



Disputes Process

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Scope	2
3.0 Oversight Roles & Responsibilities.....	3
A. Regenerative Organic Alliance.....	3
B. Certification Bodies	3
4.0 ROC Disputes Process	4
A. Submitting a Dispute	4
B. Initial Review.....	5
C. Committee Review	5
D. Issuance of Decision	6
E. Comment Period & Closing.....	6
5.0 Definitions	6

1.0 Introduction

The following Regenerative Organic Certified™ (ROC™) Disputes Process is intended to provide any interested party an opportunity to voice their concerns about issues related to Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) policies, decisions, actions of participants or certifiers in the ROC program, or share any other general complaints, and to provide a transparent process for addressing potential issues. The ROA will address submitted concerns following the procedures laid out in this document.

Participants with disputes related to certification decisions or actions of a ROC auditor or Certification Body should follow the dispute process set forth by the certification body as outlined in Certification Body Requirements 7.6 Complaints and Appeals with Respect to the Certification Body.

2.0 Scope

Any interested party or stakeholder, ROC participant, or ROC certification body is eligible to submit a formal dispute through the ROC Disputes Process. A dispute may also be filed by an unaffected third-party on behalf of the affected individual(s).

Interested parties may submit disputes related to the following: decisions or policies of the ROA or ROA Board of Directors, violations of the ROC Framework, or use of the ROC logo. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the general categories of disputes covered in this Process.

All dispute submissions must be related to actions conducted within the scope of the ROC program; concerns outside the purview of the ROA may be dismissed. This table only addresses the disputes relevant to the ROA and the ROC program.

Table 1.1 Dispute Categories

#	Dispute Category	Description	Responsible Party
1	Violations/Misuse	Violations of the ROC Framework or misuse of the ROC logo for certified operations shall be submitted to the CB	CB for Certified operations
		Any violations of the ROC Framework or misuse of the ROC logo for registered or licensed ROC operations	ROA for registered or licensed operations

2 Reconsiderations	Reconsideration of Certifier’s Certification Decision	CB for Certification Decisions
	Reconsideration of ROA’s approval of Certification Body to conduct ROC audits	ROA
3 Requested Changes to ROC Framework	Requests to add, remove, or alter ROC criteria or details within ROC Framework <u>Note:</u> These requests will be forwarded to the ROA standards subcommittee.	ROA
4 General Complaints	Complaints about ROA positions on various topics, ROC policies, interactions, or other disputes not captured in 1, 2 or 3	ROA
5 Complaints on CB Service	Such complaints will first be addressed by CBs.	CB

* The CB must address the complaint in the timeframe outlined in the CB Requirements or the complainant can report to the ROA.

3.0 Oversight Roles & Responsibilities

A. Regenerative Organic Alliance

The Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) is a non-profit established to oversee the Regenerative Organic Certified program and continuously review and update the ROC Framework and guidelines. The ROA is responsible for approving Certification Bodies. The ROA is responsible for overseeing disputes under the responsibility of the ROA.

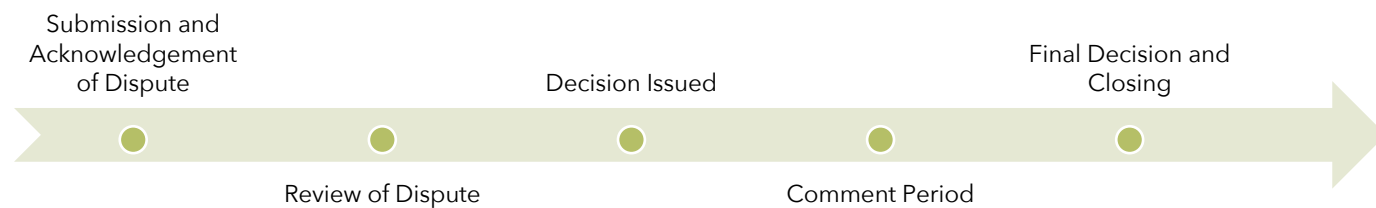
B. Certification Bodies

Approved ROC Certification Bodies are responsible for conducting onsite audit(s) for each ROC pillar, including document review, site inspection, worker interviews, technical review, resolving non-compliances and issuing the certification decision per pillar to the ROA. Any issued disputes related to ROC certification decisions or disputes against the service provided by the ROC approved Certification Body should first be issued through the process set forth by the relevant Certification Body as outlined in Certification Body Requirements 7.6. Disputes issued through the ROC Disputes Process will be routed to the appropriate Certification Bodies for review as applicable.

The Certification Body shall have a documented procedure for receiving and resolving appeals and complaints from Clients, auditors and any other stakeholders related to the ROC certification services they provide. They shall have a dedicated individual that is publicly identified (e.g. on the organization’s website) for stakeholders to contact. The appeals and complaint procedure shall also be publicly available and include a reasonable time for confirming receipt of the complaint and an estimated resolution date.

4.0 ROC Disputes Process

All disputes related to ROC that fall under the Certification Body’s responsibility in Table 1.1 undergo the internal process as defined by that Certification Body. All disputes under ROA’s responsibility related to ROC undergo the following processes for submission, review, and issuance of the decision.



A. Submitting a Dispute

Disputes related to certification decisions or certifiers will not be considered by the ROA unless the appropriate process has been followed according to the certification body’s policies and the dispute remains unresolved. Unresolved and other disputes or complaints must be submitted to the ROA through the ROC Disputes Form, which can be found on the ROA website at RegenOrganic.org/Disputes.

Before filling out your ROC Disputes Form, please note the following:

- Be sure you have read, understood, and agree to the requirements of the form and the ROC.
- Submissions will only be considered if the form is completed in its entirety, the mandatory prerequisites are met, and any relevant supporting documentation is provided.
- By providing as much information as possible, you ensure a thorough review and investigation of the complaint.

Anonymous submissions are not accepted; complainant contact information must be provided to enable adequate investigation of the dispute. Anonymous submissions may be dismissed without consideration. All dispute submissions are confidential, including

complainant identity and contact information and will be protected to the greatest extent permissible by law.

If a complainant is unable to submit a dispute through the ROC Disputes Form, disputes may be submitted by email to qualityassurance@regenorganic.org. All supporting documents should be included as attachments in the email. A representative of the ROA may contact you for additional information.

Once the dispute is received, the ROA will acknowledge its receipt within 10 business days.

B. Initial Review

Complainants must provide evidence to support allegations, including records or photos to support the claims. The ROA may request any additional information or documentation needed to support the issued dispute. If the complainant is unable to provide any additional information requested by the ROA or initial reviewer(s) that might be necessary for the review process, the dispute may be dismissed.

The dispute will be forwarded to the appropriate contacts based on one of the five general disputes categories outlined in Table 1.1. Once the appropriate contact has reviewed the dispute, they will determine whether a review committee is needed before a decision can be issued to the complainant.

If the complaint does not fall under the purview of the ROA, the complainant will be notified, and the dispute will be dismissed.

C. Committee Review

If the initial review determines that a committee is needed to resolve the dispute, an impartial review committee will be assembled by the appropriate reviewer(s) and/or the ROA. The committee members may vary depending on the dispute category reported.

The ROA Standards Committee will reference the information provided by the complainant in the ROC Disputes Form, relevant supporting documents, and may request interviews with the complainant or other relevant stakeholders, if needed.

If the Committee cannot agree on a decision based on general consensus, a majority vote will determine the final decision. The ROA may issue final decisions, depending on the complexity of the dispute.

D. Issuance of Decision

If the initial reviewer(s) of the dispute determines that no review committee is necessary, the reviewer and/or the ROA will aim to issue a decision to the complainant within 60 days. The decision timeline may vary depending on the complexity of the dispute reported.

If a Review Committee is assembled, the Committee will prepare a summary report of the findings leading to their decision to share with the complainant. This summary report will include the decision on the dispute reported, the information and documents reviewed, and any relevant corrective actions.

ROC Review Committees will aim to issue the report within 60 days following the initial receipt of the dispute. However, additional time may be necessary depending on the complexity of the issued dispute.

E. Comment Period & Closing

Complainants have 15 days from receipt of the decision to submit additional comments before the decision is finalized. If no comment is received, the decision will be considered final and the dispute will be closed.

If comment(s) are received from the complainant, these will be taken into consideration and additional review may be conducted as needed. Once the final review is complete, the final decision will be issued to the complainant and any relevant parties.

5.0 Definitions

Dispute: All-encompassing term for any complaints, allegations, or appeals submitted to the ROC Disputes Process

Complaint: A formal expression of dissatisfaction with the ROC or a third-party in partnership or operating on behalf of the ROC, such as a certification body

Allegation: A claim that a ROC participant, certification body, or other formal ROC partner has violated ROC requirements or misused the ROC logo/seal

Appeals: A request from a potential or current certification holder or certification body to reconsider a decision made relating to ROC status

Complainant: The individual or party responsible for filing a dispute to the ROC Disputes Process