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Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

5. India's Quality Ecosystem- Standards, Challenges, And Reform Imperatives -Economy

India has significantly expanded its quality ecosystem with over 22,300 standards (94% harmonised with international ISO and IEC standards) and ranked 11th in the Global Quality Infrastructure Index 2025. More than 700 products are under mandatory quality certification while hundreds more are covered under voluntary certification. However, fragmented institutional framework, weak market surveillance, overlapping roles, and limited international recognition continue to challenge India's quality credibility in global markets.

1. India's Quality Ecosystem

Key Institutions

1. **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**- Standard-setting, certification, regulatory functions
2. **Quality Council of India (QCI)**- Promoting quality across sectors
3. **National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL)**- Laboratory accreditation
4. **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)**- Certification body accreditation
5. **Export Inspection Council (EIC)**- Export quality regulation
6. **Sectoral regulators**- FSSAI (food safety), CDSCO (drugs, cosmetics)
7. Conformity assessment bodies, testing laboratories, market surveillance mechanisms

Key Statistics

1. 22,300+ standards; 94% harmonised with ISO, IEC international standards
2. Ranked **11th in Global Quality Infrastructure Index 2025**
3. 700+ products under mandatory quality certification
4. Hundreds more under voluntary certification

2. Why Existing Arrangements Are Inadequate

Fragmented Institutional Framework

1. Responsibilities for standards, certification, regulation, accreditation, enforcement spread across multiple ministries, agencies
2. Lack of coordination creating regulatory overlaps, accountability gaps
3. No single apex authority providing whole-of-government quality governance

Overlapping Roles of BIS

1. BIS performs standard-setting, certification, AND some regulatory functions
2. Concentration of functions creating conflicts between promotion, certification, enforcement roles
3. Lack of functional separation reducing transparency, accountability

Weak Market Surveillance

1. Regulations become ineffective if non-compliant products continue circulating in markets
2. Surveillance capacities remain uneven across states, sectors
3. Enforcement gaps allowing substandard products reaching consumers

Export-Quality Challenges

1. Export quality regulation fragmented among- EIC, APEDA, commodity boards, other regulators
2. Promotion and regulation coexisting within same institutions creating potential conflicts

3. Exporters navigating multiple agencies increasing compliance burden, costs

Limited International Recognition

1. Compliance with Indian standards does NOT automatically ensure acceptance in foreign markets
2. Indian certifications often requiring additional verification abroad
3. Increasing export costs, reducing competitiveness

3. Government Initiatives Promoting Quality

Quality Control Orders (QCOs)

1. Ensures products meeting prescribed quality, safety standards
2. Covers- Steel, chemicals, electronics, footwear, toys
3. Mandatory compliance preventing substandard imports, domestic production

Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) Scheme

1. Encourages MSMEs to adopt quality manufacturing practices
2. Minimising environmental impact simultaneously
3. Certification framework- bronze, silver, gold levels

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

1. Supports domestic manufacturing while incentivising global quality benchmarks
2. 14 sectors including electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles
3. Quality improvement linked to financial incentives

National Quality Mission

1. Promotes quality consciousness across industries, public institutions
2. Awareness, training, capacity building programs

One District One Product (ODOP)

1. Encourages standardization, branding, quality enhancement of local products
2. Linking local products to national, international markets

4. Way Forward

Establish National Authority on Quality

1. Create dedicated apex body providing whole-of-government approach to quality governance
2. Coordinating standards, certification, accreditation, regulation, enforcement across sectors
3. Eliminating fragmentation, overlaps, accountability gaps

Separate Key Functions

1. Standard-setting, certification, regulation, enforcement handled independently
2. Enhancing transparency, accountability, reducing conflicts of interest
3. Functional separation similar to international best practices

Improve Testing Infrastructure

1. Expand accredited laboratories, certification facilities
2. Strengthen quality assessment, compliance capabilities
3. Reduce dependence on foreign testing facilities for export certification

Streamline Export Certification

1. Rationalize multiple export-certification agencies
2. Reduce duplication, simplify compliance for exporters
3. Single-window export quality certification reducing cost, time

Enhance Global Integration

1. Increase participation in international standard-setting bodies (ISO, IEC, Codex Alimentarius)
2. Pursue Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for Indian certifications

3. Making Indian standards automatically accepted in partner countries
4. Aligning with EU, USA, Japan, ASEAN quality frameworks

5. Conclusion

India's quality ecosystem with 22,300+ standards and 11th global ranking needs structural transformation beyond expanding certifications — moving toward credible, internationally recognised quality governance through institutional consolidation, functional separation, enhanced market surveillance, and global integration to support consumer protection, export competitiveness, and Viksit Bharat manufacturing ambitions.

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