

BOLIVIA

Instituto Boliviano de Normalización y Calidad (IBNORCA)

Water efficiency management in Bolivian companies

Overview

Extreme hydrometeorological events are frequent in Bolivia where intense rains and floods can cause considerable damage. And this is likely to increase in magnitude due to the impact of climate change, which could exacerbate the scarcity of water in the country's arid valleys while reducing its availability in the highlands. The Bolivian government has made a serious start in tackling these issues by setting climate change policy at the highest level.

As the country's national standards body, the Bolivian Institute for Standardization and Quality (IBNORCA) provides the tools needed by government to better manage water resources through the inclusion of Bolivian standards in state regulation. In 2018, IBNORCA's cooperation agreement with the Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) gave rise to a capacity building project in which four companies were invited to trial standard NB/ISO 46001 for water efficiency management systems.

The project started out with the adoption of ISO 46001 as Bolivian national standard NB/ISO 46001:2020. Then, a call was put out to all interested companies from the food production sector whose industrial activities involved intensive water use. Four companies were selected among the many submissions received. The pilot consisted of three phases:

1. The first step was to assess how the company used water in its industrial processes.
2. The second step served to train up company members in the use of the standard and the implementation of a water efficiency management system.
3. The third step was all about evaluating and disseminating the results and benefits obtained.

IBNORCA dedicated its efforts to the capacity building aspect, while the implementation process was carried out by a team of external consultants in order to preserve the companies' independence. The latter phase of the project involved embedding water-saving measures into the company's production processes through reduction, replacement and reuse of water. The approach used was different in each case depending on the company's context and the complexity of its processes.

The pilot was very successful, with each company reporting excellent results in terms of water savings. To disseminate these results, a virtual event was organized so that companies could share their experiences, methodological approach and lessons learned from implementing the standard. The operation's success has since prompted companies to get certification to the standard as a next step.

Outcomes and benefits

In its three-and-half-year lifespan, the project has already started to contribute positively to Bolivia's long-term objective by fostering a culture of standardization in the country. This is borne out by the publication of NB/ISO 46001:2020 and other water/sanitation standards, which can serve as references in state regulation. Beyond the obvious benefits for the country's water resource management, it will also have a long-term positive impact on the environment.

Through the adoption of NB/ISO 46001, Bolivia has raised awareness around the importance of water efficiency for both companies and the wider society. On a broader scale, this initiative also contributes to supporting two important United Nations' goals for clean water and climate action. As more and more companies discover the benefits of water standards, it is hoped the momentum initiated by this pilot project will have a multiplying effect across the country's industries.

Partners involved

The pilot project was developed by IBNORCA (Bolivia) and SIS (Sweden) with support from the Swedish Embassy in Bolivia. It was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The project's implementation rallied a great number of players. The training course developed on NB/ISO 46001 was approved and coordinated by the School of Plurinational Public Management (EGPP), a public entity focused on building capacity among civil servants and professionals in general. What's more, the technical committee working on the national adoption of ISO 46001 also involved a variety of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia and non-governmental organizations.

Timeline

The IBNORCA-SIS initiative was part of a project that began in 2018 with the signing of the cooperation agreement between two national standards bodies. After the adoption of ISO 46001 as a national Bolivian standard in 2020, it was piloted in four different food-sector companies to assess its usability and relevance for industrial activities. The project was completed in June 2021 with very positive results.

References

- “IBNORCA impulsa la normalización técnica en Bolivia en alianza con Suecia” – [News release](#) (Spanish)
- IBNORCA-SIS project – [video](#)