



710 Striker Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95834 (Tel. 916-223-5164)

## Complaints and Appeals Procedure

### I. Scope

Clients or other interested parties may file a complaint or appeal against the certification decision or process. Safe Food Certifications, LLC has a formal process for receiving, evaluating, and resolution of all acknowledged complaints and appeals.

### II. Responsibility

#### A. Complaints, Appeals, and Resolution Committee (CARC)

1. The CARC is responsible for receiving, evaluating, and recommending decisions on all complaints and appeals.
2. The Executive Director of Safe Food Certifications, LLC approves all recommendations by the CARC.

### III. Procedure

#### A. Complaint/ Appeal Receipt

1. All complaints and appeals should be submitted in writing and addressed to the attention of the Executive Director, Safe Food Certifications
2. Written notification acknowledging receipt of the complaint/ appeal shall be provided to the client within fourteen (14) days.
3. The CARC shall confirm whether the complaint/ appeal relates to certification activities that Safe Food Certifications, LLC Certification Body is responsible for.
4. The CARC shall verify all information contained in complaint/ appeal and assign activities and responsibility for investigation and evaluation.
  - a. Objectivity, impartiality, and independence shall be upheld for all complaint/ appeal investigations and evaluations.
5. The CB must form a committee to review and provide resolution to the appeal

#### B. Complaint/ Appeal Evaluation

1. The CB must form a committee (at a minimum of two committee members or as applicable) and those committee members must not be associated with the audit (i.e., conducting the audit or any activities associated with the audit; no onsite training or any consultancy 2 years prior to this appeal by the site)



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2. The committee members responsible for evaluation and investigating the complaint or appeal can also conduct the technical review of the audit report and make a certification decision for the audit(s) for which the site has appealed a non-conformity.
3. Evidence relating to complaint/ appeal shall be objectively reviewed by at least two members of the CARC and evaluated for resolution.
4. The CARC shall recommend a decision to resolve complaint/ appeal and forward to Executive Director, Safe Food Certifications for final approval.
5. The certification decision and appeal resolution made by the committee shall be accepted and approved by the Executive Director as is (without making any changes)
6. The appeal resolution is required to be provided to the site preferably within 30 days from the date the appeal was received.

### **C. Complaint/ Appeal Resolution**

1. The Executive Director, Safe Food Certifications shall approve the CARC's recommendation for resolution.
2. A formal letter regarding resolution of the complaint/ appeal shall be issued to client and include the following:
  - a. Outcome of investigation
  - b. Approved resolution
  - c. Reason for the decision
  - d. Follow-up activity by certification body (if applicable)
3. Where a client has exhausted all remedies for a complaint or appeal through Safe Food Certifications clients may complain or appeal to scheme owners and Safe Food Certifications' accreditation body (ANAB/ANSI) directly.

### **D. Complaints About a Certified Client**

1. Complaints about a certified client shall follow procedures described in the sections "Complaint/ Appeal Receipt" and "Complaint /Appels Resolution" above.



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2. Complaints about a certified client shall be forwarded to the affected client as a part of the complaint resolution process.

### IV. Complaints Regarding BRCGS Certifications

#### A. BRCGS Referral Objective

1. The BRCGS implements a formal process for reporting and investigation of complaints (i.e., referrals) against certificated sites not maintaining the requirements of the BRCGS for Food Safety or against the certification process.
2. "Global Standard Referral Process" documents the procedure for lodging a complaint with the BRCGS (see the reference below).

#### B. BRCGS Referral Process

1. Initial contact regarding the referral process shall be directed to the Compliance Manager for BRCGS for Food Safety.
2. Complaints shall be identified using form BRC002: Standard Referral Notification.
  - a. Complete information is required to enable the BRCGS to conduct a meaningful investigation.
3. All information provided by complainant (identity excepted) shall be forwarded to Safe Food Certifications to investigate the complaint.
4. Safe Food Certifications shall provide a full report of investigation of issues within 28 days of receiving complaint from the BRCGS.
5. Safe Food Certifications' action to conduct and complete an investigation of issues includes:
  - a. Notifying certified client of complaint.
  - b. Potential for an announced or unannounced re-audit.
  - c. Potential for suspension or withdrawal of a certificate.
6. The BRCGS shall review information provided by Safe Food Certifications and decide regarding any error or oversight of Safe Food Certifications in the certification process.

### V. Complaints Regarding SQF Certifications



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- A. The following procedure deals with complaints received by certification body (see the references below).
1. The certification body – Safe Food Certifications shall document its procedures for handling and resolving appeals, complaints, and disputes made by a supplier, or made by another party about a supplier:
    - a. When a certification body receives a complaint about supplier from the other parties, Safe Food Certifications is required to investigate and resolve the matter without delay and keep a record of all complaints, appeals and disputes and their resolution.
    - b. Complaints received by Safe Food Certifications from a certified supplier shall be investigated and resolved without any delay.
    - c. Appeals regarding decisions on the suspension and/or withdrawal of the SQF certification by Safe Food Certifications shall not delay the decision to suspend or withdraw the certification
  2. When upon investigating of a complaint it is determined that there has been a substantiated breakdown of a supplier's SQF system or any other condition not in accordance with the SQF Code and /or other supporting documents, Safe Food Certifications shall suspend certification, some of the supporting documents to suspend certificate include:
    - a. Supplier fails to permit the re-certification or surveillance audit within the agreed timeframe, Safe Food Certifications shall immediately suspend the supplier's certificate.
    - b. Supplier receives an "F-failed to comply" rating at the re-certification or surveillance audit, Safe Food Certifications shall immediately suspend the supplier's certificate.
  3. "Complaints appeals and disputes shall be handled promptly and without any undue delay. Most of such matters should be resolved within one (1) month of receipt. Records of complaints and investigations shall be available to the SQFI upon request. Where a complaint, appeal or disputes cannot be satisfactorily resolved between the supplier and the certification body, the matter shall be referred to the SQFI complaints and appeals procedure.

### REFERENCES:

1. Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies. Edition 9, March 2021



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2. Criteria for SQF Food Safety Auditors and Technical Reviewers, Edition 9.2 June 2022
3. SQF Code Edition 9.0 (Effective from May 2022)
4. BRC004: Requirements for certification bodies offering certifications against the criteria of the BRCGS. June 2022