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## EAC Regional Quality Awards 2026

### Raising Standards: Driving Regional Excellence & Global Competitiveness

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**“Be Recognised as A Champion of Quality in East Africa”**

***Application Process Now Open***

#### **0 Background**

The EAC Regional Quality Awards competition is an annual event implemented in accordance with the Awards Framework, which was approved by the East African Standards Committee (EASC) during its April 2022 meeting in Arusha, Tanzania.

The Quality Awards competition is dedicated to promoting a culture of quality and inspiring excellence by recognising outstanding achievements by EAC public and private enterprises in quality management, across all sectors of the economy within the EAC region. The Awards are open to both public organizations and private Large Enterprises (LEs) as well as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in both service and manufacturing sectors, for recognition of the winners at the EAC level.

By encouraging the implementation of standards and quality management practices, the awards support sustainable competitiveness and trade enhancement among both public and private, inter alia, SMEs and large enterprises.

The process for the 2026 EAC Regional Quality Awards, the region’s highest recognition for excellence in quality performance, will be officially launched in May 2026 in Arusha, Tanzania.

#### **1 Purpose & Objectives of the EAC Regional Quality Awards**

The primary objective of the EAC Regional Quality Awards Competition is to foster a culture of quality within the East African Community by encouraging the adoption of standards and quality management practices across EAC enterprises. This, in turn, enhances competitiveness and stimulates trade.

The Competition seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- a) Stimulate interest in quality management practices and excellence among EAC public institutions and enterprises,
- b) Encourage sustainable competitiveness by recognizing organizations whose products are certified and/or excel in implementing international standards,
- c) Inspire Public institutions, SMEs and large enterprises to pursue continuous improvement and innovation,
- d) Raise public awareness of the benefits of participating in quality-related activities,
- e) Enhance cross-country experience-sharing on quality promotion, enterprise visibility, competitiveness, regional integration and access to wider markets, and
- f) Complement and align with Quality Award efforts at the national level.

## **2 Benefits of Participation**

The public and private organizations, SMEs and large enterprises that will participate in the EAC quality awards will immensely benefit from it, whereby winning a Quality Award at the national or regional level can bring a range of benefits, including:

- Regional and national recognition,
- Increased trust and credibility with customers,
- Positive media exposure,
- A strong sense of pride and morale boost across the organization, and
- Potential to unlock new business and market opportunities.

National-level winners automatically qualify to compete in the EAC Regional Quality Awards.

## **3 Eligibility criteria**

To be eligible for the Awards, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- i. Be a legally registered enterprise operating in any of the EAC Partner States,
- ii. Implementing a management system or having a valid product certification mark,
- iii. Comply with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements at national and/or regional,
- iv. Be a public institution operating in one of the EAC partner states,
- v. If applying as a subsidiary or business unit of a larger entity, the unit must operate as a clearly defined, stand-alone business with financial autonomy and independently managed accounts

## **4 Categories of the awards**

In 2026, participants will be recognised in the following four categories of Regional Quality Awards:

1. **EAC Product of the Year:** for both Large Enterprises (LEs) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
2. **EAC Company of the Year:** for both LEs and SMEs

3. **EAC Service Organization of the year:** Divided into (a) Public and (b) Private sectors (Applicable to both LEs and SMEs)
4. **EAC Exporter of the year-Agro processing:** for both LEs and SMEs

## 5 Application Process

The competition will follow a two-stage process:

- a) **Step 1:** Submit your application to the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB)
- b) **Step 2:** Winners at the national level (Rwanda) will be nominated to compete in the EAC Regional Quality Awards.

Additional information regarding how to apply for the EAC Awards 2026 can be found on the RSB website.

## 6 Roadmap

- **At the national level:**
  - a) **08<sup>th</sup> May 2026** - Applications open for National Level competitions
  - b) **By 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026** - Deadline for submission of applications at the National Level
  - c) **By 15<sup>th</sup> August 2026** – Deadline for gathering the evidences testifying compliance with the quality management principles
  - d) **By 30<sup>th</sup> August 2026** - National Winners to be submitted as contestants for the Regional Competition
- **At the regional level:**
  - a) **By 30<sup>th</sup> August 2026** - Nomination of the Regional Quality Awards Committee (RQAC) members & meeting for understanding their terms of reference
  - b) **By 11<sup>th</sup> September 2026** – individual assessment for each application by each of the RQAC members
  - c) **By 18<sup>th</sup> September 2026** – RQAC Members draw consensus evaluation for each of the applicants & select awards winners, then submit them to EAC Secretariat
  - d) **October 2026** – EAC Regional Quality Awards Ceremony held in Kigali, Rwanda.

## 7 Awards Criteria

The 2026 EAC-QA Competition is based on the Quality Management Principles that promote a systems-based approach to achieving consistent quality and sustained organisational success. These principles form the foundation of the ISO 9001 quality management system standards and can be applied by any organisation seeking to integrate quality into its core processes and drive continuous improvement.

The Quality Management Principles include:

- Customer focus
- Leadership
- Engagement of people
- Process approach
- Improvement
- Evidence-based decision making
- Relationship management
- Infrastructure & Work Environment
- Management of Natural Resources
- Regulatory Compliance

## **8 Terms and Conditions of Entry**

For organizations willing to attend the EAC-QA Competition 2026, the following terms and conditions apply:

- To follow timelines provided for in the roadmap,
- All submitted applications and materials become the property of RSB and are subsequently submitted to the EAC Secretariat, and they will not be returned to the applicant, and
- The decision of the National Quality Awards Committee (NQAC) is final at the national level. The NQAC reserves the right to determine the National winners who will represent Rwanda at the EAC level at its sole discretion and is under no obligation to disclose the scores evaluation details.
- The decision of RQAC is final. The RQAC reserves the right to determine the winners at its sole discretion and is under no obligation to disclose the score evaluation details.

## **9 Awards Ceremony**

Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) is responsible for the provision of awards for winners in 2026 at the national level.

Winners of the 2026 EAC Regional Quality Awards will be honoured at a formal ceremony to be held in October 2026 in Kigali, Rwanda.

The ceremony will take place alongside the annual EAC SMEs Trade Fair, providing a platform to celebrate quality excellence and inspire more SMEs to embrace quality management best practices that enhance competitiveness and drive sustainable growth.

## **9 Call for Applications**

Interested companies, organizations or individuals can obtain the Application Guidelines for the 2026 EAC Regional Quality Awards from the RSB websites or by

contacting Mr. Francois Nsengiyumva via email: [francois.nsengiyumva@rsb.gov.rw](mailto:francois.nsengiyumva@rsb.gov.rw) or call on 0788786293.