

AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center

Code of Ethics

AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) is an international nonprofit research and development institution committed to alleviating poverty and malnutrition in the developing world through the increased production and consumption of nutritious and health-promoting vegetables.

AVRDC and its staff believe that ethical considerations must guide the principles by which the center operates and must constitute an integral part of the Center's work. Thus the Center's work must respond to the real and pressing human and ecological needs rather than cater towards individual interests or simple scientific vanity.

General Principles

These general principles serve as a guide for all staff members in determining appropriate ethical courses of action in various contexts. They exemplify the highest professional ideals of work-related conduct.

Competence

AVRDC's staff members strive to maintain the highest levels of competence in their work, they recognize the limitations of their expertise and undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They recognize the need to continue to pursue the enhancement of their skills and to increase and improve their capacity in order to remain competent. They utilize appropriate scientific, professional, technical, and managerial resources needed to ensure competence in their work-related activities. They consult with other colleagues, peers or superiors when necessary for the benefit of all involved.

Integrity

Staff members are honest, fair and respectful of others in their work-related activities in research, training, practice, management and service. Staff members do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize their own or others' personal or work-related welfare.

Work-related and scientific responsibility

Staff members adhere to professional work-related and scientific standards and accept responsibility for their work. All staff understand that they form a community and must show respect for others, even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, managerial or personal approaches to work-related activities.

Respect for rights, dignity and diversity

Staff members respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They strive to eliminate bias in their work-related activities, and they do not tolerate any form of discrimination. They are sensitive to cultural, religious, ethnic, individual, gender and role differences in serving, training, and studying or working with groups of people with distinctive characteristics. In all of their work-related activities, staff members acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own. AVRDC staff members obtain informed consent from any person involved prior to videotaping, filming, or recording them in any form, unless these activities involve simple observations of day-to-day activities in public

places and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm.

Social responsibility

Staff members are aware of their work-related and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which and for which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge and abilities in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance science to serve the public good and to preserve biodiversity and the environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

Work-Related Ethics

Publication and review

AVRDC's staff members ensure that the output from the Center's funding is accessible to the global community. AVRDC staff members must, to adhere to scientific ethical standards, archive all data appropriately in a Center data repository. In the case of the scientific staff members, research and development outputs are published in reputable media, without exaggeration, plagiarism or omission. Staff members may be requested to review documentation for the Center and in doing so are fair and do not allow personal prejudices to sideline research outputs from other staff members. They also adopt professional standards when acting as peer reviewers for external material.

Mentoring and training

As mentors, supervisors, and trainers, all staff members adopt the highest standards in order to ensure the quality of education and the integrity of the supervisor-trainee relationship. Staff members are conscientious, and they provide accurate information about the proposed subject matter, evaluation, and other pertinent information. Staff members do not permit personal or intellectual differences with colleagues to interfere with learning, academic progress, or professional development.

Technology dissemination

AVRDC's impact is through the dissemination of its research findings to users and beneficiary populations. The Center disseminates its research findings and new technologies to beneficiaries in an ethically-responsible manner, ensuring that the true needs of the recipients are addressed and without allowing commercial, prejudiced or biased issues to cloud the ethical process of technology dissemination for the benefit of the poor in developing countries.

Human resources

The Center endeavors to recruit staff members through open and transparent processes and without discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, political ideology, sexual orientation, disability, health condition, or marital, domestic, or parental status. AVRDC is sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences and thus tries to provide an appropriate working environment that supports diversity and synergies in the workplace.

Contractual, consulting, legal and intellectual property services

All staff members undertake grants, contracts, or consultation only when they are knowledgeable or have a plan for incorporating appropriate expertise. When financial support for a project has been accepted, staff members make all reasonable efforts to complete the proposed work on schedule. AVRDC's staff members make reasonable use of

the Center's expertise in contractual, intellectual property protection and legal services before committing the Center to any course of action.

Integrity in financial services

AVRDC relies on external funding to conduct its research and development activities. AVRDC's financial services staff accept the obligation to act fully in a way that will serve the public interest, and honor the public trust in a transparent and clear manner. They provide relevant and reliable financial information in accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and technical standards and refrain from disclosing financial confidential information or using confidential information to their own advantage. Financial services staff members communicate all relevant information fairly, objectively and in a timely fashion.

Biotechnology and genetically-modified organisms

The Center supports the use of biotechnological tools to support breeding efforts and develop and improve crop plants. When genetic constraints or deficiencies to desirable improvement of vegetable variety quality or production practices cannot be solved through conventional methods which may include the use of tools such as marker-assisted selection and tissue culture, the application of genetic modification technology to the enhancement of vegetable varieties is explored as a tool to overcome these hurdles. AVRDC supports the consideration of genetically-modified vegetables as part of an integrated agricultural strategy to alleviate poverty and malnutrition.

Animal research

AVRDC endorses animal research only when alternative approaches and experimental procedures will not provide the needed scientific data within a reasonable and economic timeframe. Any animal research is approved by the Center's Biosafety and Ethics Committee which will assess and evaluate the proposed experiments. The Center's project or core funding is only utilized for such research either at the Center or a partner's location in a manner that minimizes pain or discomfort to the animals under experimental conditions. The Center abides by all relevant national and international animal research guidelines.

Research on human subjects

Informed consent is the basic ethical tenet of the Center's scientific research on human populations. AVRDC's staff members will not involve a human being as a subject in research without the informed consent of the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. Where medical research is indicated, AVRDC must work with the medical sector and all medical guidelines followed under the supervision of the medical community after AVRDC approval has been sought and received through the Center's Biosafety and Ethics Committee. AVRDC's staff members may conduct research in public places or use publicly available information about individuals (e.g., observations in public places, analysis of public records, or archival research) without obtaining consent.

AVRDC staff members not only adhere to these broad ethical guidelines but also to specific ethical policies articulated by our host and partner countries which will augment these guidelines. The Center's basic ethical principles ensure respect, beneficence and fairness in all aspects of its research and development activities. Violation of this Code of Ethics will be brought to the attention of AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center's Biosafety and Ethics Committee, or to the Center's Management, and will be evaluated as a disciplinary matter for action by the Management or Director General.