



Dispute Process

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1.0 Introduction

The following Regenerative Organic Certified® Dispute Process is intended to provide any interested party an opportunity to voice their concerns about issues related to Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) policies, decisions, and actions of participants or certifiers in the Regenerative Organic Certified® 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 a dispute related to certification decisions or actions of a Regenerative Organic Certified® auditor or Certifying Body (CB) should follow the dispute process set forth by the certification body as outlined in Operations Manual for Certifying Bodies (OMCB) 2.7 Complaints and Appeals by Operations.

2.0 Scope

Any interested party or stakeholder, Regenerative Organic Certified® participant, or Regenerative Organic Certified® certifying body is eligible to submit a formal dispute through the Dispute Process. A dispute may also be filed by an unaffected third party on behalf of the affected individual(s).

Interested parties may submit a dispute related to the following: decisions or policies of the ROA or ROA Board of Directors, violations of the Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework, or use of the Regenerative Organic Certified® marks. 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 program; concerns outside the purview of the ROA may be dismissed.** This table only addresses the disputes relevant to the ROA and the Regenerative Organic Certified® program.

Table 1.1 Dispute Categories

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

2	Reconsiderations	Reconsideration of Certifier’s Certification Decision	CB for certification decisions
		Reconsideration of ROA’s approval of CB to conduct Regenerative Organic Certified® audits	ROA
3	Requested Changes to Framework	Requests to add, remove, or alter criteria or details within Regenerative Organic Certified® 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, Regenerative Organic Certified® 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 Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework and guidelines. The ROA is responsible for approving Certifying Bodies (CB). The ROA is responsible for overseeing disputes under the responsibility of the ROA.

B. Certification Bodies

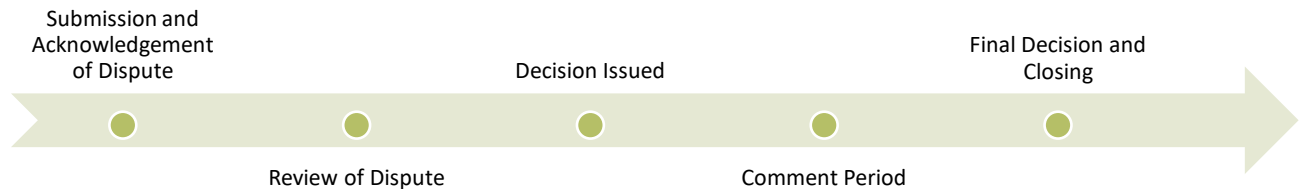
ROA-Approved CBs are responsible for conducting onsite audit(s) for each Regenerative Organic Certified® pillar including document review, site inspection, worker interviews, technical review, resolving non-compliances, and issuing the certification decision per pillar to the ROA. Any issued disputes related to Regenerative Organic Certified® certification decisions or disputes against the service provided by the ROA-approved CB should first be issued through the process set forth by the relevant CB as outlined in Operations Manual for Certifying Bodies (OMCB) 2.7. Complaints and appeals by operations, issued through the Regenerative Organic Certified® Disputes Process will be routed to the appropriate CBs for review as applicable.

The CB shall have a documented procedure for receiving and resolving appeals and complaints from clients, auditors and any other stakeholders related to the Regenerative Organic Certified® 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 Regenerative Organic Certified® Dispute Process

All disputes related to Regenerative Organic Certified® that fall under the CB’s responsibility in Table 1.1 undergo the internal process as defined by that CB. All disputes under the ROA’s responsibility related to the Regenerative Organic Certified® program 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 CB’s policies and the dispute remains unresolved. Unresolved and other disputes or complaints must be submitted to the ROA through the Regenerative Organic Certified® Dispute Form, which can be found on the ROA website at <https://regenorganic.org/disputes/>

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 Dispute Form, a dispute 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 Dispute 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.

ROA 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 Regenerative Organic Certified® Dispute Process

Complaint: A formal expression of dissatisfaction with the Regenerative Organic Certified® program or a third-party in partnership or operating on behalf of the Regenerative Organic Certified®, such as a certifying body

Allegation: A claim that a Regenerative Organic Certified® participant, certifying body, or other formal Regenerative Organic Certified® partner has violated program requirements or misused the Regenerative Organic Certified® marks

Appeals: A request from a potential or current certification holder or certifying body to reconsider a decision made relating to Regenerative Organic Certified® status

Complainant: The individual or party responsible for filing a dispute to the Regenerative Organic Certified® Dispute Process

Document Revisions

Version Number	Date Approved	Description of Changes
1.1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced ROC and trademark [™] with Regenerative Organic Certified[®] • Updated the mentions to retired CB Requirements document, now pointing to the Operations Manual for CBs. • Removal of language explaining the Disputes Form