

# PRODUCT CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT (PCA) AND CERTIFICATES OF CONFORMITY **FAQS**

## WHAT IS A PRODUCT CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME?

A Product Conformity Assessment (PCA) programme is a solution designed to ensure that specific products (or product groups) meet the requirements of technical regulations set by the regulatory authority in the importing country. Verification of compliance is done in the country of export, following the review of reports coming from one or more interventions such as (but not limited to) laboratory testing, physical inspection and/or factory audits. PCA shall only be conducted by professional inspection bodies that are qualified and recognised by the regulatory authority.

## WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE OF CONFORMITY (COC)?

A CoC is documentary proof of compliance, printed on security paper and issued by a designated certification body such as SGS. It signifies that the batch of goods assessed satisfactorily meet the requirements set by the technical regulations of the receiving country. The CoC may only be issued following a satisfactory certification decision by the certification body, after the necessary review of the test reports, inspection reports and other relevant trade documents. The CoC is required by Customs upon arrival of the goods, to facilitate goods clearance. A Non-Conformity Report (NCR) may be issued instead if the goods cannot be proven to have met the requirements of the regulation/s.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

The purpose of these programmes is to protect consumers' health and safety and the environment, to safeguard local producers and industry from unfair competition, to reduce the risk that the domestic market becomes a dumping ground for non-conforming products and to overcome the risk of rejection of the products in the destination country.

## IS IT MANDATORY?

Yes all regulated products must undergo the mandatory PCA process, through approved and authorised certification bodies.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING COC?

It is the exporter's responsibility to arrange the CoC; the verification process involves a quality document review stage followed by a physical inspection of the shipment. In some cases high-risk items may require sample testing and container sealing.

## WHO DO I NEED TO SPEAK TO REGARDING OBTAINING A COC?

Each participating country's standards agency mandates one or more independent certification bodies such as SGS to administer the PCA process on a global basis.

## WHAT DOCUMENTS WILL I REQUIRE?

Most commonly exporters will require some or all of the following documents although this list is not exhaustive and will be dependent on both the rules of the specific scheme and the product category: completed application form; commercial invoice; technical datasheets/specifications; test reports (ISO17025 accredited lab); manufacturer's ISO9001 certificate; GMP certificate and additional supporting documents that may help prove the quality of products.

## HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?

The PCA process duration is dictated by the nature of the goods to be shipped and the completeness of

the documentation submitted to demonstrate compliance. Timely co-ordination and co-operation between SGS and the exporting company will be paramount in ensuring the PCA process is completed in a timely manner.

For those goods that are homogeneous and are frequently shipped, SGS can further speed up processing through 'product registration' and 'product licensing' sub-schemes, whereby fewer interventions may be undertaken, as long as several technical and administrative conditions are met.

## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Each country has its own unique universal fee structure that is set by the relevant standards agency (see relevant SGS datasheet).

SGS is mandated to issue COCs for the following countries;

- Saudi Arabia (SASO)
- Kuwait (KUCAS)
- Algeria (IANOR)
- Kenya (PVoC)
- Nigeria (SONCAP)
- Uganda (PVoC)
- Tanzania (PVoC)
- Burundi (PSVoC)
- Rwanda (PVoC)
- Iraq (Kurdistan Region ICI)
- Qatar (QA-PVoC)
- Egypt (GOEIC)
- Ethiopia (ICP)
- Niger (IVCoP)

Ghana and Gabon may implement PCA programmes later in 2015

If you would like to learn more about PCA programmes or have any questions then please contact:

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