

AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center

Whistle Blowing Policy

If a staff member has knowledge of, or a reasonable concern about, illegal, grossly negligent, dishonest or fraudulent activity, the staff should report this to a designated authority as stated in the procedure below.

Reporting a suspected activity

Staff who has adequate reasons to suspect or have observed an illegal, grossly negligent, dishonest or fraudulent activity, shall first report in writing to their supervisor. If the supervisor concerned is suspected to be involved in the activity then staff can report it to the next level supervisor. The supervisor will conduct a preliminary inquiry. If she/he concludes from the investigation that an illegal activity, gross negligence or fraud has happened, the supervisor will send a report to the Director of Human Resources or to the Regional Director, if the incident reported pertains to a region. The Regional Director is also convinced that the reported illegal activity, gross negligence, or fraud has happened, and then the RD will forward the report to the Director of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources will take it up with the Director General for further action. The whistle-blower will be kept informed about the status of action on her/his report.

If the supervisor is unwilling or unable to act, then the staff (whistle-blower) should report this to the Director of Human Resources or Regional Director (if the incident pertains to a region) in writing through an email or letter. The staff member (whistle-blower) must exercise due care and judgment and should avoid baseless allegations. Filing a report with the intent to falsify matters or cause wrongdoing to a person will result in disciplinary action.

Investigating the complaint

The Director General will keep the Chair of the Audit Committee of the Board aware of all such complaints. The Director General, with the help of Director of Human Resources, will investigate in a fair, confidential and timely manner, collect material facts and submit a report to the Chair of the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee will examine the report, call for further information and recommend action to the Management or to the Board, depending on the nature of the incident and person(s) involved. Thereafter, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken following the disciplinary procedure as stated in the Human Resources Policy Manual.

If a staff under investigation was appointed by another organization under a hosting arrangement in the location, the host organization will be informed about the whistle-blower's complaint and the investigation will be done jointly with the host organization. If a disciplinary action has to be taken based on the outcome of the investigation, it will be done as per the provisions for disciplinary action of the host organization.

Protection for the whistle-blower

Confidentiality: All information provided to the supervisor and the Director of Human Resources will be kept confidential, and to the extent possible, the confidentiality of the whistle-blower will be maintained. However, at certain times to comply with the law, investigating procedures, etc., the whistle-blower's identity may have to be disclosed to certain authorities or persons.

Retaliation: The Center will protect the whistle-blower against any form of retaliation. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from adverse employment actions such as termination, decrease in compensation, negative work assignments, harassment, etc. If a whistle-blower, believes that she/he is suffering retaliation, the staff may bring it to the notice of the Director of Human Resources and the Director General for protection and if required to the Chair of the Audit committee if either the Director General or Director of Human Resources are personally involved in the complaint.