

Grievances and Complaints Policy

Introduction

The ProTerra Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that promotes sustainable food and feed supply chains.

This document aims to address grievances and complaints regarding the development or implementation of any element of ProTerra's system.

The grievances and complaints policy covers a very wide range of affairs. Complaints may be about the outcome of an audit, for instance, behaviour of an auditor or about discrimination.

In principle, resolution for conflicts shall be made near to the source, with the participation of the parties involved and in a consensual attitude.

Formal requirements

In principle, a grievance or complaint is to be submitted within six months after the action that is the subject of the complaint occurred. ProTerra is not held to consider a grievance or complaint submitted after this term and will do so in extraordinary cases only.

The grievance or complaint is reviewed by the grievances and complaints committee. For the entire procedure, the English language prevails.

A grievance or complaint must be signed and must at least include:

- the name and address of the party filing it;
- the date;
- a description of the conduct against which the complaint is directed;
- the reason for the grievance or complaint.

If documents have been written in a foreign language and these must be translated to handle the complaint properly, the party submitting them must arrange for a translation into English. Nevertheless, the copies of the original document must be included as part of the grievance and complaint documentation.

All documents must be submitted together when filing the grievance or complaint.

All documents should be sent to: info@proterrafoundation.org
ProTerra Foundation will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.

Procedure

ProTerra Foundation Secretariat will communicate the grievance or complaint to the Board of Directors that will be responsible, with the support of the Secretariat, to nominate the Grievance and Complaints Committee.

The Grievance and Complaints Committee will initiate the investigation within two months after its nomination and is responsible for the management of the procedure. The Committee is installed on a case-by-case basis.

The Grievance and Complaints Committee will confirm receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, indicating the manner in which and the period within which the complaint will be processed by the Grievance and Complaints Committee.

The Committee will consist of:

- I. A Chairperson
- II. A Board Member of the ProTerra Foundation or the Managing director
- III. In case of conflicts resulting from the relation between the Certification Body and the user of services based on the ProTerra Standard, e.g., appeal against refusal of a certification, a member of the Certification and Standard Committee appointed by the Board of the ProTerra Foundation, without conflict of interest with the Certification Body concerned or complaining party, shall also be a part of the Grievance and Complaints Committee.

The Grievance and Complaints Committee shall hear the parties involved before making a decision. It can also request additional documents or evidence if necessary. The results of the hearings as well as of meetings are documented. In critical cases, the Committee can consult an independent expert. The party issuing the complaint shall pay for an external expert, if this becomes necessary, before the final report is issued.

The decision of the Grievance and Complaints Committee is documented in a report that shall be submitted to the Board of the ProTerra Foundation with a clear recommendation on how to address the case. The report is to be completed at least within one year after the submission of the grievance or complaint, considering that any additional documentation or evidence requested by the Grievance and Complaint Committee is presented timely. Based on the report, the Board of the ProTerra Foundation decides on acceptance of the grievance/complaint or appeal. The decision is binding and not subject to further appeals. The ProTerra Foundation Secretariat submits the result of the procedure and the decision of the Board to the involved parties.