

Bureau of Indian Standards launches Scheme for Recognition of Consumer Organizations

The Bureau of Indian Standards, the National Standards Body of the country has been guiding the Indian Industry for more than six decades by formulating national standards for the industry and service sectors. BIS also operates Certification Schemes that assure quality, safety and reliability to the users. Through its activities, BIS endeavors to provide the benefits of Standardization and Certification to all stakeholders that include the BIS licensees as well as the chambers of commerce and industry, consumers and consumer organizations, regulators, state governments, government departments and educational institutions. An i-CARE program has recently been launched for giving an increased emphasis to this aspect of BIS functioning.

One of the primary stakeholders of BIS are the common consumers in the country. BIS considers it of paramount importance to protect and safeguard consumer rights and to empower and educate every consumer so as to create an environment of quality culture and consciousness in the country. However, India has a large population today and hence it is neither physically possible nor economically viable for BIS to reach all the consumers single handedly to achieve its goal of creating consumer awareness in the entire country.

BIS has launched a Scheme of Recognition of Consumer Organizations in order to protect the interests of common consumers and to create awareness so that the consumer organizations granted recognition under the Scheme can in turn reach the masses on behalf of BIS. For the purpose, a Scheme for Recognition of Consumer Organizations has been introduced with the specific objective of having sufficient number of recognized Consumer Organizations in the country. These recognized Consumer Organizations will act as ambassadors of BIS in the field for interacting with consumers in respect of consumer related activities of BIS and will also act as a means of communication between Bureau of Indian Standards and the common consumers.

By joining hands with BIS, Recognized Consumer Organizations will help in enhancing the Consumer Protection and Consumer Awareness activities of BIS and in meeting the targets of the recently launched i-CARE Programme for effective stakeholder engagement.

Details of the Scheme for Recognition of Consumer Organizations are available on BIS website at www.bis.org.in. Any specific information may be obtained on phone or by writing to DDG (i-Care), Ph:011-23236584 or Head (i-Care), 23235069.

You may also contact the officers of the nearest BIS Branch / Regional Office. For your convenience, the important addresses with telephone / Fax nos. of these officers are available on BIS website.

SCHEME FOR RECOGNITION OF CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Consumer constitutes the largest unorganized public body in the country and protection of their interest and rights is of vital importance in a welfare state like India. This calls for establishment of well regulated and independent mechanisms to provide quality goods, services and utilities to the satisfaction of consumers.

1.2 The Government's commitment to the cause of the common consumer is amply reflected in the enactment of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 which is a bold comprehensive legislation. Another Act of considerable significance to the consumer movement passed by Parliament at about the same time was the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986. One of the major objectives of this Act was to make BIS another instrument of State to protect and promote consumer interest.

1.3 Bureau of Indian Standards, also gives utmost thrust for promotion and protection of consumer interest. For this purpose Bureau has

- a) Has constituted a Consumer Policy Advisory Committee, which is one of the statutory advisory committees and advises BIS on policy matters relating to consumer interests and for consumer welfare.
- b) Gives adequate representation to the representatives of Consumer organizations on the policy making and technical Committees of BIS.
- c) Recently launched an i-Care Programme to provide the benefits of standardization to the various stakeholders for better functioning of BIS. This includes the existing licensees as well as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the consumers, the educational institutions, especially the engineering and technology institutions, customers who purchase Indian Standards and other publications from BIS.
- d) A dedicated implementation / co-coordinating machinery has been created in BIS for effective implementation of i-Care Programme. To implement the i-Care programme dedicated i-Care Department has been setup at Headquarters and appointed i-Care programme Officers in all the five Regions of BIS to deal with matters related to Consumers, Standards Promotion & Industry meets, Enforcement/Public Complaints, Publicity and Sales activity in the respective region.
- e) BIS has nominated Public Grievances Officers at Headquarters, Regional and Branch Offices to deal with consumer complaints against ISI marked

products and hallmarked jewellery, BIS services and misuse of BIS Standard Mark.

- f) BIS participates regularly in the meetings of International Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO).

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 It is neither physically possible nor economically viable for BIS to reach all the consumers singlehandedly to achieve its goal of creating consumer awareness in the entire country. In order to protect the interests of common consumers and to create awareness, BIS intends to recognize Consumer Organizations, who in turn can reach the masses on behalf of BIS. For the purpose, a Scheme for Recognition of Consumer Organizations has been formulated with the objective of having sufficient number of recognized Consumer Organizations in India for the following:

- a) To act as ambassadors of BIS in the field for the purpose of interacting with consumers in respect of consumer related activities of BIS.
- b) To enhance communication between Bureau of Indian Standards and the common consumers especially with the objective of creating awareness about the need to buy products conforming to Standards.
- c) To educate consumers about the benefits of the Consumer Protection activities of BIS.
- d) To inculcate quality consciousness and create awareness about Standardization and use of Standards amongst the students of educational institutions.
- e) To ensure that Indian Standards take care of consumer interest by enhanced representation and participation of Consumer Organizations in Standardization activity.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Scheme lays down the criteria, terms and conditions of recognition, renewal, de-recognition, appeal etc. relating to recognition of such voluntary consumer organizations which have been actively engaged in consumer awareness, consumer education and/or consumer protection activities in the country.

3.2 Recognition can be granted to a Consumer Organization at State/Branch level and/or at National level.

3.3 Depending on the capability and interest of the Organization, the Recognition can be granted to the same Organization in one or more States and/or at National level. However, the final authority to decide the level at which recognition is granted will be with BIS.

3.4 The recognition shall in no way be a guarantee of any assistance from BIS with respect to the consumer related activities of the concerned Consumer Organization.

4. CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION AT STATE / NATIONAL LEVEL

4.1 The consumer organization shall be

- a) Registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1986, or Registered under any other law and
- b) Recognized by the State Government for state level interactions/committees on matters concerning consumer affairs.
- c) Actively engaged in consumer awareness, consumer education and/or consumer protection work for at least three years. The work done may be in any one or more of the following areas:
 - i) Consumer education for increasing awareness about their rights and responsibilities by providing and disseminating consumer education literature to the consumers.
 - ii) Bringing out consumer education literature / bulletins /newsletters (online or through hard copy).
 - iii) Capacity building work done for developing human resources.
 - iv) Organizing consumer awareness campaigns / meetings / seminars.
 - v) Safe guarding consumers against products which cause health and safety hazards.
 - vi) Providing information regarding substandard products/spurious products through testing or any other such method.
 - vii) Encouraging industry to make improvements in the quality of products by conducting Comparative Testing of products and services and publicizing the same.

- viii) Resolving consumer disputes/ giving Legal advice / helping in litigation, etc.
- ix) Participating in policy/technical committees of BIS/Govt. / Autonomous bodies etc.
- x) Empowerment of women and children, Environment protection, Product safety etc.

4.2 The Consumer Organization should not be

- a) a political organization; and
- b) supported by any manufacturer / testing lab etc.

5. PROPOSED RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECOGNIZED CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 State/Branch Level - The Consumer organizations granted recognition at State/Branch Level will have one or more of the following responsibilities:

- a) Organize adequate number of consumer awareness programmes in each district of the State(s). During these programmes the consumers will be informed about the following:
 - i) activities of BIS including new schemes launched by BIS
 - ii) advantages of buying ISI marked products
 - iii) items under mandatory certification
 - iv) information on misuse of ISI mark
 - v) hallmarking of gold and silver jewellery/artefacts
 - vi) process of enforcement and Reward Scheme for informers
 - vii) public testing of samples
- b) Help BIS Branch Office in organizing Poster competitions /Quiz competitions/slogan competition as and when required.
- c) Provide information about BIS activities in English and vernacular language depending upon the area.

- d) Help BIS in organizing World/National Standards Day in collaboration with BIS.
- e) Encouraging consumers to pick up ISI marked samples from the market and get it tested in BIS recognized Labs or testing of hallmarked gold and silver jewellery in BIS Referral Lab.
- f) Empower consumers by disseminating information by way of bring out a bulletin on the consumer related activities undertaken by them.
- g) Informing BIS about misuse and poor quality of ISI marked products available in market.
- h) Organizing educational utilization of standards programme for college students and awareness programme for school students while carrying out their activities.
- i) Attending to any work assigned by BIS related to consumer awareness, consumer education and/or consumer protection at the State level.

5.2 National Level - The Consumer organizations granted recognition at National Level will have one or more of the following responsibilities:

- a) Provide training to representatives of other Consumer Organizations on Process of Standards Formulation and Consumer protection activities of BIS.
- b) Safeguarding consumers against products which cause health and safety hazards by providing information regarding substandard and deficient products or spurious and fake products through testing or any other such method as assigned by BIS.
- c) Encouraging industry to make improvements in the quality of products by conducting comparative testing of products as assigned by BIS.
- d) Help BIS in organizing World/National Standards Day in collaboration with BIS.
- e) Drawl of market samples on behalf of BIS.
- f) Conducting market survey as and when required by BIS.
- g) Consumer awareness, Consumer Education and Consumer Protection at the national level and assigned by BIS.

- h) Carry out any of the activities which are to be done by a recognized State/Branch level Consumer Organization.

6. PROCEDURE FOR GRANT OF RECOGNITION

6.1 Every consumer organization desirous of being recognized consumer organization, shall make an application for such recognition in duplicate to the Bureau of Indian Standards in Form-I. There is no application fee for grant and renewal of recognition to consumer organizations.

6.2 The application may be made to the concerned Branch Office / Regional Office of BIS/i-Care Department at BIS, HQs.

6.3 On receipt of an application, the BIS, shall acknowledge the receipt and inform in case any additional information is required. The applicant may provide the necessary information within 15 days of such additional information being sought.

6.4 On receipt of an application and such other additional information, for Grant of Recognition at State/Branch Level, the Head of the Branch Office will put up the case to concerned DDGR who will be the authority to grant the recognition.

6.5 For Grant of Recognition at National Level, Head (i-Care) will put up the case to Consumer Policy Advisory Committee, which is the final authority to grant the recognition..

6.6 The recognition shall be granted for a period of one year. The further renewal for a period of one/ two/three years will be done based on the satisfactory performance of the recognized Consumer Organization.

6.7 The Certificate of recognition to be issued by BIS shall be in Form-II.

6.8 Where the recognition of a consumer organization has been refused, the applicant shall be informed of the reasons for such refusal by the BIS.

6.9 The remuneration to be given and the specific activities to be carried out by the Consumer Organization shall be decided by BIS.

6.10 BIS may de-recognize, in case of unsatisfactory performance.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Consumer organizations recognized by BIS shall continue to carry out their normal work from their own resources. While doing such work they shall also carry out one or more functions as enumerated above. The work to be done by the Consumer Organization such as awareness/education/training programmes, market surveys etc. will be in

addition to their normal work and functioning. Only partial financial support will be provided so as to meet part of the expenditure incurred.

8. PRIVILEGES TO RECOGNIZED CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS

8.1 Organizations granted Recognition at State/Branch Level / National Level will have the following privileges:

- a) Will be provided free of cost training to master trainers /representatives of Consumer Organizations on Process of Standards Formulation and Consumer protection activities of BIS.
- b) Would be permitted to draw Market samples and getting it tested at “BIS recognized laboratories” for which suitable remuneration would be provided.
- c) Free of cost awareness to representatives of Consumer Organizations on consumer related activities of BIS.
- d) Eligible to independently organize Consumer Awareness Programmes on behest of BIS and with financial support as decided by BIS.
- e) Entitled to get free copy of “Standards India”, Brochures and other such consumer education literature published by BIS.
- f) Allowed to publicize their publications/results of comparative tests of products if available on their website, through a link on BIS website.
- g) Drawl of market samples on behalf of BIS on remuneration decided by BIS.
- h) As partner of BIS conduct raids on manufacturers/stockist of spurious ISI marked products.
- i) Eligible for suitable reward for providing important help/information to BIS in the form of either testing of samples and/or providing information about manufacturing/selling/storing of spurious ISI marked goods or misuse of ISI mark.
- j) Would be invited to functions organized by BIS such as World Standards Day, National Standards Day, Rajiv Gandhi National Quality Award etc.

8.2 In addition to the above, the Consumer Organization granted Recognition at National Level:

- a) Will be eligible to become member of Policy Level committees of BIS i.e. Bureau, Executive Committee, Consumer Policy Advisory Committee or any other Advisory Committee and Technical Committees i.e. Division Council /Sectional Committees / Sub-Committees, as and when decided by the respective committees of BIS.

9. GENERAL

Any situation not covered under the scheme, will be considered by the Competent Authority and his interpretation/decision will be final.

FORM I

**Form of application to be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Standards
for recognition of Consumer Organization
(to be submitted in duplicate)**

1. Name of the Consumer Organization:

2. Address:

a) Registered Office;

b) For correspondence;

c) Branches:

3. If registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1986, the date of registration (certified copy of the certificate of registration to be enclosed):

4. If registered under any other law, the Act under which registered and date of registration: (certified copy of the certificate of registration to be enclosed).

5. If recognized by the State Government for state level interactions/committees on matters concerning consumer affairs, provide details of recognition to be provided.

6. Total number of members of the organization (as on date of application).

7. Objects of the organization (Certified copy of Memorandum of Association to be enclosed along with copy of the rules and regulations of the association)

8. Names, addresses and occupations of persons on the Board of Directors, Governing Body, Council/Committee (by whatever name called), to whom the management of the affairs of the organization is entrusted.

9. Number of employees:

a) Whole-time:

b) Part-time:

10. Year-wise details of the work done by the organization during the last three years in one or more of the following fields:

a)Consumer awareness and education

b)Safeguarding consumers from health and safety hazards

c)Efforts for improvements in the quality of products

d)Work done for resolving consumer disputes

e)Participation in committees of BIS/Government/autonomous bodies

f)Work done for women and children/environment protection/product safety

g)Past association with BIS/promotion of BIS activities

h)Any other work

11. Copies of published annual report and audited accounts of the organization for the last three years.

12. Copies of Consumer News/ Bulletins/Newsletters of the organization published during the last three years.

13. Indicate the interest of area of work: Consumer Awareness/ Consumer Education/Consumer Protection

14. Indicate at which Level Grant of Recognition is being sought : State level/ National Level :
i.e. Name of the State/States / National level /both National level and State level in different States

Place

Signature

Date

Name & Designation:

FORM II

BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Certified that the Consumer Organization whose particulars are given below, has been granted recognition under the BIS Scheme for Recognition of Consumer Organizations

Particulars

1. Name of the Consumer Organization

2. Address

3. Name of persons on the governing board/body/council to whom management of the Organization is entrusted:

4. Number of members:

5. Registration number:

6. Validity of Registration:

Signature

Date

Seal of the Bureau of Indian Standards