

## RSPO Grievance Process

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a not-for profit Association that has been established with the overall objective “to promote the growth and use of sustainable palm oil through co-operation within the supply chain and open dialogue with its stakeholders.” The RSPO Secretariat is responsible for administration and management of the activities of the RSPO in pursuance of this objective.

### The need for a grievance process

The Grievance Process fulfils RSPO’s need to address complaints against RSPO members in a manner that is reflective of the nature, mission and goals of RSPO. Specifically a grievance process fulfils the following:

1. Providing a focal point for official complaints against RSPO members.
2. Providing a clear, transparent and impartial process to duly meet and address grievances against RSPO members.
3. Gives a chance for actions or initiatives that may enhance future dealings between parties.

Aside from the Grievance Process, individual RSPO Members are also expected to have their own functioning grievance/complaints mechanisms at the individual site level to resolve disputes.

### Objectives of Grievance Process

1. Provide platform for RSPO to address complaints against all RSPO Members.
2. To ensure that any alleged breaches of specified RSPO Statutes, By-laws, motions approved by the General Assembly, or any other approved articles, including the Principles & Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production and RSPO Code of Conduct are impartially and transparently addressed.
3. In cases where deemed necessary and appropriate, provide recommendations for action through forming of a Grievance Panel.

### Grievance Panel

The purpose of the Grievance Panel is to preside and deliberate on grievances that are brought to RSPO and provided detailed recommendations for resolution that would be fine-tuned and adopted by one or both (or more) parties involved in any conflict.

RSPO’s existing 5-member Arbitration Panel will form the core Grievance Panel. Additional RSPO Ordinary or Affiliate Members may be called-upon to participate in the Grievance Panel as deemed appropriate by the core Grievance Panel. The proposed composition of the core Grievance Panel is as follows (current representatives):

1. Head of Grievance Panel – RSPO President (Unilever)
2. EB member – environment (WWF Switzerland)
3. EB member – social (Oxfam)
4. EB member – producer (Malaysian Palm Oil Association)
5. Affiliate Member (Dato’ Henry Barlow)

It is the task of the Grievance Panel to carry out the following:

1. Decide on the legitimacy of any given grievance complaint made against RSPO members.
2. Deliberate and decide on the course of action to be taken to address grievances made. Guidance on a course of action should always turn to the expressed RSPO Mission, Vision, objectives, Code of Conduct and EB decisions.

## Grievance Process

All grievances raised to RSPO shall be based on the following RSPO documents:

1. RSPO Statutes and By-laws.
2. RSPO Principles & Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production (P&C), including all guidance, indicators associated with the adoption and implementation of the P&C.
3. RSPO accepted or endorsed National interpretation of the P&C where it is applicable.
4. Code of Conduct for Members of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

Any cases brought before the Grievance Panel should make reference to the above. Any issues outside of the scope of the above articles will not be considered, unless the complainant can make a legitimate case that is accepted by the Grievance Panel.

### Raising a case:

Any potential complainant would need to provide the following information and use the given template or design in submitting any grievance to RSPO. The complainant would be required to provide all of the following information to RSPO before a legitimate approach to raise a grievance can be considered:

1. Details and background on complainant, including information pertinent to demonstrate legitimacy as legal entity and also on issues raised, as well as contact person and information.
2. Name of RSPO Member grievance made against.
3. Nature of grievance described in detail and which of the four RSPO articles is being broken.
4. Supporting evidence, including all possible documentation, etc. to directly support the complaint.
5. Details of previous steps that were undertaken to seek resolution directly, prior to turning to this procedure
6. Clear, concise and specific actions, activities that are needed to correct problems raised in complaint.

The role of the Grievance Panel at this juncture is to critically review the case brought forward to RSPO, and decide on the potential of grievance brought forward. The onus of demonstrating a case at this stage is on the complainant.

### Grievance Procedure:

The process for a Grievance Procedure is provided in Figure 1 below. From Figure 1, three decision-making levels exist. In each instance, the process has a clear escalation path and another of dissolving the grievance or complaint.

As stated earlier, the role of the Grievance Panel is to review, assess and formulate practical actions that can be carried out by the conflicting parties to mitigate conflict and provide sustainable solutions to address core issues. In cases where said member is shown to have committed or omitted to act in a way that is deemed as “serious grounds” for termination (as provided under Article 7 of the RSPO Statutes), that member would be required by to take action to remedy or resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the Grievance Panel.

Figure 1: Grievance Procedure.

