



SRP Grievance and Dispute Resolution Policy

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About the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)

The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance comprising over 100 institutional members from public, private, research, civil society and the financial sector. Originally co-convened by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), SRP is now an independent member association, working together with its partners to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, and by offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice.

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Overview

SRP commits to impartial, consistent and diligent processes for receiving and responding to comments, complaints, grievances and appeals.

This document describes the process to be adopted by SRP to ensure a timely and effective resolution of comments, complaints, grievances and appeals submitted by SRP stakeholders. This procedure focuses on comments, complaints, grievances and appeals regarding substantive or procedural elements of:

- SRP standards (including development and revision process)
- SRP assurance procedures (including development and revision process)
- The performance of an Assurance Service Provider or Verification Body

Procedures

1. Principles of Comments, Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Resolution

- 1.1 Disputes should be resolved first by discussion and negotiation or mediation. Formal procedures should be adopted as a last resort.
- 1.2 Disputes should be addressed at the lowest level possible. Disputes not addressed initially at the lowest level possible may be escalated to the next level according to stipulated process, which may impact the time to resolve the dispute.
- 1.3 Disputes shall be treated with procedural fairness.
- 1.4 All persons involved in the investigation and/or decision-making process surrounding a dispute shall declare any conflict of interest they may have in the proceedings and disqualify themselves accordingly.
- 1.5 Retribution or reprisal against commenters and complainants will not be tolerated.

2. Comments, Complaints and Grievances in the SRP System

- 2.1. Comments, complaints and grievances in the following categories are processed according to this procedure:
 - 2.1.1. Substantive comments, complaints and grievances regarding the content of any SRP standard and any element of the SRP assurance scheme.
 - 2.1.2. Procedural comments, complaints and grievances related to any SRP standard development and revision processes or assurance procedures.
 - 2.1.3. Comments, complaints and grievances related to the performance of an Assurance Service Provider or Verification Body.

- 2.2. Comments, complaints and grievances against the performance of Verification Bodies are first handled by the Assurance Service Provider and processed according to the Assurance Service Provider's own comments, complaints and grievances procedure.
- 2.3. Comments, complaints and grievances against sites about their compliance with the SRP Standard, Internal Management System (IMS) Standard and Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard under the SRP Assurance Scheme are first addressed by the Verification Body issuing the original verification letter and will be processed according to the Verification Body's own comments, complaints and grievances procedure.
- 2.4. The commenter or complainant should file the comment, complaint or grievance to the correct handling body. If the comment, complaint or grievance is not submitted correctly, SRP will support the commenter or complainant in filing it correctly.

3. Comments Submitted to SRP

- 3.1. SRP invites individuals or organizations to submit a comment or suggestion at any time.
- 3.2. Commenters shall disclose their identity to SRP.
- 3.3. A comment shall be submitted in writing by using the online submission form on the SRP website (Annex A) or electronically by email to grievances@sustainableice.org
- 3.4. The comment shall be written in the official SRP language (English).
- 3.5. All comments shall be initially received and coordinated by a designated member of the SRP Secretariat.
- 3.6. SRP will promptly respond to comments provided they are substantive, submitted in writing, and include the commenter's name, contact information, and any institutional affiliation.
- 3.7. SRP reserves the right to determine how comments should be responded to and, if necessary, may refer the commenter to our complaints, grievances or appeals process for further handling.

4. Lodging a Complaint or Grievance

- 4.1. Any individual or organization may file a complaint or grievance.
- 4.2. Complainants shall disclose their identity to SRP. SRP will consider requests by complainants who wish to remain anonymous to the parties to the complaint or grievance.

- 4.3 A complaint or grievance shall be submitted in writing by using the online submission form (Annex A) on the SRP website (to provide preliminary information) or by sending a completed Complaints and Grievances Form electronically by email to grievances@sustainableice.org
- 4.4 The complaint or grievance shall be written in the official SRP language (English) and contain all fields of information requested in the Grievance and Dispute Resolution Form (see Annex).
- 4.5 Only complaints and grievances that meet all conditions indicated above shall be evaluated.
- 4.6 SRP will promptly address complaints and grievances that are brought to its attention.
- 4.7 Correspondence related to the complaint or grievance will be retained on file by the SRP for at least five (5) years.
- 4.8 All parties involved in the process should refrain from commenting publicly until a decision is made and all parties have been informed accordingly.
- 4.9 The complainant may withdraw the complaint or grievance at any point in time of the process, at the complainant's sole discretion.

5. Processing a Complaint or Grievance

- 5.1 All complaints and grievances shall be initially received and coordinated by a designated member of the SRP Secretariat, hereafter referred to as the coordinator, to ensure efficient handling of stakeholder concerns.
- 5.2 Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a complaint or grievance, the coordinator shall:
 - 5.2.1 Acknowledge receipt of the complaint or grievance with the complainant.
 - 5.2.2 Analyze by which process the complaint or grievance shall be dealt with.
 - 5.2.3 Inform the appropriate handling body and the complainant.
 - 5.2.4 Record the complaint or grievance in the case tracker. Records shall also include subsequent verbal and written exchanges (with date, time and summary of issues discussed).
- 5.3 For substantive complaints and grievances regarding the content of any SRP standard and any element of the SRP assurance system and procedural complaints and grievances related to any standard development and revision processes or assurance procedures:
 - 5.3.1 Complaints and grievances are initially considered by senior operations staff to determine merit and then passed through a consultative process that may include SRP Secretariat staff, Technical Committee, and SRP

Board, as appropriate.

- 5.3.2 The SRP Executive Director or coordinator shall contact the parties to the complaint or grievance by e-mail or phone to attempt to informally resolve the issue via direct mediation.
 - 5.3.3 If informal resolution cannot be reached, the Technical Committee will investigate the issue and provide a recommendation on the complaint or grievance. Additional information may be requested from the complainant, the defendant, third parties named as sources of information or other parties likely to have information relevant to the investigation.
 - 5.3.4 SRP will respond to the complainant with a proposed resolution within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the complaint or grievance. The response shall include a conclusion on the complaint or grievance, the rationale for the decision and, if applicable, any follow up measures to be taken.
 - 5.3.5 If no further issue arises, the complaint or grievance is considered resolved and the case file closed.
 - 5.3.6 If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, they may submit an appeal to the SRP Secretariat, which will be escalated for review by the SRP Board following the procedure outlined in Clause 5.
 - 5.3.7 SRP will communicate in writing the decision regarding the resolution of the complaint or grievance to the complainant and parties involved, without violating reasonable guidelines or requirements for confidentiality.
 - 5.3.8 SRP will provide a summary of the complaint or grievance decision to other interested parties where relevant and on request, unless providing the information would violate reasonable guidelines or requirements for confidentiality.
- 5.4 For complaints and grievances related to the performance of an Assurance Service Provider:
- 5.4.1 Stakeholders with complaints or grievances related to the conduct of an Assurance Service Provider are encouraged to first use the dispute mechanism established by that Assurance Service Provider.
 - 5.4.2 The coordinator will track the handling of the complaint or grievance by that body.
 - 5.4.3 If the complaint or grievance remains unresolved, SRP may, at its discretion, mediate on behalf of the complainant following the procedure outlined in Clause 4.3.
- 5.5 For complaints and grievances against the performance of Verification Bodies or compliance of sites:
- 5.5.1 Stakeholders with complaints or grievances are obligated to first use the

dispute mechanism established by the relevant Verification Body and/or by an Assurance Service Provider.

5.5.2 The coordinator will track the handling of the complaint or grievance by that body.

5.5.3 If the complaint or grievance remains unresolved, SRP may, at its discretion, mediate on behalf of the complainant and decide to conduct an extraordinary investigative audit, whose outcome shall be final.

6. Appeals Against Complaints and Grievances Decisions

6.1 Appeals in the following categories are processed according to this procedure:

6.1.1 Appeals from complainants that challenge SRP complaints and grievances decisions, where there has been a breach of procedure that may undermine the decision.

6.1.2 Appeals from complainants that challenge the outcome of an Assurance Service Provider's complaints and grievances process, where the complainant can show that the Assurance Service Provider failed to handle the complaint or grievance per their procedures, or that the outcome did not consider all the evidence provided.

6.2 Appeals can be submitted electronically by email to grievances@sustainablerice.org. The SRP Secretariat will acknowledge receipt of an appeal within five (5) business days.

6.3 Appeals are initially considered by senior operations staff to determine merit and then passed through a consultative process that may include the Assurance Service Provider, SRP Secretariat staff, Technical Committee, and SRP Board, as appropriate.

6.4 For appeals that challenge complaints and grievances decisions, SRP will respond to the appellant with a decision to uphold or reject the appeal, based on a review of the decision by the SRP Board.

6.5 For appeals that challenge complaints and grievances decisions made by an Assurance Service Provider, SRP will respond to the appellant with a decision to uphold or reject the appeal, based on a review of the decision by the SRP Secretariat staff, Technical Committee, or SRP Board, as appropriate.

6.6 If the appeal is rejected, the original decision stands.

6.7 If the appeal is upheld, the original decision will be overturned, and the Assurance Service Provider may face corrective actions, if applicable.

6.8 All appeal decisions are final.

Figure 1: Summary of Complaint, Grievance and Appeal Process



ANNEX: Grievance and Dispute Resolution Form

SRP commits to impartial, consistent, and diligent processes for receiving and responding to complaints and grievances. All information will be handled confidentially by the SRP Secretariat. Further actions will be agreed and coordinated together with you.

<u>Information of the individual(s) or organisation(s) filing the complaint/grievance ('Complainant')</u>	
Date	
Organization	
Address	
Website	
Contact Name	
Contact Email	
Contact Phone	

<u>Information about the individual(s) or organisation(s) against whom the complaint/grievance is submitted</u>	
Organization	
Address	
Website	
Contact Name	
Contact Email	
Contact Phone	
Name of other parties involved (if any)	

<u>Information to be submitted about the complaint/grievance</u>	
Subject of the complaint/grievance	
Brief summary of issues and events leading to the complaint/grievance	
Specific requirement not complied with	
Evidence to support each aspect of the complaint/grievance	<i>Please provide an overview and description of supporting documents attached.</i>
Overview of steps taken to resolve the issue prior to lodging this complaint/grievance, and any response received	
Agreement to share the complaint/grievance with the other parties to the complaint/grievance	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I agree. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I do not agree.
Desired outcome of filing this complaint/grievance	

Attachments:

Please enclose evidence/documents to support this complaint/grievance.

Submit:

Please email this form together with all attachments in pdf format to grievances@sustainablerice.org.