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QCI entrusts 2 agencies as certification bodies for units making Ayush products

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Joseph Alexander, New Delhi

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The efforts of the Department of Ayush to introduce voluntary certification scheme has finally taken off with the Quality Council of India (QCI) according approval to a couple of third party organisations as certification bodies (CB) to carry out evaluation and issue certificate to the manufacturing units of Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (Ayush) products.

The Department had tied up with QCI to work out the modalities of the certification scheme last year and the QCI has already given accreditation to two certification bodies (CB) to begin with, and is processing the applications of a few others for the purpose, sources said. Hyderabad-based Foodcert India (P) Ltd and Mumbai-based Bureau Veritas Certification (India) Pvt Ltd have thus become the approved certified bodies under the scheme.

The role of the third party CB is to conduct evaluation of the desiring units and issue the certification of the products in consultation with the QCI, besides stringently monitoring the units further. Under the scheme, the two types of certifications will be issued to the units. The Ayush Standard Mark, after meeting the domestic regulatory requirements, will be for the domestic sector while the Ayush Premium Mark is meant for the exports in line with the international norms such as those set by WHO, or regulations of European Commission, USA and other countries.

Sources in the department said the two CBs have already got some applications from the units and were holding the evaluation process before finally issuing the certification. "Now the common man in India also can see if the product they are buying from the market has this quality mark from the government and can be satisfied. Besides, since the QCI is an internationally accepted agency under the government, its quality mark will also have an advantage for the products being exported," sources said.

The Ayush products are regulated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 by the Drugs Controller General of India through the State Governments. The Department of Ayush has been exploring the possibility of introducing a voluntary product certification scheme for selected Ayush products to enhance consumer confidence. The efforts in this regard were launched as early as in December 2008 and by July 2009, Ayush Department and the QCI formally signed the agreement to design the scheme.

The Scheme will be overseen by a Multistakeholder Steering Committee (MSC) chaired by the Secretary (Ayush) with secretariat in QCI. The MSC will be supported by a Technical Committee and a Certification Committee constituted by QCI.

Ayush Standard Mark which is based on compliance to the domestic regulatory requirements while Ayush Premium Mark which is based on GMP requirements based on WHO Guidelines and product requirements with flexibility to certify against any overseas regulation provided these are stricter than the former criteria. Under this scheme, each manufacturing unit would obtain a certification from an approved CB which is accredited to appropriate international standards by the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) and will be under regular surveillance of the certification body.