

July 2026

Preparing CARICOM for a New Era of Digital Trade

The Future of Caribbean Exports Depends on More Than the Product

Trade competitiveness is increasingly being shaped by something far less visible than ports, tariffs or logistics; it is being defined by data. Increasingly, market access will depend not only on the quality and value of products, but on the accuracy, reliability and accessibility of the information that accompanies them.

One of the most significant developments driving this transformation is the European Union's Digital Product Passport (DPP). As part of the EU's broader sustainability and digital transition agenda, the DPP will require products placed on the European market to carry verified digital information regarding their origin, composition, environmental performance, reparability, recyclability and compliance with applicable requirements.

For CARICOM, this development is particularly significant. The European Union remains an important trading partner for the Caribbean, and many regional producers rely on access to European markets for growth and export diversification. As DPP requirements begin to shape market expectations and supply chain practices globally, Caribbean exporters—particularly Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)—must be prepared to operate within an increasingly digital, transparent and data-driven trading environment.

Failure to adapt could create new barriers to trade. Conversely, early preparation could position Caribbean firms to strengthen market access, increase competitiveness and participate more effectively in sustainable global value chains.



Recognising both the scale of this transformation and the opportunities it presents, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) is currently implementing the **Supporting CARICOM's Digital Trade Readiness: EU Digital Product Passport and Beyond** initiative, commonly referred to as the **CARICOM Digital Trade Readiness (DTR) Project**.

Why the Digital Product Passport Matters to CARICOM

While the Digital Product Passport is being developed within Europe, its impact will extend far beyond EU borders.

Just as international standards often become global benchmarks, many of the technical requirements and expectations associated with the DPP are expected to influence international supply chains, procurement systems and market access conditions worldwide. Caribbean exporters seeking to maintain or expand access to international markets will increasingly need to demonstrate product traceability, provide reliable product information and align with evolving sustainability requirements.

The implications extend beyond individual businesses. The DPP highlights the growing importance of effective Quality Infrastructure. Standards, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology will play an increasingly critical role in supporting the integrity, reliability and interoperability of product information systems. The emergence of digital trade therefore represents not only a technological shift, but also a strategic opportunity to strengthen CARICOM's Regional Quality Infrastructure and improve the region's overall trade competitiveness.

For CARICOM, readiness is not solely about compliance. It is about ensuring that regional producers remain visible, trusted and competitive within an increasingly digital and sustainability-focused global marketplace.

The Regional Quality Infrastructure Influences Readiness

As the steward of CARICOM's Regional Quality Infrastructure (RQI), CROSQ has a critical role to play in supporting regional preparedness for the next generation of trade requirements. The Digital Product Passport sits at the intersection of trade, quality infrastructure, sustainability, digitalisation and regulatory cooperation—areas that are central to CROSQ's mandate and increasingly important to the region's economic development agenda.

Through the CARICOM DTR Project, CROSQ is facilitating dialogue among policymakers, standards bodies, regulators, technical experts, digital infrastructure providers and private sector stakeholders to ensure that the region can respond proactively rather than reactively to emerging international requirements. By strengthening awareness, promoting knowledge-sharing and supporting capacity development, CROSQ is helping to position CARICOM to benefit from digital transformation while safeguarding market access opportunities for Caribbean businesses.

Importantly, this work aligns closely with the broader objectives of CARICOM's Regional Quality Infrastructure and the Revised Regional Quality Policy, both of which seek to strengthen competitiveness, facilitate trade, enhance innovation and improve the sustainable development prospects of Member States.

As a first step towards raising DPP awareness, a two-day regional webinar series titled, “Digital Trade Readiness in CARICOM: Understanding the EU Digital Product Passport”, held on June 23rd and 24th, 2026, brought together European policymakers, international standards specialists, and regional experts to examine the opportunities and challenges presented by the DPP from varying regional and international perspectives. In tandem, the sessions demonstrated that digital trade readiness is not solely a technical issue, but an economic, environmental, institutional and strategic imperative, directly affecting the future of regional trade.

Regional Webinars

Session 1

On day one, **Dr. Franziska Zibold, Policy Analyst** at the **European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)** outlined the regulatory architecture underpinning the DPP. She explained that the DPP forms part of the EU's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, establishing a framework through which products will carry verified digital information relating to their origin, composition, environmental performance, reparability and compliance. Rather than creating another administrative requirement, she positioned the DPP as an essential mechanism for improving transparency, supporting circular economy objectives and enabling more informed decisions across global value chains. Her presentation underscored an important reality for Caribbean exporters: preparedness cannot begin once implementation deadlines arrive, it must begin now.



Dr. Franziska Zibold, Policy Analyst, European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)

Shifting the focus from regulation to implementation, **Mr. Andrea Raffaelli, Senior Policy Adviser and Experts' Coordinator** at **Small Business Standards (SBS)** examined what the DPP means for businesses, particularly SMEs, highlighting one of the most pressing challenges facing implementation: awareness. While European standards supporting the DPP are already being developed and adopted, many SMEs remain unfamiliar with what the new requirements will mean in practice. His presentation argued that technical compliance must be matched by practical guidance, targeted education and institutional support if smaller businesses are to remain competitive. For CARICOM, where MSMEs account for a significant share of economic activity, this message carried particular weight. Building resilience, he suggested, depends as much on strengthening knowledge as it does on developing standards themselves.



Mr. Andrea Raffaelli, Senior Policy Adviser and Experts' Coordinator, Small Business Standards (SBS)

Mr. Gary Kalloo, Business Development Director at the **Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU)**, then broadened the discussion by examining the digital infrastructure required to support emerging systems such as the DPP, expanding the discussion beyond product standards and arguing that digital trade depends upon resilient regional digital infrastructure. While acknowledging the region's progress, he also identified the need for greater harmonisation, sustained investment and regional collaboration to strengthen the Caribbean's digital ecosystem. In doing so, he reinforced that digital trade readiness is not solely a standards issue, but a wider development imperative requiring coordinated action across institutions and sectors.



Mr. Gary Kalloo, Business Development Director, Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU),

Session 2

The second session expanded the discussion beyond regulatory compliance, to the broader value proposition of digital product information. Here, **Ms. Margaux Le Gallou, Senior Programme Manager** at the **Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)** demonstrated how Digital Product Passports can address longstanding information gaps throughout product value chains, benefiting manufacturers, retailers, consumers, repairers and recyclers alike. By making reliable environmental and product performance data readily accessible, she argued, the DPP has the potential to improve consumer confidence, support circular economy objectives and encourage more sustainable production practices. Her presentation illustrated that digital transparency is becoming an increasingly valuable economic and environmental asset, not simply a regulatory obligation.



Ms. Margaux Le Gallou, Senior Programme Manager, Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)

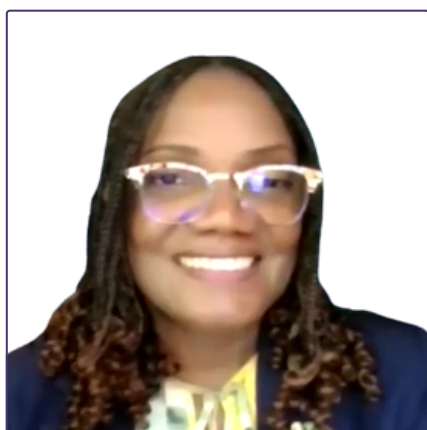
Completing the session with a regional perspective, **Ms. Mara Abraham, Technical Officer, Standards at CROSQ**, explored what this evolving landscape means for CARICOM's own standards ecosystem. She outlined how traditional approaches to standards development must now evolve to encompass digital product information, interoperability, digital conformity assessment and participation in emerging international standards initiatives. Her presentation positioned the DPP as a catalyst for modernising regional quality infrastructure, while emphasising the importance of strengthening CARICOM's engagement within global standards development processes to ensure that the region's interests are represented as these frameworks continue to evolve.



Ms. Mara Abraham, Technical Officer, Standards, CROSQ,



A Strategic Opportunity for the Future of Caribbean Trade



Dr. Sharonmae Smith Walker,
CEO, CROSQ

According to **Dr. Sharonmae Smith Walker, Chief Executive Officer at CROSQ**, who moderated sessions 1 and 2, *“Across both days of discussion, one message emerged with remarkable clarity: the Digital Product Passport is not simply another European regulatory requirement. It represents a fundamental shift in how products will be traded, monitored, verified and trusted within the global economy. For CARICOM, responding effectively will require investment in institutions, standards development, digital infrastructure, conformity assessment systems, data governance, and technical capacity. Equally important will be sustained collaboration among governments, National Standards Bodies, private sector organisations, customs authorities, telecommunications institutions and regional organisations.”*

The challenge is significant, but so too is the opportunity. By preparing early, CARICOM can position itself not only to meet future compliance requirements but also to leverage digitalisation to enhance competitiveness, strengthen sustainability performance, improve participation in international value chains and expand access to global markets. In doing so, the region will be better equipped to navigate an increasingly complex global trading environment where trust, transparency and digital information are rapidly becoming essential components of market access.

Building on this momentum, the next phase of the project will focus on the development of practical knowledge products that translate technical concepts into accessible, stakeholder-focused resources, supporting greater understanding and adoption of emerging digital trade requirements across the region.

Through the CARICOM Digital Trade Readiness Project, CROSQ is helping to ensure that the Caribbean is not merely adapting to the future of trade—but actively preparing to participate in it, shape it and benefit from it.

Supporting CARICOM's Digital Trade Readiness: EU Digital Product Passport and Beyond is one of the beneficiaries of a grant under the first Open Call under [InDiCo-Global](#), which is a project funded as part of the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No 101136022. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.