, crispness, resilience and firmness etc.). Quality gradually deteriorates after the best-before date. But the food may still be perfectly edible.

Food that has been stored properly is still safe to eat after the best-before date. One simple way of minimizing waste is to look, smell and taste food. Trust your senses – if they tell you that the food is still good, feel free to eat it.

Normally, all packaged food is to be labelled with a best-before date – or a use-by date in certain cases. Fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as a few other items, are exempt from the requirement. Food with a shelf life of longer than 90 days are not required to have best before dates, but manufacturers can choose to add one. If they add a best before date, it means the same thing – foods before their best before keep their nutrition and quality when unopened and stored properly.

Best before, durable life and

packaged on dates are essentially the same. They tell about the freshness, nutrition and quality of the food when it is stored according to directions and is unopened. After the best before date, the quality may be less than when it was packaged, and there may be less of some nutrients. All foods with a shelf life of 90 days or less are required to have a best before or durable life date. For example, yogurt and pre-packaged foods like hummus, guacamole and tofu have them. Foods packaged in the store where they are sold also have a best before date or a “packaged on” date. Foods with a “packaged on” date should also have more information on how many days the product will stay fresh either on the label or in a nearby store.

It is not illegal to sell a product if its best-before date has passed. However, when this date has passed, the food may lose some of its freshness and flavour, or its texture may have changed. Some of its nutritional value, such as vitamin C content, may also be lost. It is illegal to sell food that is unsafe. It is the responsibility of food manufacturers, producers and retailers to ensure the food they produce and sell is safe. Any changes made to the best-before date or durable life information that result in false or misleading information on the label are prohibited.

Food manufacturers can collect this information by either conducting tests themselves to assess quality. This can be done by storing multiple versions of your product in the recommended storage condition and then testing them at various time intervals to assess the point when quality begins to decline. It is important to note that you do not produce, package or store these test-products any differently than you would normally do. Finally, the best-if-used-by date should pass before any sort of decline in product quality. Since best-if-used-by dates are an indicator of quality, it is important that your product is safe for consumption well beyond the date you print on the label.

It is important to note that a best-before date is not the same as expiration date. The ‘best before’ date guarantees certain properties of the product to be effective up to this point. Once the date has passed, it may just lose its freshness, taste, aroma or nutrients. But it does not necessarily mean that the food is no longer safe to eat. In order to decide whether the food is still edible, one should rely on his/her senses (sight, smell and taste). The product should not be consumed if found that the taste has been compromised, odour and appearance is odd or it is exhibiting strange consistency. NOTE: This only applies to unopened shelf-stable products. Once a sealed product is

exposed to air it is prone to contamination. Thus, the 'best before' date no longer applies to it.

### Packaging dates

"Packaged on" dates are similar to "best-before" date but are used on retail-packed foods with a durable life date of 90 days or less, and must be accompanied by durable life information either on the label or on a poster next to the food. The durable life information can be expressed several ways, for example, the number of days a product will retain its freshness, or a best-before date. Together, the "packaged on" date and durable life information tell consumers about the anticipated amount of time within which an unopened food product will retain its quality and freshness.

### Expiration (Use-by) date

An expiration date is not the same as a best-before date. Expiration dates are required only on certain foods that have strict compositional and nutritional specifications which might not be met after the expiration date. Expiration dates must be used on the following products:

- formulated liquid diets (nutritionally complete diets for people using oral or tube feeding methods);
- foods represented for

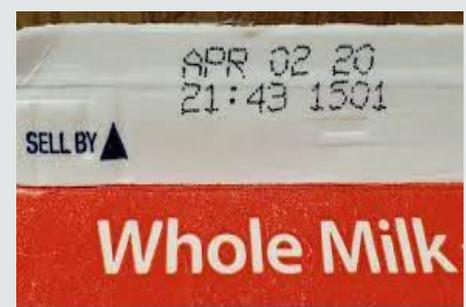
use in a very low-energy diet (foods sold only by a pharmacist and only with a written order from a physician);

- meal replacements (formulated food that, by itself, can replace one or more daily meals);
- nutritional supplements (food sold or represented as a supplement to a diet that may be inadequate in energy and essential nutrients); and
- human milk substitutes (infant formula).

Expiration dates tell consumers the last day a product is safe to consume. Best before date on the other hand tells you that the food is no longer in its perfect shape from that date. It may just lose its freshness, taste, aroma or nutrients. It does not necessarily mean that the food is no longer safe to eat. Best before date is basically a quality indicator. Another term that gets mixed up with this is the 'use by' date which applies only to perishable goods such as fresh fish or meat. Dispose them off immediately once they have passed the 'use by' date.

When a food must be consumed before a certain date to ensure its safety and quality the use-by date or expiration date must be declared. Where a use-by date or expiration date is not required, the best-before

date or best quality before date must be declared. If products must be consumed within three months, a day, month and year must be indicated. For products lasting beyond three months, a month and year must be indicated. After the expiration date, the food may not have the same nutrient content declared as on the label. Food should not be bought, sold or eaten if the expiration date has passed. It should be discarded. Manufacturers specify a use-by date if they think that the product can deteriorate quickly and become a health risk. The use-by date is the last day the manufacturer guarantees that the food can be consumed without putting your health at risk. Foods with an expired use-by date may not be sold or donated.



Food safety involves the safe handling of food from the time it is grown, packaged, distributed, and prepared to prevent foodborne illnesses and is the responsibility of those who handle and prepare food commercially for delivery to consumers and of consumers who prepare and eat food. Foodborne illness may be caused by bacteria that

grow on food or by viruses that are spread because food is not cleaned, stored, or handled properly. Expiry dates are indicative of the safety and nutritional quality of foodstuffs and nutrition. It is risky to consume unhealthy food. The risk of food-borne diseases increases after the expiration date, especially if the storage conditions are less than optimal. Reading food labelling information is important to assist in making informed choices of food.

## Other date markings

Other voluntary date marking systems may be useful to consumers. These may appear on food products as long as they are not misleading and the label meets appropriate requirements. These different word-

ings are permitted to be used on food products as long as the label meets regulations and requirements. Food businesses should be aware of these different types of wordings that might be used on packaged food products and what they mean. These include:

- **“Sell by” date:** Refers to a product’s shelf life in-store – the recommended time in which it should be sold to retain marketed quality.
- **“Freeze by” date:** Indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- **“Manufactured on”/“prepared on” date:** The date on which the food becomes the product as de-

scribed. This is not an indication of the durability of the product.

- **“Date of packaging”:** The date on which the food is placed in the immediate container in which it will be ultimately sold. This is not an indication of the durability of the product. Packaging dates are closely related to best before dates and are intended to give consumers an idea of how long a product will maintain its quality. These dates are used on food products with a shelf life of 90 days or less

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*“Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten. Always use TBS-certified products”*

# Industrial food processing and food safety



**Gwantwa Samson**

**F**ood safety refers to a set of scientific guidelines that dictate how to store, handle and prepare food to ensure it is safe for human consumption. Access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health.

World Food Safety Day (WFSD) is celebrated on 7 June of every year. Among other issues it aims to draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks.

This year's theme, 'Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow', enlightens that production and consumption of safe food has immediate and long-term benefits for people. Traditionally in many Tanzanian communities, it has been a practice and it is believed that safe food is the one produced and prepared domes-

tically or at household level. Increase in global trade, expanding world economy, liberalization of food trade, growing consumer demand and developments in food science and technology have caused shift away from the traditional food production to the consumption of processed and pre-packaged foods.

Pre-packaged foods are foods that have been processed to increase the shelf life and improve some organoleptic properties and made up in advance in a container, ready to offer to consumer.

As the consumption of processed foods increases, there is also an increase in health risks which are perceived to be foodborne and thus a rise in the number of myths about food processing and food safety at large. There is also an increased fear in the society that "processed foods" are bad for health and in most cases are linked with various health conditions and diseases.

The society should first understand that most foods we eat are processed and that food processing is meant since ages, to transform raw ingredi-

ents into edible food by using physical and chemical means. Also, in most cases, food processing involves food preservation by stopping or slowing down the spoilage of food and loss of quality for longer time.

Methods used in food processing and preservation include cooking, refrigeration, processes like salting, drying, smoking, fermenting, pasteurization etc. Food processing also makes otherwise inedible foods palatable and nutritious; whole grains, for example, would not even be digestible without milling and cooking. In domestic food processing depending on the context, sometimes there is addition of oils, salt, table sugar etc. In industrial food processing there is a combination of multiple ingredients, including food additives like flavouring, colouring, emulsifiers and sweeteners other than simple table sugar. Soft drinks, desserts, breakfast cereals and some breads fall into this group. This category often causes the most panic in relation to health as narrated above, but the reality is that more- or less-nutritious options can be found in all categories of processed foods, and thus industrial processed

foods do not need to be avoided completely. However, it is true that in the course of industrial food processing, if the set standards and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) are not adhered to, there is likelihood of the processed food to be inferior nutritionally and also to be unsafe for human consumption.

Industrial Food processing is legally regulated and food regulatory authorities worldwide set rules, standards and regulations all of which are aimed at ensuring that food safety is attained. Tanzania Bureau of Standards amongst other responsibilities has the mandate to ensure food safety in the country. In the context of food processing, consumers are protected against hazards which may rise from consumption of improperly processed foods. The Bureau is doing certification and registration of all industrial processed and pre-packaged food products. In the course of registration and certification, evaluation of ingredients used in food processing is done to ensure that they have been appropriately used. Similarly, assessment of conformity for imported foods is done at the Bureau and also GMP inspection of

all food processing industries to ensure adherence to Good Hygiene Practices as well as Good Manufacturing Practices.

Even though the Bureau is doing all these, food safety is still a shared responsibility between governments, producers and consumers. Everyone has a role to play from farm to table to ensure the food we consume is safe and healthy. Processors or producers of food are responsible to ensure that they adhere to all set requirements to produce safe food and that consumers are provided with adequate and precise information about the processed food so that they can make informed choices.

Moreover, food processors need to be extra careful when it comes to food safety, as their policies, procedures and the actions of food handlers can affect the health and safety of the public. Food safety mistakes in a business of industrial food processing can have serious consequences for customers, the business and those involved in the whole process.

It is important that food handlers know about the health hazards that exist in food pro-

cessing, how to manage them, especially in cases where the processing involve the use of food additives and other cautious ingredients and methods which have direct safety implication on the processed food and when misused can cause health hazards to consumers. In this respect, food safety training and expertise must be the highest priority for any food industry to ensure food safety.

On the other hand, consumers have a responsibility to ensure that they purchase processed foods while well informed and from reliable sources. Consumers also have a responsibility to read food labels so that they can make informed choices. It is obvious that in this era of increased globalization and industrialization, industrial processed foods cannot be avoided. Importantly, it is for every stakeholder of food safety to play their part in ensuring that the food eaten today is not a source of health risks tomorrow.

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