



Making and Handling Appeals, Complaints and Disputes (as described in AC SOP 8)

Making and Handling of Appeals, Complaints and Disputes

This is a summary of the details documented in CB standard Operating Procedure number, AC SOP 8.

1. Purpose

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

2. Responsible

2.1 The Quality Manager

- I. Receives and documents all complaints and appeals.
- II. Analyses the received complaints and appeals in consultation with the technical /Scheme managers to establish the ones related to the certification activities.
- III. Facilitates the evaluation process for the received complaints / appeals to conclusion.
- IV. Communicates the outcome of the evaluated complaints or appeals to the complainant or appellant.

3. Handling appeals, complaints and disputes.

- i. AfriCert encourages complaints and appeals to be submitted preferably in written form. Where complaints and appeals are received verbally, these shall be documented internally then addressed.
- ii. Anonymous appeals and/ or complaints shall also be accepted and on such, the CB shall do an appraisal to assess risk of anonymous grievances. The CB is under no obligation to investigate the anonymous complaints if there is no sufficient preliminary evidence or information.
- iii. Responses to anonymous appeals or complains shall only be to either to contacts disclosed later or to the closest contacts implied in the appeal/ complaint if any.
- iv. Written complaints shall be signed by the complainant and addressed to the Quality manager and Technical manager according the procedures provided by the certification body.
- v. AfriCert shall require that complaints or appeals submitted on behalf of a group, such as a community, farming group or labor organization, have at least one viable contact person to manage communications and further inquiries.
- vi. They must be signed by the person submitting them and addressed to the Quality manager and Technical manager according the procedures provided by the certification body.
- vii. They must contain adequate information on the subject issue or on the adverse decision and reasons for believing the decision was not acceptable or was not made in accordance with proper regulations, or policies.
- viii. The Quality Manager shall register the submitted appeals and / or complaints in the form AC 9x (appeal form) and AC 54x (complaint form) respectively (See below).



Making and Handling Appeals, Complaints and Disputes (as described in AC SOP 8)

3.2 Receiving and processing the complaints/ appeals.

- i. After receiving an appeal, the Quality manager shall register it in form AC 9x (appeal form). This can also be done directly by the appellant if he /she is conversant with the form contents.
- ii. After receiving a Complaint, the Quality manager shall register it in form AC 54x (complaint form). This can also be done directly by the appellant if he /she is conversant with the form contents.
- iii. The Certification Body must acknowledge receipt of the appeal to the appellant within 10 working days.
- iv. The Certification Body must acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within a maximum of 10 business days and 5 business days for RA standard.
- v. The Quality Manager and the Technical manager or an appointed Lead auditor who did not participate in the audit process in question, and all of them without any conflict of interest as stated in AC SOP 1 - Procedures for Confidentiality and Impartiality. shall:
 - Study the appeal to confirm if it's related to the certification activities appealed against and if so shall address it.
 - Gather verify and compare information regarding the appeal to make a decision. The involved auditor(s)/ Inspector(s) are allowed to present their version of events (views, opinions, evidences, defense etc.) surrounding the appeal for the resolution team to compare with those presented by the appellant and make informed decision.
 - Make a decision regarding the appeal based on the verified information
- vi. The decision made is then communicated to the appellant/ complainant either upholding it or dismissing it within 20 business days for all standards apart from RA standards which takes 30 business days.

NB/ AfriCert shall not resolve appeals by changing the certification scope in order to eliminate a problem in the scope of the certification granted.

The appeals/ complaints should be sent to the addresses below:

1. complaints@africertlimited.co.ke
2. Copy reports@africertlimited.co.ke
3. A hard copy can be mailed to the following postal address: P.O. BOX 74696-00200, Nairobi, Kenya