

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
WASHINGTON, D.C.EXPORT TRADE EXPANSION AND RETENTION
THROUGH CERTIFICATION OF QUALITY-----
Standards to Promote Exports

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.

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, comment from foreign buyers is obtained through the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and the Department of State, in order that the standards may be adjusted to suit the requirements of foreign buyers, particularly in Latin America.

The 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 and circulated to the American Foreign Service Officers as a means for stimulating trade opportunities.

The exporters may also obtain printed copies, 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.

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, Washington, D. C.

