

9.8 Appeals and Complaints Procedure

AHF shall have a documented process to receive, evaluate, and make decisions on the complaints and appeals. AHF shall record and track complaints and appeals, as well as actions taken to resolve them. (See AHF-F-022)

- (1) AHF shall confirm the validity of the complaint or appeal (related to the certification activities for which it is responsible).
- (2) AHF shall acknowledge the receipt of a formal complaint or appeal
- (3) AHF shall gather and verify all necessary information to progress the complaint or appeal to a decision.
- (4) Decisions resolving the complaint or appeal shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, person(s) not involved in the certification activities related to the complaint or appeal.
- (5) AHF shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Personnel who have provided consultancy or been employed by the client shall not be used to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or appeal for that client within two years following the consultancy or employment.
- (6) Whenever possible, the certification body shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the complaint process to the complainant.
- (7) AHF shall always give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the appeal process to the appellant.
- (8) Should a resolution be warranted, AHF shall take an appropriate action to resolve the complaint or appeal.
- (9) To ensure impartiality and fairness, AHF will establish two distinct committees: one for handling appeals and another for complaints.

References:

Complaints and Appeal Form (AHF-P-022)

9.8.1.1 Appeals

- AHF has a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on appeals. The appeals handling process will be publicly available.
- The Appeal Committee of AHF is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals handling process. AHF ensures that the persons engaged in the appeals handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions. The appeals committee will consist of personnel who are independent of the audit and certification decision-making process to avoid any conflict of interest.

- AHF ensures that any submission, investigations, and decisions on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the organization or person making the appeal (appellant).
- The appeals handling process includes at least the following elements and methods
 - a) Acknowledge receipt of the appeal.
 - b) Investigate the appeal by reviewing relevant documents, audit reports, and applicable standards.
 - c) Providing a formal response to the appellant with a detailed explanation of the committee's decision.
- AHF is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal.
- AHF ensures that receipt of the appeal is acknowledged and will provide the appellant with progress reports and the outcome.
- The decision to be communicated to the appellant shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the appeal.
- AHF gives formal notice to the appellant of the end of the appeals handling process.

9.8.1.2 Complaints

- AHF ensures that the complaints handling process is publicly available and AHF is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process.
- AHF ensures the submission, investigation and decision on complaints should not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant.
- The Complaints Committee will include members who have no direct involvement in the subject of the complaint to ensure unbiased handling of the case.

- On receipt of a complaint, AHF establishes and confirms whether the complaint relates to certification activities that it is responsible for and, if so, dealt with it. If the complaint relates to a certified client, then the examination of the complaint considers the effectiveness of the certified management system.
- Any complaint about a certified client shall also be referred by AHF to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.
- AHF has a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints. The process is subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint.
- Upon receiving an appeal, the committee will:
 - 1) Acknowledge the complaint within a defined period.
 - 2) Conduct a thorough investigation, which may include interviews with the complainant, review of documentation, and consultation with the audit team.
 - 3) Ensure corrective actions are taken if the complaint is found to be valid.
 - 4) Provide a resolution to the complainant, including any actions AHF has taken to address the issue.
- AHF will ensure that it gathers and verifies all necessary information to validate and process the complaint.
- AHF will, wherever possible, acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide the complainant with progress reports on the outcome as a result of complaint.
- The decision regarding the complaint is made, reviewed, approved and communicated by individuals not previously involved in the subject of the complaint.
- Wherever possible, AHF will give formal notice of the end of the complaints handling process to the complainant.
- AHF will determine, together with the client and the complainant, whether and, if so, to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution is made public.

9.8.2 AHF shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel (including those acting in a managerial capacity) who have provided consultancy for a client, or been employed by a client, shall not be used by the AHF to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or appeal for that client within two years following the end of the consultancy or employment.

9.8.3 AHF has established a Complaint and Appeals committee and consist of a minimum of three persons, where at least one of them must be a Halal Islamic affairs expert. The members of this committee shall be independent from the Halal certification activities related to the subject complaint or appeal.

9.8.4 Complaints by consumers regarding a certified Halal product/service shall be evaluated by AHF, which will be responsible for making the necessary investigations. As a result of such evaluations, if the complaint is found to be justified then the certificate holder shall be required to compensate for the damage(s) caused under the relevant provisions of the contract.

Reference □

- AHF-F-022 Complaints and Appeals Form

9.9 Records of Applicants and Clients

9.9.1 AHF maintains records on the audit and other certification activities for all Clients, including all organizations that submitted applications, and all organizations audited, certified, or with certification suspended or withdrawn. AHF retains all records generated during the certification process of an individual certified product, which provide evidence that all the certification requirements are fulfilled. AHF creates a directory file on the online server as well as the hard copy for each Client. All data, correspondence, notes and records related to the Client are maintained in these files. Each Client file contains the following documents:

- a. Application for Halal Certification, all audit reports and other certification documents.
- b. Halal Certification Agreement.
- c. Justification of the methodology used for sampling of sites (if applicable).
- d. Justification for the audit time determination.
- e. Verification of correction and corrective actions.
- f. Records of complaints/appeals and any subsequent corrections or corrective actions.
- g. Committee deliberations and decisions (if applicable).
- h. Documentation of the Halal Certification decisions.
- i. Certification documents, including the scope of certification with respect to product, process or service, as applicable

- j. Audit programs.
- k. Related records necessary to establish the credibility of the certification, such as evidence of the competence of auditors and technical experts.

9.9.2 AHF shall keep the records on applicants and clients secure to ensure that the information is kept confidential. Records are stored, transported, transmitted, and transferred using confidential methods.

9.9.3 All records related to individual product certification activities are retained in the previous and the current evaluation cycle. After this period, all records are archived and, after the set storage period has expired, are destroyed in a safe manner.

9.9.4 AHF shall retain records to demonstrate that all certification process requirements (those in this International Standard and those of the certification scheme) have been effectively fulfilled.

10. Quality Management Systems

10.1 General

This document defines the Quality System supporting the activities required for product certification under AHF's accredited product Certification Scheme. This Quality System manages product evaluations, certifications and continuous monitoring works performed at AHF. It also governs activities that result in certification and certification-related reports and assures objectivity of the information contained in the reports.