	MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT'S APPEALS AND DISPUTES	Code 30 MP-S-03
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1. GENERAL ASPECTS

Client's appeals may be an indicator of weaknesses in the quality control, and they will be closely watched by **NaturaCert**. The Executive Director and the quality office staff will examine and decide if the client's appeals and disputes are justified or unjustified, however the analysis and treatment will always be performed with the support of a leading auditor.

NOTE. Any auditor involved in the analysis and treatment of the appeal and/or dispute, must not have taken part in the audit process or the certification decision making.

2. OBJECTIVE

Ensure that appeals and disputes that may arise from clients are dealt with in a timely and fair manner.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. Appeal: Request from a client to reconsider any adverse decision taken by the Certification Body in relation to an aimed certification status. Some Adverse decisions are refusal of an application, refusal to perform an audit, corrective action requests, modifications in the scope of the certification, decisions to deny, suspend or terminate a certification, and any other action that prevents certification.

3.2. Justified appeal: The evaluation results of this appeal conclude that it has the right technical support to grant an answer in favor of the request.


3.3. Unjustified appeal: The evaluation results of this appeal conclude that it does not have the technical support to grant an answer in favor of the request.

3.4. Dispute: An appeal that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by **NaturaCert** or that requires resolution by another instance, as in the case where the interpretation of criteria is disputed.

4. SCOPE

This procedure is applied to all companies that are subject to control by **NaturaCert** according to the rule or standard to which they are applying.

Prepared by: Quality Division Date: 2022/08/12	Reviewed and approved by: Executive Director Date: 2022/08/29	Version 9 Date: 2022/08/29	Page 1 out of 4
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	MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT'S APPEALS AND DISPUTES	Code 30 MP-S-03
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5. RESPONSABILITIES

The Quality Coordinator is responsible for receiving recommendations, complaints/claims from customers through the PS-10 Report and follow-up of recommendations, complaints/claims, appeals and disputes and reply a response informing that it will be processed by **NaturaCert**. **NaturaCert**'s Executive Director, the Quality Coordinator and a leading auditor are responsible for providing an adequate process and subsequent solution.

NOTE. Any auditor involved in the analysis and treatment of the appeal and/or dispute, must not have taken part in the audit process or the certification decision making.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. Management of clients' appeals and disputes

6.1.1. Appeals against **NaturaCert** decisions

Any active client of **NaturaCert**'s product certification program may undertake an appeal process against the granting, maintenance, or denial of certification. The applicant must be requested it in writing by filling out the PS-10 Report and follow-up of recommendations, complaints/claims, appeals, and disputes form.

Appeals may only take place on the condition that the applicant:


- a. Has signed a valid contract with **NaturaCert** and has complied with the commitments acquired therein.
- b. Is covered within the certification/verification program.
- c. The appeal is filed within the time established by the scheme.

6.1.2. Appeals of nonconformities

Any active client of the certification program for NaturaCert products may exercise the right of appeal of non-conformities if the evaluation scheme allows it.

The applicant must be requested it in writing by filling out the PS-10 Report and follow-up

Prepared by: Quality Division Date: 2022/08/12	Reviewed and approved by: Executive Director Date: 2022/08/29	Version 9 Date: 2022/08/29	Page 2 out of 4
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	MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT'S APPEALS AND DISPUTES	Code 30 MP-S-03
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of recommendations, complaints/claims, appeals, and disputes form. The same must be duly substantiated and must also comply with the sections of the preceding paragraph.

6.2. Appeals

The Executive Director, the Quality Coordinator, and a leading for the scheme auditor of **NaturaCert** are responsible for considering in the first instance the appeal report format PS-10 Report and follow-up of recommendations, complaints/claims, appeals and disputes, will analyze the motives that led to the appeal and will present the implementation of an action plan.

Note. The auditor in charge of the analysis and treatment of the appeal and/or dispute must not have participated in the audit process and will not participate in decision making processes regarding the certification.


Note 2. In case the scheme requires more than one lead auditor for the treatment, the scheme rule will be adopted.

After the appeal has been reviewed (within a period not exceeding 18 working days from the moment it was filed), **NaturaCert's** Executive Director will inform the result to the person concerned by a mail.

If necessary, during the execution of the action plan, **NaturaCert's** Executive Director will consult the evaluation team to clarify the facts and if there are differences in the interpretation of the findings, it is possible to request advice from the standards body that manages the applicable standard of the certification/verification process of the client. The action plan may schedule a visit, that aims to resolve the issues under discussion, after the visit, the leading auditor/inspector will prepare a report to be submitted to a new Certification Committee/Certifier that can give a final verdict. The auditor who led the visit or who made the previous certification decision, cannot take part in this session.

If after the implementation of the action plan, the appeal is to be justified and the client's position is confirmed, the costs incurred by the tour will be charged to **NaturaCert**. Otherwise, the appeal is found to be unjustified or unsubstantiated, will be refused and if the visit took place, the customer will be responsible for the costs incurred by **NaturaCert** concept of this activity.

Prepared by: Quality Division Date: 2022/08/12	Reviewed and approved by: Executive Director Date: 2022/08/29	Version 9 Date: 2022/08/29	Page 3 out of 4
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	MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT'S APPEALS AND DISPUTES	Code 30 MP-S-03
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NaturaCert's Executive Director will send a written report to the client, providing all the information regarding the final verdict of the appeal, the client must reply to this communication with the acceptance or rejection to the response.

6.3. Disputes

If the client does not agree with the final verdict after the appeal, it will be treated as a dispute, whereby the Executive Director will take the case to **NaturaCert's** Board of Directors which must reach a definite response the request or refer to the scheme if the scheme's regulations so determine.

If no satisfactory answer has been given to the client, the Chairman of the Stakeholders Committee will be informed to convene that committee as a third instance to review the case and give a final response to the request, that decision shall be reported to the client. The Stakeholder Committee may refer directly to the Accreditation Agency to find a way of settling the dispute.

6.4. Record and filing of appeals and disputes

Appeals and disputes, as well as the procedure related to them, are filed in the digital folder of the corresponding client. In addition, a copy is filed in the Quality PQRS folder, for the necessary follow-up.

Prepared by: Quality Division Date: 2022/08/12	Reviewed and approved by: Executive Director Date: 2022/08/29	Version 9 Date: 2022/08/29	Page 4 out of 4
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