

Caucascert	Procedure for Complaint Handling	Code GC/CHP/PM-11.9
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Purpose:

To establish responsible and effective complaint handling and resolution procedures in a transparent manner, ensuring the satisfaction of internal and external customers.

Scope:

The procedure covers all complaints that may be received from direct Clients, indirect customers (Customers of Client, user of the produce) and consumers the end use of the produce and also from the members associated with the group certification.

Responsibility:

The Quality Manager and Deputy Director are responsible for handling all types of complaints through to final resolution and ensuring appropriate corrective actions are taken.

Procedures:

- The Quality Manager shall address all written complaints received. Acknowledgment of the complaint shall be issued either by:
 - Providing a signed copy of the complaint letter, or
 - Replying to the email (in case the complaint is received by email), including the contact details of the complainant.
- If necessary, the complainant may be invited to present the issue directly to the Deputy Director.
- Based on the nature of the complaint, the Quality Manager will review and decide whether to accept or reject the complaint:
 - Rejected complaints (due to being unsubstantiated or incomplete) shall be communicated to the complainant with reasons.
 - Accepted complaints will be entered into the Complaint Register, and acknowledgment will be sent via email or formal letter.
- The Quality Manager shall assign the complaint for investigation to:
 - A staff committee,
 - A single employee, or
 - An independent committee/person not involved in the inspection or certification decisions related to the complaint.
- Upon request, the Quality Manager shall provide the necessary information, assessment reports, decisions, corrections, and corrective actions (if applicable).

Developed: IE Date: 21.10.2024	Revised: IE Date: 01.04.2025	Approved: PK Date: 01.04.2025	Public	Version 2	pages: 1-of 3
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- All actions and recommendations will be submitted to the Deputy Director for final decision making.
- The outcome of the complaint resolution will be communicated in writing (via email or letter) to the complainant within 30 days of receipt.
- The Deputy Director will conduct a root cause analysis, involving technical experts in the relevant area, as necessary.
- The complaint will be evaluated based on the root cause findings, and the complainant will receive a written explanation along with supporting documentation.
- For complaints related to certification procedure lapses, a house meeting will be convened for discussion and resolution.
- All complaints must be reviewed and approved by personnel not involved in the certification activities related to the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Deputy Director, the Quality Manager will appoint two independent persons to investigate the complaint following the same procedure.
- To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel who have provided consultancy for a client, or been employed by a client, will not be used by Caucascert to review or approve the resolution of a complaint for that client within two years following the end of the consultancy or employment.
- If the Deputy Director has a conflict of interest, another qualified person (e.g., the Quality Manager or Senior Inspector) without any conflict of interest will handle the complaint.
- Only written complaints will be entertained. This procedure 11.9 - Procedure for Complaint Handling will be made available to clients or any interested party upon request.
- If the complainant agrees with the outcome at this stage, the complaint process concludes. All complaints and actions taken will be tracked and recorded in 7.4 - Complaints and Disputes.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, an appeal may be filed with the Deputy Director within 30 days of the decision.
- A root cause analysis of the complaint will be documented in 5.3 - Control of Corrective Action, and preventive actions will be implemented to avoid recurrence.

Notes:

- The identity of the complainant will remain unknown, and no attempt shall be made to identify them.

Developed: IE Date: 21.10.2024	Revised: IE Date: 01.04.2025	Approved: PK Date: 01.04.2025	Public	Version 2	pages: 2-of 3
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- Anonymous complaints will be treated with the same seriousness and due diligence as identified complaints, provided sufficient information is available.
- Trends from multiple anonymous complaints may be analyzed to detect patterns or systemic issues.

Developed: IE Date: 21.10.2024	Revised: IE Date: 01.04.2025	Approved: PK Date: 01.04.2025	Public	Version 2	pages: 3-of 3
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