

## CASE STUDY TITLE

Utilizing Standards to Effectively Support National Requirements for Biodegradability and Compostability.

### SUMMARY

Trinidad and Tobago anticipated the need to rapidly develop regulations that would regulate alternatives to single-use plastics, particularly expanded polystyrene products used in food containers to address health, safety and environmental risks. Some of these risks include the chemical constituents which may pose a danger to health welfare and the impact of expanded polystyrene products on the environment. Of specific interest were practices supporting the biodegradability and composability of alternative food- contact single-use containers and packaging.

The national standards body, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), approached this market and regulatory need by first seeking to understand the relevant definitions and classifications, other nations' practices and regulatory frameworks, and the related standards that could suitably assist with the development and implementation of the regulation.

### BACKGROUND

Based on research regarding the environmental impact of certain plastic products, legislation in Trinidad and Tobago to ban the importation of non-biodegradable expanded polystyrene (EPS) food and beverage containers is expected to be included in the upcoming legislative agenda. Manufacture of Expandable Polystyrene (EPS) in Trinidad and Tobago is also planned to be phased out thereafter.

In anticipation of the new ban, TTBS was designated as the organization responsible to ensure that the alternative products coming into the country and/or manufactured products are biodegradable and/or compostable. As a long-standing partner of ASTM International through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2002, TTBS approached ASTM to gain insight into the

### AT A GLANCE

#### COUNTRY

- Trinidad & Tobago

#### LEVEL

- National

#### SDG ADDRESSED

- SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption & Production

issues around biodegradability and composability and to answer technical queries on how Trinidad and Tobago could best address the conformity assessment issues for the alternative products to EPS.

In December 2019, TTBS worked with ASTM International and an expert from ASTM International Committee D20 on Plastics to arrange two days of awareness-building training during which stakeholders received an overview of the relevant standards, existing certification marks, and appropriate test reports. The sessions also provided insight into the most appropriate regulatory frameworks and conformity assessment schemes. Over 100 representatives from the public sector, private sector and non-governmental organizations participated in these sessions.

## STRATEGY

When an urgent regulatory need was brought to TTBS, the National Standards Body took the appropriate steps to engage the primary stakeholders on the value of standards as part of an effective socio-economic framework. This included:

- Defining the issue to be addressed as the topic is complex and broad and the technology is dynamic.
- Developing a better understanding of the technical terms and supporting materials for defining and evaluating biodegradability and compostability, including relevant standards.
- Identifying approaches that other nations had considered and/or implemented to benefit from the best practices used in these countries and to expedite Trinidad and Tobago's learning curve and response.
- Seeking out and securing training and technical expert guidance.
- Engaging a broad audience of impacted public and private stakeholders. This included not only domestic stakeholders but also those in the other Member States in the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality.

## RESULTS & IMPACT

Through its research of relevant standards, regulatory frameworks and related certification programs, TTBS identified several key ASTM International standards, including Standard Specification D6400-19 for Labelling of Plastics Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities.

As an ASTM International Memorandum of Understanding partner that has effectively partnered with ASTM International on previous training programs and successful, extensive citation of ASTM standards for business and regulatory needs, TTBS was able to once more access this resource. The national standards body relied on technical expertise to support the need for educational and regulatory insights.

Compulsory standard TTCS9-2022 will be adopted by May 2022 and is expected to enter into force by December 2022.

This demonstrates that TTBS has successfully been able to utilize globally relevant standards to support the rapid development and deployment of a compulsory standard that addresses the health and safety of its citizens, limits waste and protects the environment. In addition, the adoption of standards has enabled businesses to understand and achieve market and regulatory requirements.

The standards body has adopted current, international standards that not only support national needs, but are also appropriate for implementation within the region. Doing so facilitates compliance with good regulatory practice and encourages regulatory convergence. Further, the implementation of standards drives the implementation of the national standardization strategy 2019-2022, which seeks to advance the development of key national standards to address economic diversification and sustainability challenges.



## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

The topic of biodegradability and compostability is complex. It is critical to be clear about desired outcomes, the impacted stakeholders and the metrics for compliance before formulating and implementing standards and regulation.

The topic is timely and broadly relevant to several nations; encouraging others to join in the training and dialogue was a well-conceived idea. Measuring compliance is ideal, but costs, for both the regulatory agency and private sector should be considered and understood.

## POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

As noted in the preceding information, the topics of biodegradability and compostability are timely and relevant. The ASTM standards are scientifically based, reflect ongoing changes, and benefit from global input and review. In the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), a fifteen-member community of English-speaking island nations, ASTM International standards are used extensively. Specifically, regarding the use of ASTM D6400, six other nations in CROSQ have cited D6400.

In August 2020, CROSQ issued the draft CARICOM Regional Standard for Biodegradable Products for comments. The DCRS 73:20XX, Biodegradable Products - Specification is a broader document for regional use that also incorporates ASTM D6400 among other standards.

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