

White Paper 8

Standards in Palestine

1. Description of the Problem

Because of many interrelated reasons Palestinian industries and products, have demonstrated moderate to low levels of competitiveness locally and internationally. The problem has been manifested in many aspects related to the degraded quality of locally manufactured products, low volumes of export, the trend towards import among manufacturers, and lack of standardization, just to name a few. This paper has addressed the important problem of quality, standardization, and product competitiveness in Palestine. Based on a methodological assessment of the standards problem, the following major problems have been identified:

1. Insignificant role of the Palestinian Standards Institution (PSI) in promoting and enforcing quality and standards in the manufacturing sectors.
2. The very limited resources of the PSI and the related administrative and financial constraints that have severely and adversely affected its intended role.
3. The lack of sufficient and capable testing laboratories at the PSI and in the private sector, especially calibration laboratories.
4. Absence of the required integration among related organizations in Palestine that are responsible for establishing, enforcing and promoting standards and quality.
5. Lack of effective modern management systems in the business community that are quality-oriented and geared towards international standards and markets. Existing management practices have created barriers to the implementation of standards despite their accessibility and availability.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the paper can be summarized as follows:

1. To determine the impact of quality and standardization on the competitiveness of Palestinian products and to state the recommendations and programs and the suitable policies to promote quality and standards.
2. To identify the existing problems of quality and standardization in Palestine.
3. To identify major stakeholders in the quality and standardization issue in Palestine.

3. General Recommendations

1. Assist prospective Palestinian manufacturers to comply with the requirements of the International Markets from standards and specifications and to get recognition in the Palestinian standard certificate and to increase the mutual recognition with the International standards institutes.
2. Encourage the establishment of a laboratory calibration body in Palestine by the private sector and to support the existing laboratories. And build calibration laboratories at the PSI if the private sector does not want to build these laboratories, and encourage these laboratories to Accreditation by an international laboratory accreditation body.

3. Taxation policies applicable to the manufacturing sectors in Palestine should consider certain incentives based on product quality and competitiveness levels. Factors to be considered can be:
 - Degree of manufacturer commitment and implementation of quality standards.
 - Quantity of export.
 - Winning of national or international quality awards.
4. Palestine should establish mutual recognition agreements with other countries of potential markets. Agreements should be established between the Palestinian Standards Institute and like institutions in other countries.
5. Governmental departments must enforce quality and standards as mandatory requirements in purchasing procedures.

4. Recommended Programs, Measures and Laws

1. Implement and enforce the law of the Palestinian Standards Institute (PSI), and authorize the PSI to be responsible for developing and issuing standards, besides its role in certifying and testing systems and products according to "optional" standards.
2. Improve the capabilities of the PSI. The PSI requires immediate strengthening in these several aspects:
 - Qualify an increased number of PSI technical and management staff to meet certification requirements.
 - Build a strong PSI information network with other international standards organizations.
 - The PSI should be run as an independent organization with a wider-base involvement and participation of the private sector.
3. PNA ministries and departments must recognize that the PSI is the sole authority for auditing, testing, and evaluating product and system conformity and issuing system and product certificates.
4. Exercise stringent control and enforcement on non-conforming products or systems.
5. Identify potential testing laboratories whose services are highly needed for providing product conformity tests. These laboratories should be assisted to develop and implement quality management systems, and to build technical capacity for testing products against international product standards.
6. Sufficient public awareness initiatives should be made on the role of the PSI in the supervision of quality and standards to increase confidence in Palestinian products.
7. Qualify PSI for assessing and certifying management systems to international standards such as ISO 9000.
8. Formulate and issue a law for protecting consumers (e.g., Consumer Right Act). Such a law should reflect satisfaction of Palestinian consumers with the performance of the public and the private sectors (e.g., the Palestinian Customer Satisfaction Index, PCSI)