

LACON IN	OPERATION MANUAL	OM/Annex E	
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COMPLAINT & APPEAL HANDLING PROCEDURE

Complaints are taken seriously by LACON and are considered to be indications for the improvement in the quality system. Resolving the cause of the complaint is aimed at avoiding a repetition in the future thereby achieving increased customer satisfaction and satisfaction of the authorities. Complaints can be filed by applicants, by companies inspected by LACON or by the authorities. All complaints are registered and attended to.

Receiving the complaint

The complaint that reaches LACON per telephone, email or in writing is received by administrative personnel and is directed to the department management or the Quality Manager.

Dealing with complaints

Minor complaints such as fee calculation or issuance of a certificate on time are dealt with and resolved directly by the administrative personnel in the area concerned. The complaint is entered in the complaint register and its resolution is documented with a signature of the Quality Manager. The Department Management is informed verbally of the case.

Dealing with complaints concerning an inspection result, a sanction or a certification decision

The department management asks the Operator to submit the complaint in writing. After consulting the inspector who had conducted the inspection, the department management gives the Operator an explanation and inquires if the complaint will be upheld. If the complaint is not withdrawn, a meeting is held. Purpose of the meeting is to verify the decision on certification or the evaluation result including measures and sanctions imposed. Minutes of the meeting are recorded. The Operator filing the complaint is informed of the results.

LACON handles complaints related to its operations and those against certified operators as follows:

A) Complaints related to its operations

Complaints received by any means concerning the certification scheme itself will be dealt with by the Quality Manager of LACON, who will arrange to:-

- Record every complaint in the complaint register
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours via email or telephone
- Investigate the complaint for its cause and prepare a report of its deliberation.
- Having considered the report the Quality Manager may order corrective action to be taken.
- The decision of the Quality Manager will be recorded in the complaint register and any decision requiring corrective action to be taken will be implemented by the administrative staff.

B) Complaints related to operator

The responsibility for complying with requirements of the regulation as prescribed by LACON rests absolutely with the operator and, therefore, any complaint about a product or any complaint arising from possible infringements / violation is required to be dealt with by the operator concerned.

LACON on receiving a complaint about the presence of non-authorized substances in an Organic product certified by LACON or has been informed by an Operator or detects such substance in an Organic/ in-conversion products, LACON

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shall seek documentary evidence from the complainant. The Technical Reviewer shall review the documents, justifying the substantial evidence provided/collected and all will be pursuant to the following;

- LACON shall inform the Operator and ask justification regarding the complaint.
- LACON shall notify the operator to prohibit the marketing of the concerned products and their use in Organic production until the investigation is completed.
- LACON shall immediately carryout an official investigation as per the procedure stipulated in the Point 8.1 of OM/39.
- LACON shall give an opportunity to the concerned Operator to provide their statement on the Outcome of the investigation.
- Based on the investigation findings, if the Operator is found to be deviating from the organic guidelines, LACON shall impose decision inline to the LACON Sanction catalogue (Annex E of OM/39).
- The Organic status of the Lot in question shall be finalized based on the investigation outcome.
- The investigation outcomes will be communicated to the complainant, Operator, competent authorities and Certification Body involved in the chain of custody.

LACON shall keep records of the investigation it has carried out.

Appeal Handling Procedure

If an operator fails to comply with the regulation, as amended from time to time, LACON may as appropriate: Withdraw the certificate of registration or reduce its scope or Refuse to grant or renew the certificate of registration or extend its scope or suspend the certification.

LACON may, at its sole discretion, and subject to the provisions of withdraw or refuse to grant or renew a certificate of registration if the operator's likely business to be disbanded or be unable to pay its debts. Such decisions, and the grounds for them, are communicated to the operator in writing.

In the event of an operator wishing to appeal against any decision of LACON as above, the Director receives the appeal in writing within 15 days from the operator after being officially informed of such a decision. A meeting of the Appeal committee shall be held within 30 days of receipt of such an appeal. The decision of Appeal committee shall stand. The appellant shall be given 7 days' notice of the time and place of such a meeting. The operator, if, cannot attend the meeting on the specified time, appeal committee will decide further on methods/procedures to be adopted to communicate with the operator. At such a meeting, the members of the appeal committee and the appellant shall be entitled to be heard confidentially. The decision of the majority of the appeal committee as declared by the Department Management shall be final.

LACON retains all the records pertaining to the handling of an appeal in the Appeal register. Nominated members under the Department Management form the appeal committee. Quality Manager takes all appropriate follow-up actions on the decisions of the certification committee and records the same in the Appeal register.

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