

Overview

Standards setting as a trend is gaining momentum in India. India has generally made efforts to match national standards in line with international norms, and most Indian standards are harmonized with ISO standards. Nonetheless, some Indian standards are not matched with international standards, and several recent standards-related regulations have created barriers to trade and posed challenges to expanding U.S. exports in certain sectors. India has also frequently failed to notify the WTO of new standards and allow time for discussion with its trading partners prior to implementation. Because of pressure from consumer rights groups, NGOs, and environmental activists there is a growing emphasis on product standards in India in various industry sectors. The proactive role of the judiciary in formulating legal framework and regulations for better standards and control in sectors such as the environment have also contributed to an increased awareness and emphasis on product standards in India. But, for instance, while Indian food safety laws are outdated or in some cases more stringent than international norms, enforcement is weak.

Standards Organizations

In India, voluntary standards are exclusively developed by the national standards body. The [Bureau of Indian Standards \(BIS\)](#), established under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act of 1986, is the national standards body of India responsible for development and formulation of standards. BIS is comprised of representatives of industry, consumer organizations, scientific and research bodies, professional organizations, technical institutions, Indian government ministries, and members of parliament.

Besides development and formulation of Indian Standards, BIS is involved with product certification, quality system certifications and testing, and consumer affairs.

The Ministry of Commerce, Government of India (GOI) has designated BIS as the National WTO-TBT Enquiry Point in accordance with its obligations to the agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the WTO. According to the agreement, BIS in liaison with the Indian Ministry of Commerce, issues notifications on proposed technical regulations and certification systems in India to the WTO. BIS's Technical Information Services Center responds to domestic and foreign requests for information about Indian standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment rules. U.S. companies that wish to make comments on any notifications can obtain copies of the text from BIS from the WTO-TBT Enquiry Point, Technical Information Services Center in BIS. BIS communicates comments to the Ministry of Commerce.

BIS is the only organization in India authorized to operate quality certification plans under an Act of Parliament. It serves as the official member and sets policy for Indian participation in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electro technical Commission (IEC).

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL: <http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

Conformity Assessment

A list of testing organizations spread throughout the country providing conformity testing against relevant Indian standards is available from the BIS website at: <http://www.bis.org.in/lab/lab.htm>
In association with technical GOI agencies and NGOs, BIS carries out periodic surveillance inspections of products under mandatory certification. A provision exists for sub-contracting certification surveillance activities to relevant competent agencies in specific areas. Certain types of steel, rubber, and electronic products are presently under such surveillance agreements.

Product Certification

BIS's product standards are basically voluntary in nature, but subsequent to the removal of quantitative restrictions (QRs) on imports by India in 2000, the GOI, in order to provide protection to domestic producers in certain sectors, promulgated regulations dictating that imports of 109 products are subject to mandatory compliance with specified Indian quality standards. For compliance, all exporters/manufacturers of the 109 products are required to register with, and obtain certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards, before exporting such goods to India.

The list of 109 products includes various food preservatives and additives, milk powder, infant milk food, certain kinds of cement, household and similar electrical appliances, several types of gas cylinders, and multi-purpose dry batteries.

These 109 products generally must be tested and certified by BIS in India. BIS now however, also has a system for foreign companies to receive automatic certification for products not manufactured in India. The system is based on a self-certification basis, under which a foreign manufacturer is permitted to apply the standards mark on the product after ascertaining its conformity to the Indian Standard licensed for. At the foreign manufacturer's expense, BIS inspectors travel to the manufacturer's country to inspect their production facility to pre-certify the company and its production system, and then authorizes subsequent monitoring and compliance by an independent inspector to ensure that the company maintains the specified standards.

Information on the application procedure for BIS Product Certification Plan for foreign companies is available through the BIS website at: <http://www.bis.org.in>

Exporters/manufacturers of these products also are required to maintain a presence in India. This requirement does not apply if the foreign manufacturer nominates an authorized representative in India who agrees to be responsible for compliance with the provisions of BIS on behalf of the foreign manufacturer as per an agreement signed between the manufacturer and BIS. Under separate arrangements some products have been placed under special certification plans of lot or batch inspections carried out by BIS inspecting officers. A majority of gas cylinders, deep well hand pumps and valves are certified through such plans.

To facilitate international trade and cooperation, India has plans to harmonize its standards with other countries, primarily with its main trading partners. A serious effort is being made by BIS to have mutual recognition of standards with various countries so that other countries provide recognition of the Indian standards on certain products and vice versa. The BIS has expressed interest in having mutual recognition agreements with U.S. organizations.

Accreditation

The National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) established in 1985 as an autonomous body under the Department of Science & Technology is authorized by the GOI as the sole accreditation body for testing and calibration laboratories. More than 200 testing and calibration laboratories have been accredited to date. A list of accredited laboratories is available from NABL's website at: <http://www.nabl-india.org/nabl/html/about-intro.asp>

For international mutual acceptance of test results in order to be compliant with the WTO/Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) regulations, NABL is a member of international organizations such as International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC) and Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (APLAC). NABL is a signatory to ILAC as well as APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA), based on mutual evaluation and acceptance of other MRA Partner laboratory accreditation systems.

More and more Indian manufacturing companies are investing in standards accreditation. The number of plants in India with ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 accreditation increased from a negligible figure in the early nineties to more than 8000 in 2003. Five Indian companies have won the Deming prize for total quality management in FY 2002-03, while eight more are preparing for the honours this year. Eighteen manufacturing plants of 10 Indian companies have been recognised by the Japanese Institute of Plant Management for excelling in total productive management in 2003.

Publication of Technical Regulations

An electronic version of Indian Standards is now available on CD-ROM from the Bureau of Indian Standards. Further information is available at <http://www.bis.org.in/other/iscd.htm>

Contacts

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NABL

Department of Science and Technology Technology Bhawan, New Mehrauli Road New Delhi – 110 016 Tel no.: 91-11-2686 4642 / 2685 7661 Fax no.: 91-11-2686 4642 / 686 3866 Email : akc@alpha.nic.in

Web: <http://www.nabl-india.org/>

Director General of Foreign Trade
Ministry of Commerce & Industries
Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi 110 011
Tel: 91-11-2301 1777
Fax: 91-11-2301 8613
Web: <http://dgft.nic.in/>

Department of Consumer Affairs
Office of the Additional Secretary (Weights & Measures)
Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi 110 001
Tel: 91-11-2338 3027
Fax: 91-11-2338 6575

Trade Agreements

India has entered into bilateral and regional trading agreements over the years. These agreements, besides offering preferential tariff rates on the trade of goods among member countries, also provide for wider economic cooperation in the fields of trade in services, investment, and intellectual property.

The preferential arrangement/plans under which India is receiving tariff preferences are the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP). Presently, there are 46 member countries of the GSTP and India has exchanged tariff concessions with 12 countries on a limited number of products.

Other such preferential arrangements include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA), the Bangkok Agreement and India–Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISLFTA). These arrangements/ agreements prescribe Rules of Origin that have to be fulfilled for exports to be eligible for tariff preference.

India and several Asian countries have signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which is an integrated package of agreements embracing trade in goods, services, investments and economic co-operations in education, science and technology, air services, and intellectual property. The agreements provide wide-ranging exemptions and reductions on basic customs duty on products imported from Singapore into India. The Indian Ministry of Commerce projected that 60 percent of India's future trade would be accounted for by free trade agreements (FTAs), with such countries as Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan and even China. In a major policy shift, the government has decided to convert all Preferential/Free Trade Agreements (PFA/FTA) into Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements (CECA). This goes beyond the Indian government's bid in recent months to embrace bilateralism aggressively.

The decision seems to be aimed at mollifying the World Trade Organization (WTO), which cautioned India against negotiating exclusively PFAs/FTAs. PTAs/FTAs usually involve structured reduction in tariffs between two countries. CECAs would cover preferential relaxation of FDI rules vis-à-vis the partner country, tax holidays on investment and income, easing of visa restrictions etc. Trade in services too would come under the purview of CECA. Information on India's bilateral trade agreements is available at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry website: http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta.asp?id=2&trade=i

Web Resources

Trade regulations:

Import tariffs

<http://dgft.nic.in/>

<http://dgftcom.nic.in/exim/2000/policy/contents.htm>

<http://www.dgciskol.nic.in/>

<http://www.cbec.gov.in/>

Trade barriers

<http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/reports-and-publications/2011-0>

http://commerce.nic.in/medium_term/contents.htm

<http://www.ustr.gov/>

Import requirements and documentation

<http://dgftcom.nic.in>

<http://dipp.nic.in/>

U.S. export controls

<http://www.bis.doc.gov/>

http://www.access.gpo.gov/bis/ear/ear_data.html

<http://www.cbp.gov/>

Temporary entry

<http://dgftcom.nic.in/exim/2000/policy/chap-02.htm>

<http://www.atacarnet.in/>

Labeling and marking requirements

<http://www.bis.org.in/cert/man.htm>

<http://www.bis.org.in/cert/prooth.htm>

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

<http://commerce.nic.in/qr/default.asp>

Standards:

Overview

<http://www.bis.org.in/bs/index.htm>

<http://www.bis.org.in/org/obj.htm>

Standards Organizations

<http://www.bis.org.in/sf/powork.htm>

Conformity Assessment

<http://www.bis.org.in/lab/lab.htm>

<http://www.bis.org.in/sf/nrstd.htm>

Product Certification

<http://www.bis.org.in/cert/fm.htm>

<http://www.bis.org.in/cert/procert.htm>

<http://www.bis.org.in/sf/nrstd.htm>

Accreditation

<http://www.nabl-india.org/nabl/html/contact.asp>

Publication of Technical Regulations

<http://www.bis.org.in/other/iscd.htm>

Labeling and Marking

<http://www.bis.org.in/cert/man.htm>

Trade agreements

<http://commerce.nic.in/>

http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta.asp?id=2&trade=i