

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
In Cooperation With
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
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EXPORT TRADE EXPANSION AND RETENTION
THROUGH CERTIFICATION OF QUALITY

The National Bureau of Standards and the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce are jointly carrying out a program for establishing commercial standards for commodities exported and the publication of such standards in appropriate foreign languages, for the purpose of promoting export trade.

Standards to Promote Exports

Information Section
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Washington, D. C.

Through the years, foreign buyers have frequently requested the National Bureau of Standards to examine and certify that the quality of goods for export conforms to specifications. With the feeling that this should be done by commercial testing and inspection agencies, and realizing that the concentration of inspection and testing in a Government agency may tend to slow down the movement of goods from seller to buyer and constitute a bottleneck which would be thoroughly undesirable for all concerned, the National Bureau of Standards has preferred to assist in the development and establishment of standards or specifications. These may be cited in sales contracts, and the necessary inspection and testing may be done by commercial testing agencies situated close to the point of production or shipment. This plan makes maximum use of NBS resources of research data and factual information without unnecessary and unwarranted expansion of Governmental functions.

It is believed that with modern mass-production methods, systematic inspection, and technical control of raw materials and processes, our country now surpasses foreign competition in its ability to produce uniform grades and types of the highest quality of machine-made goods. However, speaking broadly, we have not used standards with voluntary inspection prior to shipment, and voluntary certification as to grade in order to clinch the recognition of and reputation for quality as a sound foundation for the expansion of a more permanent and profitable export trade.

Buyers, both domestic and foreign, are eagerly searching for assurance as to quality, and sellers are even more eagerly looking

for means to promote sales, to expand, and to solidify their markets. What more natural, convenient, and effective means could there be for accomplishing both of these purposes than through the voluntary, legally-binding certification of quality by the seller according to voluntary standards established with the cooperation of the Federal Government? It is a logical and practical long-term method of preparing for economic defense.

The objective of such standards is to bring some order out of conflicting sizes, ratings, grades, or other commercial claims; not to make products uniform, nor to give up design differences, nor to hamper future improvements, nor to surrender any selling points, trade names, trade brands, or other individual advantages; but rather, to find some common ground or platform on which sellers can stand together to improve public understanding and acceptance of the product, to provide fair competition, to broaden markets, and to provide voluntary and regular identifications or labels whereby the seller accepts responsibility for compliance with the standard through voluntary declarations on which the purchaser may rely.

In order to make this possible, Congress has allotted a small sum to enable the National Bureau of Standards to cooperate with those industries which may wish to do so, in the development and establishment of commercial standards as a basis for export trade.

The procedure is very similar to that for the establishment of commercial standards for domestic trade. On specific request by the exporters, conferences are held, standards developed and adjusted, and following acceptance in writing by a satisfactory majority, these standards are published and promulgated in English by the National Bureau of Standards. In the course of development, the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce investigates the usefulness of proposed standards from the standpoint of practical trade promotion, and obtains opinions and suggestions from well-informed foreign buyers, in order that the standards may have the maximum value as a means of increasing the prestige and sale of American commodities abroad.

Approved standards are then translated into Spanish, Portuguese, or other appropriate languages according to the market opportunities, and after checking with experienced exporters, the translations are published in these languages by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. They are circulated to the American Foreign Service Officers for trade promotion purposes, and to libraries, government departments, and other offices in foreign countries, where they will be available for reference.

Exporters may also obtain printed copies at reasonable cost, in such quantities as they desire, in English or other language editions for use by their own representatives in stimulating foreign business.

It will be seen that the purpose of commercial standards for export trade is to provide definite methods of testing, grading, and inspection for conformity with performance requirements and other criteria; to present a common basis for better understanding between buyers and sellers; to assure prospective foreign buyers of uniform, high-quality products in order that they may purchase with confidence; and to provide a means whereby American exporters may cooperate with the Federal Government in the expansion of export markets and the improvement of our reputation as producers of quality products as distinct from those which are offered almost wholly on a price basis or for barter.

In order that such a cooperative program between Government and business may attain maximum effectiveness, in working with industries or groups desiring the assistance of the Department in establishing and translating standards as a basis for exports, preference will be given to those (1) who have formed a trade association or other central organization; (2) whose individual member companies will accept the standard in writing as their normal standard of practice; (3) whose members, either individually or collectively, or both, will regularly identify or label the goods or shipments as complying with the standard; and (4) who will formulate and follow some simple, inexpensive plan of check-testing, in order that each exporter, the trade association or central organization, and this Department, may be assured of the integrity of the labels or identifications.

Exporters who may be interested in the establishment of standards for export trade, or who may wish to inquire further about them, are encouraged to write the Division of Trade Standards, National Bureau of Standards, or the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Washington 25, D.C.

