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When an entrepreneur requests a technical assessment of a product by Agrément South Africa, it is because there are as yet no national standards for such a product. Given the absence of standards, Agrément South Africa bases its assessments on the *performance concept*, whereby the required performance-in-use of a product is defined without specifying how such performance is to be attained.

The elements of the performance concept are:

- establishment by experts in all the relevant technical and scientific disciplines of performance criteria appropriate to the properties and use of the product
- identification of suitable test methods or methods of assessment which may be applied in the measurement of performance
- measurement of the actual performance of the product in accordance with the established methods
- judgement of acceptability in the light of the measured or assessed performance of the product against the appropriate performance criteria.

Criteria for local conditions

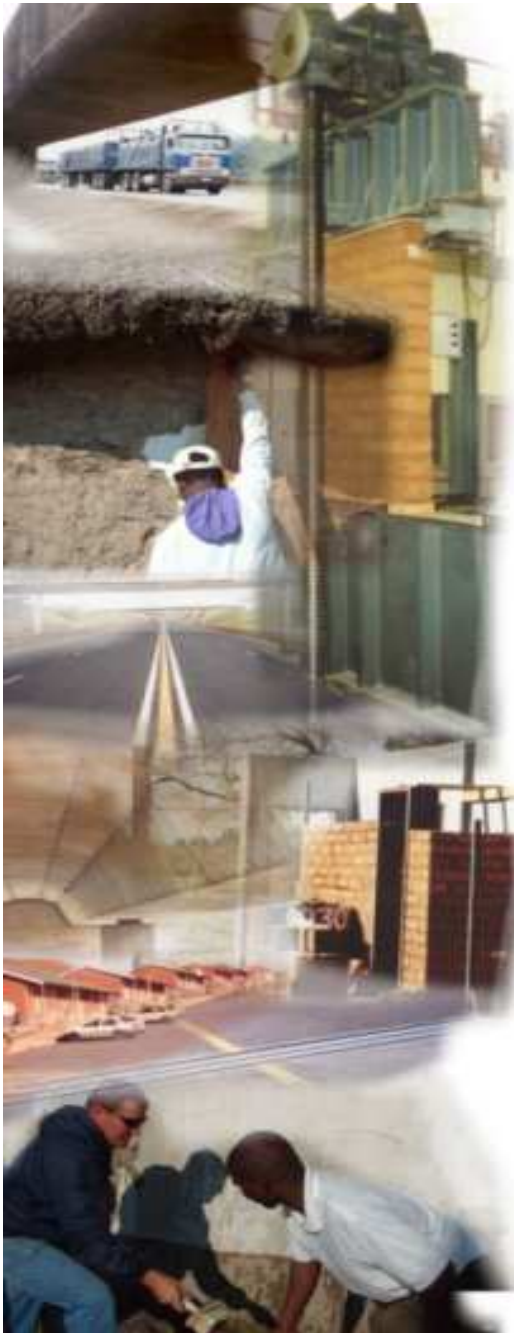
Clearly the criteria which the product must satisfy should take local conditions into consideration. For instance a product meant for use in full sunlight may well be more prone to ultra-violet degradation in South Africa than in the northern hemisphere. Similarly in the northern hemisphere products for use outdoors may be subjected to freezing temperatures seldom experienced in South Africa.

Technical assessment a holistic process

From the above it must be clear that Agrément South Africa cannot limit itself to assessing only one or two aspects of the performance of a system or product. The technical assessor must exercise his judgement as to which aspects of performance are relevant to the determination of fitness for purpose.

Often, however, Agrément South Africa is called upon by prospective certificate holders to grant certification of a system or product on the strength of only one or two test reports on certain aspects from other testing agencies, such as the SABS or equivalent local or international testing house.

P O Box 395 Pretoria 0001
Telephone 012 841 3708
Fax 012 841 2539
e-mail agrement@csir.co.za
<http://www.agrement.co.za>



While such tests can provide valuable information and can be a useful input into the technical assessment, they will not necessarily suffice or be relevant to the particular requirements of an assessment programme.

From the above it must be clear that Agrément South Africa cannot accept, without further scrutiny, test reports tabled by the prospective certificate holder, but must consider whether such test reports are appropriate and assess all relevant aspects of the product's performance in order to be able to establish whether it is fit for purpose.

Using published Agrément performance criteria or test methods

Agrément South Africa has published a range of [performance criteria](#) as well as test methods for a variety of construction systems and products. These documents are intended for the guidance of clients and assessors, but must be used with circumspection and only to the extent to which they are appropriate.

The assessment process must at all times be sufficiently comprehensive to confirm the overall fitness for purpose of the product or system in its "as built" or installed condition. This would include the ability of the manufacturer, installer or contractor to consistently manufacture, build or install the product to the required level of quality.

And lastly, the results of the assessment process and its conclusions must be able to survive robust peer review and critical consideration by the Board of Agrément South Africa.

Performance criteria and minimum requirements for the assessment of innovative building methods

Certain of the performance criteria published by Agrément South Africa have been developed specifically for *buildings* ranging from simple houses to complex multi-storey structures and focus on the structural integrity, habitability and durability of such buildings and their components.

Whilst most innovative construction methods combine *innovative* and conventional components or elements, it is only the innovative aspects that are assessed by Agrément South Africa.

However, in the case of buildings, the interaction of the innovative with the conventional components or elements also needs to be assessed, based on the assumption that the conventional components or elements are constructed in accordance with good building practice and in compliance with the National Building Regulations.