

## 1. Purpose and scope of the instruction

This instruction defines the procedure for receiving, handling, and reviewing complaints and appeals related to IFS Food certification.

## 2. Responsibility and authority

- 2.1 All EVOCERT employees involved in processes related to IFS Food certification are responsible for applying the provisions of this instruction.
- 2.2 The Director of Product Certification is responsible for supervising the proper application of the provisions of this instruction.

## 3. Definitions of used terms

- 3.1 Appeal – a written submission by the Client or their authorized representative against a decision made with respect to the Client, related to EVOCERT's certification activities. An appeal may concern, for example, a decision regarding the certificate, including its issuance, withdrawal, suspension, etc.
- 3.2 Complaint – a written submission by the Client, their authorized representative, or another interested third party concerning EVOCERT's certification activities. A complaint may relate, for example, to entries in an audit report. A complaint may be submitted directly to EVOCERT or to the IFS Office.
- 3.3 Management Board – within the meaning of this instruction, the term refers to the management board listed in the National Court Register (KRS), together with any authorized proxies, if such have been appointed.

## 4. Procedure description

- 4.1 Appeals
  - 4.1.1 The Client has the right to appeal any decision made by EVOCERT within 7 days of receiving such decision, unless otherwise stipulated in the certification agreement.
  - 4.1.2 Every appeal submitted to EVOCERT is registered.
  - 4.1.3 The Management Board determines whether the appeal concerns EVOCERT's certification activities. EVOCERT informs the appellant in writing about the registration and whether the appeal relates to the certification activities. If any member of the Management Board has participated in the process to which the appeal refers, that member shall not take part in either the evaluation of its validity or the review of the appeal.
  - 4.1.4 If it is determined that the appeal relates to EVOCERT's certification activities, the Management Board reviews the appeal within 20 working days of receiving the information from the audited company. For this purpose, it analyzes the documented process of review and assessment preceding the decision in question. Where appropriate, other documents may also be taken into account, e.g. records from previous years. The Management Board makes its decision based on the conducted analysis.

- 4.1.5 If, as a result of the appeal review, it is determined that the decision in question was incorrect, EVOCERT shall take appropriate measures, which may include, for example, a re-review and a new decision based on it.
- 4.1.6 The Management Board informs the appellant in writing about the outcome of the review and the conclusion of the appeal procedure. The document is sent by regular mail, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or by email with delivery confirmation.
- 4.1.7 Within 7 days of receiving the response to the appeal, the appellant has the right to submit a further appeal. The renewed appeal is registered, and the Client is notified in the same manner as for the initial appeal.
- 4.1.8 The renewed appeal and its validity is reviewed by the Impartiality Committee within 20 working days of registration.
- 4.1.9 The Impartiality Committee informs the appellant in writing about the outcome of the review and the conclusion of the appeal procedure. The document is sent by regular mail, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or by email with delivery confirmation.
- 4.1.10 The decision of the Impartiality Committee regarding the appeal is final.
- 4.2 Complaints submitted to EVOCERT
- 4.2.1 Every EVOCERT client or third party involved in certification services provided by EVOCERT has the right to submit a complaint related to EVOCERT's certification activities.
- 4.2.2 Every complaint submitted to EVOCERT is registered.
- 4.2.3 The EVOCERT Management Board determines whether the complaint concerns EVOCERT's certification activities. EVOCERT informs the complainant in writing, within 5 working days, about the registration and whether the complaint relates to the certification activities.
- 4.2.4 If it is determined that the complaint concerns EVOCERT's certification activities, the Management Board reviews the complaint within 30 working days of its registration. For this purpose, it analyzes the content of the complaint and the available related materials. If ambiguities or incomplete data are identified, the Management Board requests the interested parties to provide additional information.
- 4.2.5 The Management Board will provide the complainant with an initial response within 10 business days of receiving the complaint. The initial response will be in writing and will outline the findings to date regarding the complaint and provide information on the progress of its review. The document will be sent by post, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or email with confirmation of delivery.
- 4.2.6 The Management Board will provide the complainant with a full written response after a full and thorough investigation of the complaint has been completed (maximum 30 business days from registration). The full response will include information on the outcome of the review and the completion of the complaint process. The response will be provided in

writing. The document will be sent by post, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or email with confirmation of delivery.

4.2.7 The Management Board informs the complainant in writing about the outcome of the review and the conclusion of the complaint procedure. The document is sent by regular mail, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or by email with delivery confirmation.

4.2.8 Within 7 days of receiving the response to the complaint, the complainant has the right to resubmit the complaint. The renewed complaint is registered in the same manner as the initial complaint. EVOCERT informs the complainant in writing about the registration of the renewed complaint.

4.2.9 The renewed complaint and its validity shall be reviewed by the Impartiality Committee within 60 working days of the registration of the renewed complaint.

4.2.10 The Impartiality Committee informs the complainant in writing about the outcome of the review and the conclusion of the complaint procedure. The document is sent by regular mail, courier with acknowledgment of receipt, or by email with delivery confirmation.

4.2.11 The decision of the Impartiality Committee regarding the complaint is final.

#### 4.3 Complaints submitted to the IFS Office

4.3.1 This instruction describes the procedure for handling complaints received by the IFS Office. It should be noted, however, that in such cases the provisions of the IFS Framework Agreement with EVOCERT apply.

4.3.2 Every complaint of which EVOCERT is notified is registered.

4.3.3 Complaints forwarded by the IFS Office are handled by the Management Board. If any member of the Management Board has participated in the process to which the complaint refers, that member shall not take part in its handling.

4.3.4 If a complaint concerns the quality of an IFS Food audit or the content of an IFS Food audit report, the IFS Office requires EVOCERT to submit, within two weeks, a statement explaining the cause and the corrective actions taken to resolve the issue. For this purpose, the Management Board analyzes the situation and responds within the timeframe specified by IFS.

4.3.5 If a complaint relates to administrative errors, e.g. in the IFS Food audit report, IFS Food certificate, or the IFS database, the IFS Office requests EVOCERT to submit a statement and correct the problem within five working days. In such a case, the Management Board prepares the statement and ensures the problem is resolved within the timeframe specified by IFS. The statement is issued in writing and sent electronically or by post.

4.4 The processes of receiving, registering, reviewing, and making decisions regarding appeals and complaints are subject to the confidentiality rules applicable at EVOCERT and IFS.