

	SOP No.	AGRI-C-001
	Version No. 2	Revision Date.
	Controller	SM
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Making and Handling Appeals, Complaints and Disputes		

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to describe how appeals, complaints and disputes are received, evaluated, and resolved by the CB.

2.0 Scope

This procedure covers all complaints and appeals received by the CB by any means, like written, verbal, e-mail etc. It also includes adverse findings during audits.

3.0 Responsibility

3.1 The Administrator

3.2 The Administrator is responsible for receiving the complaints and appeals from the clients / other parties. They, in consultation with the office staff and auditors, are responsible for handling, validating and analysis of the complaint and appeal to the satisfaction of the clients / other parties.

3.3 The overall responsibility to execute this procedure is given below.

Activity	Responsibility
Completing and submitting incident report logs for entry into the customer complaint log	All Agri-Canaan Staff members
Incident investigation and root cause analysis	Scheme Manager
Receiving of Appeals and Submission to Scheme Manger for Investigation	Administrator
Appeal review, analysis, and decision	Appeals Committee

4.0 Description of activity

4.1 Quality System Incidents

4.1.1 Agri-Canaan recognizes that events that occur in day-to-day operations can have a collective impact on the quality management system.

4.1.2 In order to properly analyze and resolve system problems, a consistent and thorough process of gathering information is essential.

4.2 Complaints

Complaints are incidents of grievance or dissatisfaction with Agri-Canaan. Complaints may be:

- internal in nature - raised by a Agri-Canaan staff member regarding internal service, operations, or employee performance.
- external in nature- raised by Agri-Canaan, suppliers, or other affiliated organizations.
- written;

- verbal;
- complaints raised by client's customers or stake holders.

4.3 Terminology used in this procedure for incidents

The incidents and complaints are considered as any of the below 4 things and procedure describes the system for handling the same.

4.3.1 Suggestions

Agri-Canaan recognizes that positive feedback is as important as negative feedback. Suggestions are vital in identifying risk and system improvement. As with complaints, suggestions may be internal or external in nature, written or verbal.

4.3.2 Appeals

Agri-Canaan recognizes that the client may have some reservations or may not agree with the conduct of auditor, audit findings, certification committee decision and / or overall interaction with Agri-Canaan staff.

4.3.3 Observations

Observations are witnessed incidents of service/operational deficiency, malfunction and or failure. Observations are often made by individuals independent of the activity witnessed and therefore objective in nature. Observations also play an important role in identification of risk and system improvement.

4.3.4 Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are incidents where the system has not failed, yet greater operational efficiency may be obtained in analyzing current practice. Opportunities for Improvement are often collected internally but input from external sources is also beneficial.

4.4 Receipt of Incidents

4.4.1 The quality incident may be reported by any means – verbal or written. In the case of an external source, the incident report may be received by any staff member. The staff members shall fill the Incident report recording all the information and details of the complaint log. The filled report shall be submitted by the Administrator or the Scheme Manager for further directions and action. In the case of internal sources, the incident report shall be filled by the staff member and submitted to the Administrator who shall forward the same to the Scheme Manager.

4.4.2 The Administrator shall contact (telephone, email, letter) the external source to acknowledge the receipt of information within 5 working days of receipt. S/He shall understand the issue in detail from the source (to avoid any error in writing the report). S/he may decide to personally meet the initiator, depending on the gravity and seriousness of the issue.

4.4.3 In case of Complaints and Observations, they may be against Agri-Canaan (a system / procedure or a person) or an Agri-Canaan certified company (client). In case of suggestion / opportunity for improvement, it is for Agri-Canaan to study the suggestion and decide.

4.4.4 All such incidents received by any means or by any one is first of all recorded in the Incident report with the details of;

- Complaint and appeal sr. No.,
- Mode of receipt,
- Received by,
- Name of client / other parties,

- Description of complaint and appeal,
- Reference of services against, which complaint and appeal is raised along with the reference, date and other details.

4.4.5 The Client / other parties' complaint and appeal incident report are issued to the Scheme Manager for the relevant scheme for analysis of the root cause.

4.4.6 The Scheme Manager validates the complaint after checking necessary back-up records or personal interview of auditors / staff members (who were involved in the job).

4.4.7 The Scheme Manager's Report is handed over to the Managing Director who is ultimately responsible for handling of the complaints, together with the Impartiality and Appeals Committee.

4.5 Handling of Client Complaint and Observations

4.5.1 In case of a complaint / observation against Agri-Canaan, the Scheme Manager analyzes the issue to determine if there is a system error or a personal error. He shall determine the root cause and determine correction/corrective action. The possible complaints are –

- Administration - problems with appointments, certification files, certificates issued or issued late.
- Auditor / subcontractor - problems with incomplete audit or surveillance documentation.
- Managing Board – problems with general compliance with Agri-Canaan administration or audit procedures.

4.5.2 The correction is needed immediately to satisfy the complainant. This may include training / counselling the person involved. The CAPA is discussed with the management during the next Management Review. Appropriate action is taken based on discussions (change in procedure /Formats, training to all personnel etc.). An email is sent out to all staff detailing the issue and remedial action (for information). A copy of the complaint and investigation details is maintained in the respective individual's personnel file for reference at the performance appraisals.

4.5.3 In case of a complaint / observation against a certified client, the Scheme Manager studies the complaint and discusses with the auditor (last audit). If the complaint is found genuine and valid i.e., indicates a system failure, the complaint is sent to the client for a response. No confidential reports or information will be sent to complainants without written permission from the client. Adequate time is given to the client for a response. If required, the Scheme Manager follows up with the client for the response. Depending on the response, the Scheme Manager may decide to –

- Write to the complainant about the response and ask for his response.
- seek further clarification from the client.
- Depute an auditor to personally visit the client and investigate system failure. Such visit shall be considered as special visit and charged to client.
- Request a joint meeting with client, complainant, and Agri-Canaan

4.5.4 The Scheme Manager shall communicate with the complainant at the end of the process detailing the findings and formally close the complaint. A copy of the correspondence is kept in the client file for records and the same is passed to the auditor during next audit. The details of all complaints and action taken (Correction, CAPA) are discussed in the Management Review meeting.

4.6 Handling of Appeals

Any company or organization that fails to satisfy an audit or surveillance may appeal against the decision. Where an appeal is received the following procedure will be followed.

4.6.1 The Board of Directors will meet to review the appeal in accordance with the report submitted

for review by the Scheme Manager to determine the outcome.

4.6.2 In case the Scheme Manager was part of the audit/ certification team, the Management Board shall decide on the investigating officer for the appeals process. In such a scenario, the Management Board shall approach the Impartiality Committee to provide a decision on the appeal.

4.6.3 The decision on the appeal shall be taken based on the decision by the Agri-Canaan Appeals committee. The results of the appeal will be reported to the Managing Board.

- All appeals shall be received by the Scheme Manager and details of appeals shall be recorded in the Appeals Register maintained by the Administrator.
- The Scheme Manager shall investigate the appeal made and inform the client about its plan of action for investigation and action there upon.
- An investigation report (Incident Report) for each individual appeal shall be maintained by the Administrator. In case any further corrective action is required post actions identified and taken based on Incident report – Corrective action procedure is implemented.
- A copy of the investigation report shall be sent to the client.
- In case of any further ambiguity, the same shall be reviewed by the board of directors and an appropriate decision arrived at.
- In case the issue remains open, the same shall be intimated to the accreditation board for its valuable comments.
- All appeals made are collected and analyzed on a yearly basis.
- Necessary corrective actions shall be taken based on the appeal trend.
- Appeal trends and corrective action taken shall also be reviewed as part of the Management Review Meeting and Impartiality, Complaints and Appeals Committee meeting.
- The Managing Director and the Scheme Manager shall ensure that details with respect to the appellant and actions there upon are not shared with the audit team members.
- The Managing Director and Scheme Manager shall ensure that no discriminatory action is taken against the appellant.
- The client is made aware of the appeals process and is given to him on request.
- In case of an appeal made by a client against a decision made by an auditor, Lead auditor, Inspector or certification committee, the appeal shall be recorded by the Administrator and forwarded to Appeals Committee.
- The appeals Committee shall review the appeal, investigate (which may include discussion with concerned client, respective auditor / lead auditor and review of audit report).
- The Appeals Committee may also direct any other lead auditor to visit the site and determine the validity of the appeal.

4.7 Handling of Suggestions /Opportunity for improvement

- In case of suggestion / opportunity for improvement, the source is predominantly internal, and the concerned staff member fills out the incident report and submits it to Scheme Manager or the Managing Director. The other source may be internal / external audit.
- The Scheme Manager studies the suggestion to determine any conflict with ISO17021, ISO/IEC 17065, Agri-Canaan Policy and Individual Scheme Rules for which S/he is responsible.
- In case the suggestion is in conflict, the same is communicated to the initiator. However, the suggestion is also discussed in the MRM. In case the suggestion is found not in conflict, the suggestion is studied for benefits and the impact on other processes.
- The suggestion is accepted if found beneficial and does not adversely impact any other process. The Scheme Manager determines the changes in existing documentation and implements them through Document Change process , as approved by the Management Board.

- If any certified client or interested party asks for the appeal/complaint handling process then it is forwarded to the Managing Director. He will inform a certified client /any other interested party the appeals and complaint handling process of Agri-Canaan if any complaints / appeals are received by certified clients / interested party

4.8 Closing of complaint and appeal

- 4.8.1 Depending on the nature of the non-conformity, the Scheme Manager may follow up with requests for corrective actions. When the investigation of client complaint and appeal determines that remote operation or other external organizations contributed to the complaint and appeal, the Scheme Manager or his delegate contacts these organizations and provides them with all relevant information.
- 4.8.2 Every client complaint and appeal shall be in recorded format. The records are maintained by the Administrator.
- 4.8.3 When there are copies of written communication, reports and other documents related to a complaint and appeal, these records are organized into a file and are identified with the complaint and appeal number and also having records of the corresponding corrective action. The records of investigations that concern product quality or other test characteristics are maintained by the relevant Scheme Manager. Based on analysis of Client / Other Parties complaint and appeal, necessary actions are taken, and client is replied for closing the complaint and appeal. The Scheme Manager identifies need for taking corrective action to prevent such complaint and appeal in future and accordingly concerned person is informed.
- 4.8.4 All the complaints and appeals received by the Organization will be closed within 7 working days after receipt of the complaint and appeal. The Scheme Manager is authorized for closing of complaint and appeal.