

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME FOR OECS MSMES TO ENHANCE MARKET ENTRY INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION MARKET

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Relevant background

The CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), signed in 2008, aimed to enhance trade and investment between CARIFORUM states and the European Union (EU). Despite its goals, outcomes have been mixed, with EU exports to CARIFORUM growing while CARIFORUM's exports to the EU declining. This highlights challenges faced by CARIFORUM firms, especially SMEs, in accessing the EU market due to factors like small market size, production capacity, and technical barriers.

SMEs are crucial to the Caribbean economy, necessitating enhanced export competitiveness. Caribbean Export, the regional agency supporting SMEs in export development, has focused on improving SMEs' technical capacity through various initiatives under European Development Fund (EDF) programmes. These initiatives include meeting international standards, addressing phytosanitary requirements, packaging, labeling, and certifications vital for EU market access. Caribbean Export has also facilitated Caribbean firms' participation in international trade shows, expanding their global reach and confidence.

The proposed Standards and Certification Programme is one of the critical elements of the new EU Global Gateway Regional Private Sector Development Programme (RPSDP) III, which started in October 2023. This programme aims to enhance the Caribbean private sector's technical competencies through regional workshops and a technical support programme, focusing on international mandatory and voluntary certifications, and packaging and labeling standards. By improving access to these certifications, the programme seeks to boost the competitiveness of Caribbean SMEs for the global market.

The CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the National Standards Bureaus have been identified as partners under this initiative. Technical experts will provide tailored support, workshop materials, and guidance on certification processes, ensuring SMEs receive comprehensive assistance to navigate international trade complexities.

The programme will also focus on creating direct business-to-business (B2B) linkages between Caribbean firms and EU counterparts, fostering trade and investment flows. These connections aim to deepen regional integration and create a balanced, mutually beneficial relationship.

The Standards and Certification Programme leverages EPA opportunities and addresses challenges faced by Caribbean SMEs. By focusing on standards, certifications, and market linkages, it aims to unlock the Caribbean private sector's potential, driving sustainable economic growth and development.

Between January and July 2025, a series of capacity-building initiatives under the Standards and Certification Programme were launched as part of the EU Global Gateway Regional Private Sector Development Programme (RPSDP) III. The initial phase targeted four CARIFORUM states—Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago—identified based on the strong response to a regional Call for Expressions of Interest. A critical mass of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from these countries was engaged, demonstrating significant interest and readiness to benefit from technical support in standards, certification, and market access.

Building on the momentum and strong interest of this initial implementation phase, Caribbean Export now seeks to extend this support to countries within the Eastern Caribbean. This expansion aims to ensure inclusive participation across the CARIFORUM region, enhance the competitiveness of OECS-based SMEs, and deepen regional integration in alignment with EPA objectives.

1.1 Contracting Authority

The contracting authority for this assignment is the Caribbean Export Development Agency.

1.2 Beneficiary Countries

The primary beneficiaries under this project are the private sector SMEs in the subregion of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States; namely Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

1.3 Target Groups

The primary target groups for this program are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the sub region. Firms will be grouped as follows:

1. Tier 1 firms representing firms still in the export development stage and will receive general support towards certification;
2. Tier 2 firms, or firms that demonstrate export capacity or are exporting will be eligible for tailored support towards certification.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1 Overall Objective

The overall objective of the Standards and Certification Programme is to enhance the global competitiveness of Caribbean SMEs by equipping them with the necessary certifications and technical knowledge required to access and succeed in the European Union (EU) market.

2.2 Specific Objectives

- To provide capacity-building training focused on the importance of international standards and certifications in the export process.
- To enhance SMEs' understanding and compliance with packaging, labeling, and sanitary and phytosanitary standards required for the EU market.

- To provide technical assistance to SMEs, supporting them in achieving international certifications, such as HACCP and ISO standards.
- To facilitate the creation of business-to-business (B2B) linkages between Caribbean firms and EU counterparts, fostering trade and investment.

2.3 Purpose of consultancy and expected results

The purpose of the consultancy is to deliver specialized training and technical assistance that will enable Caribbean SMEs to achieve the necessary certifications and meet the compliance requirements for the EU market. The expected results include:

- Increased awareness and understanding among Caribbean SMEs of the importance of international standards and certifications.
- Enhanced technical capacity of SMEs, enabling them to obtain necessary certifications and comply with EU market regulations.
- Strengthened market access for Caribbean SMEs through improved compliance with international standards and successful certification.
- Creation of sustainable business linkages between Caribbean firms and EU partners, leading to increased trade and investment.

3. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS AND MITIGATION

3.1 Assumptions

- Caribbean SMEs have the basic infrastructure and willingness to engage in the process of obtaining international certifications and improving their compliance with EU standards.
- There will be active participation and cooperation from key stakeholders, including SMEs, government agencies, and regional organizations such as CROSQ.
- The necessary financial and technical resources will be available throughout the duration of the program to support the capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives.

3.2 Risks

- SMEs may lack the capacity or resources to fully implement the changes necessary to achieve certifications or meet compliance standards.
- Low participation or engagement from SMEs due to perceived complexity or cost of the certification processes.
- External factors, such as changes in EU market regulations or global economic conditions, may impact the program's effectiveness.

3.3 Mitigation

- To mitigate the risk of limited SME capacity, the program will provide targeted technical assistance tailored to the specific needs and capabilities of each SME.
- Regular communication and coordination with certification bodies and other stakeholders will be maintained to ensure smooth and timely implementation of the program.

- The program will include a flexible design that allows for adjustments based on changing market conditions or regulatory updates to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

4.1 Specific Activities

The consultant/firm will be responsible for executing a phased programme that includes research, capacity-building workshops, tailored technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing monitoring. The main activities will include:

Research and Analysis

- Conduct research on EU market access requirements, with a focus on packaging, labeling, and certification standards, particularly for pre-packaged food products.
- Assess the current technical capabilities of Caribbean SMEs in meeting these requirements and identify gaps and priority areas for improvement.

Capacity Building Workshops - Phase 1: Capacity Building Workshop

- Design and deliver targeted virtual workshops targeting OECS SMEs to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of international standards and certifications.
- Support the identification and categorisation of SMEs into tiered groups for targeted support.
- Deliver hybrid or in-country workshops to deepen SMEs' understanding of specific international standards, regulatory compliance, and certification processes.

Technical Assistance Program - Phase 2:

- Provide customised technical assistance to selected SMEs to help them meet certification requirements and improve compliance with EU standards.
- Engage high-potential firms through in-depth assessments (e.g., site visits, production audits) to develop firm-specific action plans for certification readiness.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Collaborate with national Standards Bureaus, CROSQ, and other regional stakeholders to ensure alignment with national and regional quality infrastructure priorities.
- Promote long-term sustainability and integration of the programme into existing institutional frameworks.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Track the progress of participating SMEs throughout the programme, providing continuous support and real-time adjustments where necessary.
- Prepare comprehensive progress reports and final recommendations, including:
 - Lessons learned
 - SME performance outcomes
 - Suggested follow-up actions

Institutional Strengthening

- Train the trainer knowledge exchange to local and regional partners and staff of Caribbean Export

5. DELIVERABLES and REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Management Structure

The Manager, Technical Programmes will have oversight of this project. The consultant will coordinate closely with the Manager to ensure that all activities align with the objectives of the program. The Manager will be responsible for providing guidance, approving the deliverables, and facilitating any necessary resources or support needed by the consultant. Additionally, the manager will act as the primary point of contact between the consultant and any other stakeholders involved in the program, including regional organizations such as CROSQ.

5.2 Reporting

Report outlining key activities undertaken, progress made, and results achieved must be submitted to Mr. Wayne Elliott, Manager Technical Programmes and copied to Mrs. Natasha Edwin-Walcott, Lead-Export Development & Promotion at welliott@carib-export.com and nwalcott@carib-export.com

6. Logistics and Timing

6.1 Commencement date and period of implementation of tasks

The consultancy is expected to be completed over a period of 16 weeks or (4) months, with an expected start date of 1st September, 2025.

7. Payment Terms

All services must be completed to the satisfaction of the Agency and payments will be contingent on submission and approval of the progress report and appropriate invoice. Payments will be made in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the contract between the contracting authority and the consultant.

The following payment terms are proposed:

- Upon presentation and acceptance of Report 1, 20% of the total cost will be paid.
- Upon presentation and acceptance of Report 2, 40% of the total cost will be paid.
- Upon presentation and acceptance of Report 3, 40% of the total cost will be paid.

8. REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Qualifications and Work Experience

This consultancy requires the services of a key expert. The appointed consultant must meet the following minimum requirements:

- A postgraduate degree in at least one of the following relevant fields of study: trade policy, engineering or natural sciences.

- At least five (5) years' experience in the field of Quality infrastructure.
- Knowledge of relevant international standards such CODEX; ISO and CEN/CENLEC standards
- Knowledge of EU labelling and packaging regulations/requirement for market access
- Knowledge of the CARIFORUM- EU Economic Partnership Agreement.
- A minimum of five (5) years' experience in delivering professional training.
- Experience in training individuals in packaging and labelling of pre-packaged goods.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills; ability to be tactful and flexible in dealing with personnel at all levels of an organisation.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English.
- Excellent technical and report-writing skills.

8.2 WORK EXPERIENCE

- At least 7 years of relevant professional experience

Required Documentation

- Technical proposal/ concept design for delivery of services requested.
- Financial proposal in Euros
- Applicant Declaration form in paragraph 12.

Required documentation should be submitted to Natasha Edwin Walcott, Lead Export Development and Promotion with a copy to Mikaela Franklyn, Export Development and Promotion Officer at nwalcott@carib-export.com and mfranklyn@carib-export.com no later than **8th August, 2025 at 11:59pm AST**.

8.3 Office Accommodation

N/A

8.4 Facilities to be provided by the consultant

N/A

8.5 Equipment

The consultant is expected to utilize resources to ensure the adequate fulfilment of the scope of services.

8.6 Travel

Travel for the trainer is expected for this consultancy. Thus, the overall budget must include all travel expenses anticipated to meet the scope of works. Costs associated with workshop venue will be met by Caribbean Export.

9 REPORTS

9.1 Reporting documents

An Inception Report (Report 1) that includes a proposed project design and work plan, as well as timelines, to be presented within 10 working days of the commencement of the consultancy. Prior to the submission of the Inception Report and the commencement of the contract, the consultant will be required to attend an inception meeting (meeting to be conducted virtually if the consultant is not present in Barbados) with the Caribbean Export team.

The Inception report shall include:

- The methodology and approach for conducting the consultancy including determining the demand for EU Standards and Certification in the OECS.
- Desk research on EU market access requirements, focusing on packaging, labeling, and certification standards, particularly for pre-packaged food products.
- Proposed modules including detailed content outlines, learning objectives,
- Intervention Assessment Framework: Description of the assessment framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the training intervention, including the pre and post training questionnaires, the criteria for success and the methodology for measuring impact;
- Any issues or possible risks and remedies or mitigating actions that will be undertaken
- Timelines for actions to ensure proper execution of the consultancy

Progress report (Report 2) shall include:

- The delivery of the capacity building and technical assistance activities including the content covered, the methodologies used and the participant engagement strategies.
- The identification of specific challenges faced by firms in getting certified and complying with respective standards for entry into the EU market
- The development of action plans for participating high potential SMEs to address challenges in obtaining certification.

Final report (Report 3) which builds on the foregoing reports, activities undertaken, identifies lessons learned from implementation and makes recommendations on the scope of works and deliverables.

9.2 Submission and Approval of Reports

The reports and deliverables as referred to above must be submitted to Ms. Mikaela Stoute, Export Development and Promotion Officer at mstoute@carib-export.com with a copy to Mrs. Natasha Edwin-Walcott, Manager (Ag)- Competitiveness and Export Promotion at nwalcott@carib-export.com for approval.

10 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Consultancy will be monitored and evaluated by Caribbean Export over the duration of the project. Performance on the project will be measured by satisfactory completion and timely submission of the deliverables outlined in Sections 3 and 5. Feedback, other than acceptance, on each submitted deliverable is not a requirement for the continuation of the project. However, in some instances the Consultant may need to integrate any feedback into the subsequent deliverables. The Contracting Authority will provide feedback to the consultant within ten (10) working days of receipt of the final report.

11 PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

To participate in any activity executed or supported by Caribbean Export, you hereby agree that any information and personal data that you share and is collected by the Agency will be processed for the purpose of reporting the outcomes and impact of your projects and/or participation. Please note that Caribbean Export reserves the right to publish the Contractor's/Participant's name and address, the purpose and nature of the activity, and financial arrangements, in accordance with Caribbean Export's Personal Data Protection Policy. [Personal Data Protection Policy](https://content.carib-export.com/download/personal-data-protectionpolicy/).(https://content.carib-export.com/download/personal-data-protectionpolicy/). Derogation from publication of this information may be granted if it could endanger the Contractor/Participant or harm his/her commercial interests

12 DECLARATION

To participate in any procurement undertaken by Caribbean Export, all applicants must complete and submit to the agency the Applicant Declaration Form. <https://content.carib-export.com/download/applicant-declaration-form/>

All queries relating to this activity should be directed to Natasha Edwin Walcott nwalcott@carib-export.com and Mikaela Franklyn at mfranklyn@caribexport.com.