

Adverse Action Appeal Process

§ 205.680 General.

- (a) Persons subject to the Act who believe they are adversely affected by a noncompliance decision of the National Organic Program's Program Manager may appeal such decision to the Administrator.
- (b) Persons subject to the Act who believe that they are adversely affected by a noncompliance decision of a State organic program may appeal such decision to the State organic program's governing State official who will initiate handling of the appeal pursuant to appeal procedures approved by the Secretary.
- (c) Persons subject to the Act who believe that they are adversely affected by a noncompliance decision of a certifying agent may appeal such decision to the Administrator, *Except*, That, when the person is subject to an approved State organic program, the appeal must be made to the State organic program.
- (d) All written communications between parties involved in appeal proceedings must be sent to the recipient's place of business by a delivery service which provides dated return receipts.
- (e) All appeals shall be reviewed, heard, and decided by persons not involved with the decision being appealed.

§ 205.681 Appeals.

- (a) *Certification appeals.* An applicant for certification may appeal a certifying agent's notice of denial of certification, and a certified operation may appeal a certifying agent's notification of proposed suspension or revocation of certification to the Administrator, *Except*, That, when the applicant or certified operation is subject to an approved State organic program the appeal must be made to the State organic program which will carry out the appeal pursuant to the State organic program's appeal procedures approved by the Secretary.
 - (1) If the Administrator or State organic program sustains a certification applicant's or certified operation's appeal of a certifying agent's decision, the applicant will be issued organic certification, or a certified operation will continue its certification, as applicable to the operation. The act of sustaining the appeal shall not be an adverse action subject to appeal by the affected certifying agent.
 - (2) If the Administrator or State organic program denies an appeal, a formal administrative proceeding will be initiated to deny, suspend, or revoke the certification. Such proceeding shall be conducted pursuant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Uniform Rules of Practice or the State organic program's rules of procedure.

(b) *Accreditation appeals.* An applicant for accreditation and an accredited certifying agent may appeal the Program Manager's denial of accreditation or proposed suspension or revocation of accreditation to the Administrator.

(1) If the Administrator sustains an appeal, an applicant will be issued accreditation, or a certifying agent will continue its accreditation, as applicable to the operation.

(2) If the Administrator denies an appeal, a formal administrative proceeding to deny, suspend, or revoke the accreditation will be initiated. Such proceeding shall be conducted pursuant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Uniform Rules of Practice, 7 CFR part 1, Subpart H.

(c) *Filing period.* An appeal of a noncompliance decision must be filed within the time period provided in the letter of notification or within 30 days from receipt of the notification, whichever occurs later. The appeal will be considered "filed" on the date received by the Administrator or by the State organic program. A decision to deny, suspend, or revoke certification or accreditation will become final and nonappealable unless the decision is appealed in a timely manner.

(d) *Where and what to file.* (1) Appeals to the Administrator must be filed in writing and addressed to: Administrator, USDA, AMS, c/o NOP Appeals Staff, Stop 0203, Room 302-Annex, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-0203.

(2) Appeals to the State organic program must be filed in writing to the address and person identified in the letter of notification.

(3) All appeals must include a copy of the adverse decision and a statement of the appellant's reasons for believing that the decision was not proper or made in accordance with applicable program regulations, policies, or procedures.

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§§ 205.682-205.689 [Reserved]