

South African Forestry Assurance Scheme

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Dispute Resolution Procedures

SAFAS

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1. Scope

- 1.1 This procedure document describes the procedures for complaints and appeals to the SAFAS council which concern decisions and/or activities related to SAFAS, including standard setting, interpretation of the SAFAS standards, logo usage licencing and notification of certification bodies.

Note: Complaints and appeals relating to the decisions and activities of a certified entity; an accredited certification body or an accreditation body shall be dealt with by the complaints and appeals procedures of the relevant accredited certification body or the responsible accreditation body.

2. Normative references

None

3. Terms and definitions

3.1 Appeal

Written request by any person or organisation (the appellant) for reconsideration of any decision affecting the appellant made by any SAFAS accredited certification body where the appellant considers such decision has been taken in breach of the SAFAS requirements or procedures.

Note: Such adverse decisions may include, for example:

- Rejection; suspension; or termination of SAFAS membership,
- Rejection of application for usage of the PEFC Logo;
- Refusal of application for the notification of certification bodies.

3.2 Complaint

Written expression of dissatisfaction (other than appeal) by any person or organization which relates to the activities of SAFAS.

4. Complaints and appeals acceptance

- 4.1 All complaints and appeals shall be addressed in writing to the SAFAS Council.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the complainant/ appellant to submit written information which can be verified as accurate and correct through an independent source.
- 4.3 The SAFAS Council decides on formal acceptance of the complaint/ appeal provided that the complaint/appeal is in accordance with 3.2/3.1 and the information supporting the complaint/appeal can be authenticated as being in compliance with 4.2.

The SAFAS Chairman shall without delay:

- a) acknowledge to the complainant/ appellant (in writing) the receipt and acceptance/rejection of the complaint/ appeal, including its justification;
- b) provide the complainant/appealant with details of the SAFAS complaints and appeals procedures to ensure that they are clearly understood;

- c) refer the complainant/ appellant to other parties responsible for resolving the matter where the matter does not satisfy clause 1.1.

5. Complaint and appeal resolution process

5.1 The SAFAS Chairperson shall assign an ad-hoc Complaints and Dispute Committee (the CDC), comprising one or more persons, to investigate the accepted complaint or appeal. The members of the CDC shall have no vested or conflict of interest in the complaint or appeal. Alternatively, in justified circumstances, the CDC may have balanced representation of concerned parties.

5.2 The CDC shall undertake a thorough investigation and seek a resolution. The CDC shall submit in a timely matter, a detailed written report, to the SAFAS Chairperson to be presented to the Board of Directors. The report shall include a statement indicating whether, or not, the complaint or appeal has been substantiated and recommendations on resolving the complaint/ appeal.

Note: It is expected that complaints not requiring an on-site investigation should normally be investigated by the CDC within 1 month.

5.3 The SAFAS Council shall approve or disapprove the conclusions of the report, including its recommendations and relevant corrective and preventive actions. Where the complaint or appeal concerns the decision of the General Assembly, the final decision is made by the General Assembly based on recommendation of the SAFAS Council.

5.4 The Chairperson of SAFAS shall, without delay, inform the complainant/ appellant and other interested parties about the outcomes of the complaint/ appeal resolution process, in writing.

5.5 It is expected that any formally accepted complaint/ appeal, not requiring an on-site investigation should normally be resolved within 6 months.

5.6 Regardless of the outcome of any complaint/ appeal, the complainant/ appellant and SAFAS shall each meet their own costs.

6. Documentation

6.1 The Chairperson of SAFAS shall keep records relating to the complaints/ appeals, including their reception; acceptance/rejection, investigation, resolution and communication to the complainant/ appellant.