 GREENCERT <small>Inspection . Certification . Training</small>	GREENCERT LIMITED			
	Title: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS HANDLING PROCEDURE			Doc No: GCL-PRC-06
	Issue No: 2.0	Date of Issue: 03/2022 Prepared by: QM	Authorized Date: 03/2022 Authorized by: GM	Date of Rev: 03/2022 Reviewed by: GM

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS HANDLING PROCEDURE

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to describes the procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints received from various sources.
- 1.2 This SOP outlines the actions to be taken in the event that a complaint or appeal is received from certified persons, and other parties in regards to the rules, policies, procedures, certification decisions, or overall GreenCert operations.
- 1.3 This procedure excludes complaints related to alleged illegal, financial, or regulatory issues, which shall be handled by appropriate authorities.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 Any applicant and/or GreenCert certified client can make appeal against any/all GreenCert's decision including decision of application reviewer, audit team and/ or certification decision maker.
- 2.2 This procedure includes handling of all complaints received by clients against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in certification process, certified clients, or any other by any means or even relevant reference appearing in print media.

3.0 Terms and Definitions

- 3.1 Terms and Definitions are in accordance to Annex I: Glossary of Terms of the **Quality Management Manual GCL-MN-01**, to which this Procedure forms part of.


4.0 Responsibility

- a) **Quality Manager** is responsible to receive the appeals and/or complaint and forward the information to relevant personnel within GreenCert
- b) **Certification Scheme Manager** is responsible for monitoring of appeals and/or complaints directly related to Certification activities.
- c) **General Manager** is responsible for final decision on closure of the complaints and appeals.

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Complaints Handling Procedure

5.1.1 General

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5.1.1.1 All complaints received by GreenCert shall be channeled to the Quality Manager, who shall have an assistant who maintains record pertaining to all complaints including; date of receipt, date of acknowledgement, date of closure or final disposal in ***GCL-FO-16 Complaints and Appeals Register***

5.1.1.2 Immediately on its receipt, the same shall be acknowledged with the assurance that GreenCert will be investigating the complaint and informing the complainant of the outcome at the earliest. Anonymous complaints shall also be registered if they appear to be valid and having substance.

5.1.1.3 GreenCert shall be responsible for all decisions at all level of complaint handling process.

5.1.1.4 All complaints shall undergo initial scrutiny by the Quality Manager to determine whether they fall within the ambit of GreenCert activities and whether they are valid, based on which any of the following action shall be taken.


- a) If a complaint is outside the domain of GreenCert activities, the complainant shall be informed accordingly and the complaint shall be treated as closed.
- b) If information provided in the complaint is inadequate for any meaningful follow-up and the complainant is not able to provide minimum required information such complaints shall also be treated as closed and the complainant shall be informed accordingly.
- c) If the complaint clearly falls within the domain of GreenCert activities and appears to be valid, the initial information provided is sufficient for initial investigation, and the same shall be taken up for further action.

5.1.2 Investigation of Complaints

5.1.2.1 Complaints received broadly fall in three categories and below shall be the procedure for dealing with each category of complaints:

a) Complaints against GreenCert Clients

- If a complaint is received against a certified client the content of complaint shall be noted and severity of complaints analyzed.
- If complaint is from any regulatory body, then client shall be immediately sent a notice for corrective action and if complaint is from the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Scheme then special short visit/ audit shall be planned to review effectiveness of certified client production system.
- The clients shall be informed of all complaints received against them. If evidence is required for corrective actions, GreenCert shall seek prior

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approval from client and complainant for making complaint and its resolution publically accessible.

b) Complaints against Certification Committee Members and Auditors/Inspectors

- A *Complaints and Appeal Committee* consisting of Quality Manager and the Certification Scheme Manager shall investigate the complaint in case of complaint against the Auditor/inspector and in case of complaint against a Certification Committee or its member.
- The committee may seek clarification from client, auditors/inspectors or other persons who may have knowledge about the matter contained in the complaint.
- The committee shall submit their findings to the General Manager for his decision. The General Manager, if necessary may consult the appropriate personnel i.e., interested party and take decision.
- In case of valid complaints, action taken by GreenCert may involve feedback for corrective action followed by monitoring, warning against future recurrence and in extreme case, deletion of the Auditor/Inspector from GreenCert certification activities or removal of Certification Committee member from the committee.
- The outcome of the investigation shall be informed to the complainant and a brief summary of nature of the complaint, outcome of the investigation and action taken shall be added to the ***Complaints and Appeals Register GCL-FO-16***.

c) Complaints against GreenCert Personnel

- When the complaint is against GreenCert personnel/staff, he/she will not be involved in investigation process either directly or indirectly.
- All such complaints will be brought to the notice of the General Manager, who shall seek clarification from the person concerned. If an investigation is required, he/she may delegate it to a Complaints and Appeal Committee consisting of one or more suitable persons depending on the person whom the complaints is against. The findings of the committee shall be placed before the General Manager for his decision.

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- If the complaint is found to be valid, the General Manager shall ask the concerned staff to take required corrective actions. In extreme cases, the decision may involve a punishment including a dismissal of the concerned staff in which case GreenCert Procedures & Codes of Ethics and Conduct shall be followed.
- The complainant shall be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by GreenCert if any.
- If the complaint is against the General Manager the matter shall be brought to the notice of the Chairperson of the GreenCert's Board of Directors who shall take appropriate actions.

5.1.3 Reporting on Complaints and Other Related Actions

- 5.1.3.1 As an outcome of investigation of complaint and root cause analysis, if any corrective action is felt necessary, the Quality Manager shall inform the concern Department/Personnel and corrective action shall be initiated by the department in line with the requirements of **Procedure for Preventive Actions and Corrective Actions, GCL-PRC-10**
- 5.1.3.2 All records pertaining to complaints shall be maintained and updated by the Quality Manager. The status of complaints shall be reported to the Quality Manager who is responsible for monitoring of complaints.
- 5.1.3.3 The Quality Manager shall analyze all the complaints and their outcome for possible trends. The complaints received, their handling, corrective actions taken and analysis of those complaints, shall be discussed as one of the agenda items in the internal staff meetings and as an input for Management Review meetings.
- 5.1.3.4 Any complaint pending for more than 90 days shall be referred to the relevant interested parties i.e., Certification Scheme, Accreditation Body, Regulatory Authority, along with all documents of original complaint, Record of review, Response to complainant and with detail of action taken by GreenCert till date.


5.2 Appeals Handling Procedure

- 5.2.1 Appeals need to be submitted to GreenCert in writing within 14 days after receipt of the GreenCert certification decision. The appellant may send the appeal to info@greencert.co.tz.
- 5.2.2 The client is informed about the right to appeal any GreenCert certification decision by the following indication Clause in the Certification Agreement: **“This decision may be**

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appealed within 14 days to GreenCert Limited Plot 2, Uzunguni Area, Ben Bella Road, P.O. Box 2592 Arusha-Tanzania.”

- 5.2.3 Appeals need to include a clear description of the case, objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the appeal, and the name and contact information of the appellant.
- 5.2.4 Appeals are forwarded to the person in charge, which is the Certification Scheme Manager concerned.
- 5.2.5 All appeals are preliminarily reviewed by the Certification Scheme Manager.
- a) If the appeal is outside of the scope for appeals handling, the Scheme Manager shall reject the appeal in writing.
 - b) If the appeal is within the scope for appeals handling, the Scheme Manager shall initiate the appeal handling procedure as detailed hereafter.
- 5.2.6 Each appeal case will be registered in the ***Complaints and Appeal Appeals GCL-FO-16*** and forwarded to the Quality Manager for central registration in the appeals register.
- 5.2.7 As soon as possible, at the latest within 2 weeks (10 working days) the Certification Scheme Manager shall communicate with the appellant to confirm receipt of the appeal and to provide an overview of the proposed course of action to follow up on the appeal.
- 5.2.8 The appeal is duly investigated and the certification decision re-assessed in consideration of the new evidence or additional justification provided, as well as additional information obtained by other staff members and/or third party experts, if relevant. Further information is requested from the appellant if necessary.
- 5.2.9 The Certification Scheme Manager shall keep the appellant informed of the progress in evaluating the appeal. Based on the result of the investigation, the Certification Scheme Manager shall specify all proposed actions in conclusion of the appeal within 28 days of receiving the appeal.
- 5.2.10 In order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, the decision to resolve the appeal is taken by, or reviewed and approved by, person(s) not involved in the activities that led to the appeal. This means, the Certification Scheme Manager must have been not involved in the certification decision questioned in the appeal. If the Scheme Manager was involved, the General Manager shall appoint an Auditor to handle the matter, who wasn't involved in the certification process that led to the appeal.
- 5.2.11 Furthermore, personnel involved in the review or approval of a resolution to an appeal must not have been involved in consultancy tasks with or have been employed by the client in question for the past TWO years.

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- 5.2.12 The Certification Scheme Manager shall notify the appellant in writing about the outcome of the appeal when the appeal is considered to be closed.
- 5.2.13 The appeal shall be closed once GreenCert has gathered and verified all necessary information, assessed the evidence provided, and taken a decision on the appeal. If applicable, the certification decision needs to be revised and updated certification documents need to be issued according to certification scheme requirements.
- 5.2.14 If applicable, the competent authorities and/or standard/certification scheme owners i.e., GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, are included in the process.
- 5.2.15 The Certification Scheme Manager informs the Quality Manager upon the completion of the appeal procedure, and forwards respective documentation for final assessment and recording.
- 5.2.16 In case the appellant disagrees with the conclusions reached by GreenCert, the appellant may refer their appeal to the competent authorities, Accreditation Bodies, and/or the standard/certification scheme owners i.e., GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

6.0 Records

- 6.1 The record that shall be maintained shall be the
- a) **Complaints and Appeals Register GCL-FO-16,**
 - b) **Notification Template GCL-FO-24** for informing the relevant interested parties on the outcomes of the complaints or appeals.