Making Voluntary Sustainability Standards Contribute to the SDGs
11 October 2018

"Voluntary Sustainability Standards, Trade and Sustainable Development"
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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD
Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS), Trade and Sustainable Development
UNFSS

- UNFSS is a neutral, independent and credible platform to harness VSS potential to achieve SDG by:
  - **Facilitating** developing countries access to global markets
  - **Stimulating** well-informed policy dialogue among key stakeholders on the national and international level

- UNFSS' **goal** is to make VSS a way to **improve the well-being and prosperity** of people in developing countries

- UNFSS functions by **pooling resources from five United Nations agencies:**
  - FAO
  - International Trade Centre
  - UN Environment
  - UNIDO
  - UNCTAD
UNFSS' work response to a need....

- Developing countries often have problems with VSS because:
  - they can’t find credible standards
  - compliance is costly
  - small-scale producers risk being left out
  - standards are not harmonized causing unnecessary multiplication

- UNFSS respond to these challenges through:
  - Informed policy dialogue: Example International Convention on Sustainable Trade and Standards (New Delhi, September 17-18, 2018)
  - Support for national initiatives: India Private Sustainability Standards Platform
  - Research and Analysis: Flagship reports
Key Findings of the 3rd Flagship

1. **VSS can potentially be a catalyst of sustainable development**  
   - Analysis reveals institutional complementarities between VSS and the SDGs

2. **However, effectiveness depends on the institutional design factors of VSS systems**  
   - Credibility is fundamental: rigorous standard-setting, monitoring and verification mechanism

3. **VSS systems could be facilitators or barriers to trade**  
   - To avoid being barriers and reduce costs they should do more to actively support suppliers and increase transparency

4. **Concerns for multiplicity of VSS**  
   - This increase compliance costs

5. **Increasing interest of VSS in developing countries**  
   - Through multi-stakeholder platforms and by collaborating with International Organizations as a channel to emphasize national priorities
VSS Move Towards Multi-Stakeholder Approach in Developing Countries

- National Platforms address challenges that producers, consumers, and exporters face with regards to VSS, namely awareness and information gaps.

- They:
  - Facilitates dialogue
  - Adapts external standards to domestic conditions
  - Extends international networking and collaborations
  - Knowledge-Sharing: building an ecosystem for VSS
  - Links policy making with research and analysis
  - Get Governments involved in the discussions

- Examples of activities (Last two years):
  - Study “The Indian Story”
  - Qingdao, China Conference (more than 500 participants)
  - International Convention on Sustainable Trade and Standards, New Dehli, (again more than 500 participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National Platforms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIA</strong></td>
<td>Consisting of Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, a Steering Council, Sectoral Committees and a Secretariat, hosted by Quality Council of India (QCI), with the Ministry of Commerce and Trade.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHINA</strong></td>
<td>The Secretariat is being run by the Standardization Administration of China in cooperation with the China Association for Standardization.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BRAZIL</strong></td>
<td>The Platform is being run by the Brazilian National Institute of Metrology, Quality and Technology (INMETRO).</td>
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<td><strong>México</strong></td>
<td>Just launched two months ago. Supported by the Direcccion de Normas in the Ministry of Economy, but will be run each year by a different institution</td>
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A Platform of International Dialogue on Voluntary Sustainability Standards

Thank You

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