
3 Broad features of the current SQAM

The current South African SQAM and its interactions with stakeholders is characterised by the following:

- A number of well-developed and internationally-respected institutions providing standards development, metrology, accreditation and certification services.
- A history of overlaps in the responsibilities and delivery of some national interest roles which, in international practice, are typically conducted by separate, specialist organisations. While some of these overlaps have been reduced over recent years, others endure, creating confusion in the community and diluting scarce national human resources.
- An outdated suite of legislation affecting the roles of SQAM institutions and their interactions with regulatory processes.
- A fragmented framework for formulation and implementation of technical regulations, which hinders business efficiency, and, in some instances, fails to provide adequate protection to consumers.
- Near collapse of the national and provincial inspectorate for trade metrology leading to lack of protection of consumers from unfair trading practices.
- Public confusion and perceived or real conflicts of interest in the combination of national interest, regulatory support and competitive commercial activities undertaken by the South African Bureau of Standards.
- In international terms, relatively high levels of government funding for some of the SQAM activities (in many cases justified by the developing country status of South Africa), but varying degrees of clarity in the application of such funding to specific national interest objectives.
- A need to address newly-emerging national interest needs through targeted funding for SQAM support for international trade negotiations in regulated sectors, in representation on SADC specialist SQAM forums and in supporting potential government to government agreements directed at eliminating technical barriers to trade.
- Availability of comprehensive international networks of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) between South Africa's accreditation body and its international counterparts, and similarly, between the national measurement institute and its counterparts. Such MRAs have

South Africa very well placed to facilitate market access in numerous economies and to underpin any future government to government MRAs in the regulated sectors.

- Very limited national coordination between the major SQAM institutions.
- A surprising lack of direct government representation on the governing Councils and Boards of the institutions funded for national interest activities.
- A lack of any national strategy for development of quality awareness and a similar lack of coordination and harmony between various providers of quality awareness and development services.
- Although there are various incentives in place for Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprises (SMMEs) to access specific SQAM services, it does not cater for all SQAM activities, and is in general limited to SMME's in the manufacturing industry. Much progress has also been made to remove barriers created by the SQAM that prevented SMME's for entering specific industries. The "bridging standards" of the SABS is a good example of such efforts that enables SMME's to enter markets while still ensuring quality.
- Availability of a dedicated cadre of staff in the Government Directorate responsible for SQAM institutions and for development of trade agreements where SQAM credibility and support will be essential in future trade negotiations.