

4 Overview of the South African SQAM infrastructure and its regional counterparts

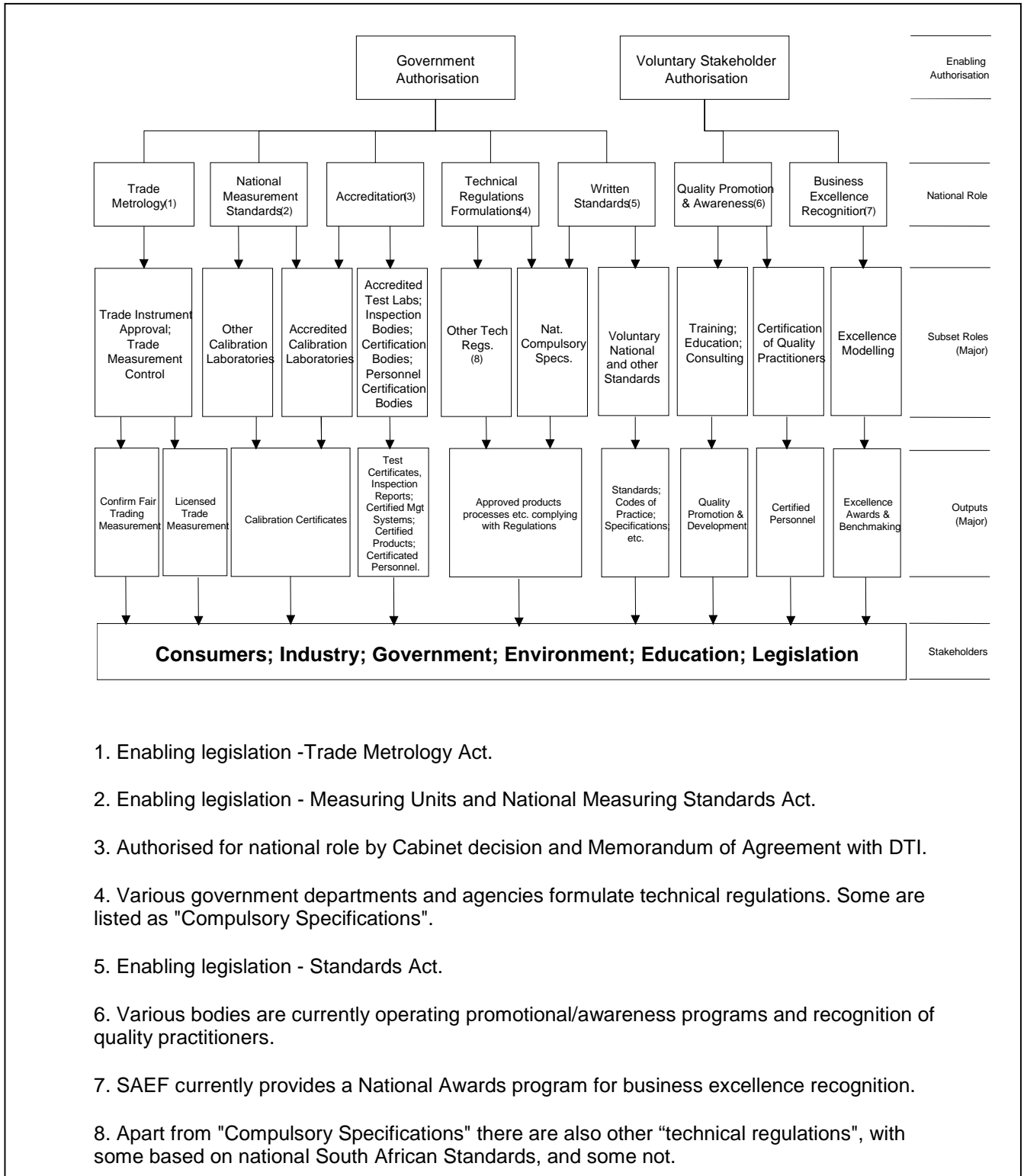
4.1 The South African SQAM landscape

The South African standards, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM) infrastructure is characterised by a combination of well-established, long standing organisations together with organisations that can be considered relatively young. The South African Bureau of Standards (The SABS), which was established in 1909 to meet the needs of the burgeoning gold industry, has achieved several milestones in its 90 years of existence, and is a household name. The NML was established in 1947.

SANAS, on the other hand, was formally established in 1996 and became fully operational in 1998, whereas the South African Quality Institute (SAQI) was only established in 1993 as an independent organisation.

The current SQAM landscape for South Africa is shown in Figure 4 on the next page

Figure 4: The South African SQAM landscape



4.2 Regional standards and conformance infrastructure

Within the world economic environment, there has been regionalisation of economic activity e.g. the European Community, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, the South African Development Community etc.

A similar pattern of regionalisation of standards and conformance infrastructure has occurred, at least partly because of the close relationship between trade and standardisation. The regional groupings of standards and conformance bodies parallel the regional economic groupings, but do not match exactly on an economy-by-economy basis. A representative outline is shown in Table 3..

The regional standards and conformance groupings act as a two-way conduit between their geographic areas and their respective international coordinating bodies : ISO/IEC (standards-writing). CGPM/BIPM (physical metrology). OIML/BIML (legal metrology). ILAC (laboratory accreditation). and IAF (general accreditation-certification bodies etc.). On the one hand, the regional grouping in a particular discipline provides a forum for members to aggregate any local concerns and convey these to the international body. On the other hand, the international body can achieve more rapid dissemination of its information and practices through the counterpart regional body than would be possible by contacting the participating entity in each individual economy.

The regional bodies also provide opportunities for development of the organisations in their member economies. In most regional bodies, there is a mix of developed and developing economies and the opportunity arises to provide mentoring and assistance in a more focussed way than would be possible with a single international coordinating body.

As the trend towards global mutual recognition of voluntary sector agencies increases, the regional arrangements are particularly important as a means of assisting all economies to build towards international recognition of their standards and conformance infrastructure.

South African standards and conformance bodies have a pivotal role to play in the regional standards and conformance groupings for the South African Development Community. The South African standards and conformance institutions have the longest history, in the region, of interaction with their counterpart organisations in Europe, North America and Asia as well as with the international coordinating bodies. Therefore the SADC standards and conformance grouping is highly dependent on the South African member bodies to act as the two-way conduit

between the regional and international levels. Each of the South African standards and conformance bodies plays a significant role in its respective regional grouping, and it is important for the whole SADC region that this level of cooperation be maintained.

Table 3: Regional standards and conformance bodies

Geographic area	Functional area	Regional body
Europe	Standards development	CEN (European Committee for Standardization); CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization)
	Physical metrology	EUROMET (European Collaboration on Measurement Standards)
	Legal metrology	WELMEC (European Cooperation in Legal Metrology)
	Accreditation	EA (European Cooperation for Accreditation)
	Certification	
The Americas	Standards development	
	Physical metrology	SIM (Inter-American Metrology System; including NORAMET, CARIMET, ANDIMET, CAMET, SURAMET)
	Legal metrology	
	Accreditation	IAAC (The Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation)
	Certification	
Asia-Pacific	Standards development	PASC (Pacific Area Standards Congress)
	Physical metrology	APMP (Asia Pacific Metrology Programme)
	Legal metrology	APLMF (Asia Pacific Legal Metrology Forum)
	Accreditation	APLAC (Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation)
	Certification	PAC (Pacific Accreditation Cooperation)

Southern Africa	Standards development Physical metrology Legal metrology Accreditation Certification	SADCSTAN (SADC Cooperation in Standardisation) SADCMET (SADC Cooperation in Measurement Traceability) SADCMEL (SADC Cooperation in Legal Metrology) SADCA (SADC Cooperation in Accreditation) SQAMEG (SADC SQAM Expert Group)
Middle East & North Africa	Standards development Physical metrology Legal metrology Accreditation Certification	MENAMET (Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Metrology Cooperation)
Central & Eastern Europe	Standards development Physical metrology Legal metrology Accreditation Certification	COOMET (Euro-Asian Cooperation of National Metrological Institutions)