

**Africa Rice Center**  
(AfricaRice)

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## **Whistle Blowing Policy**

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### **Introduction**

The Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) is responsible and accountable for the resources made available to the Center to enable it to pursue its mission of contributing to poverty alleviation and food security in Africa through research, development and partnership activities aimed at increasing the productivity and profitability of the rice sector in ways that ensure sustainability of the farming environment. As a scientific research institution, AfricaRice is committed to using the highest standards of personal and professional ethics in implementing its mission. AfricaRice also aims to ensure a transparent, fair, healthy and safe working environment for its employees and partners.

All AfricaRice employees are responsible for helping the organization to ensure that its commitments are met. They can do this by reporting any behavior that is inconsistent with the principles laid out here by "whistle blowing," i.e., calling such actions to the attention of authorities capable of investigating the matter and resolving it fairly, confidentially and promptly. This whistle blowing policy will be implemented to address situations that may have potential detrimental or serious consequences for the organization, its staff or other partners and to strengthen AfricaRice's ability to promote accountability, assure scientific quality and integrity, and provide a safe, fair and rewarding working environment.

Management cautions that "whistle blowing" should not be taken lightly or used with malicious intent.

### **Purpose of the Policy**

Employees who have evidence or information or have reason to suspect that fraud, violations of research ethics, or other abuse of AfricaRice's principles and standards are being committed are expected to bring such information to the notice of their immediate supervisors. In the event that supervisors are unable or unwilling

to address these concerns or for other reasons it is inappropriate to bring the matter to their attention, employees should use the procedures outlined in this policy.

The procedures provide for the submission, treatment, and feedback of complaints and concerns regarding suspected irregularities or fraud in matters of procurement, accounting, auditing, scientific ethics, treatment of staff or other areas in which abuse of AfricaRice policy or procedures might be noted. It provides for employees making confidential, anonymous submissions as well as identifying themselves and their concerns.

These procedures are supplementary to the provisions on Ethics, Conflict of Interest, Disciplinary/Grievance Policies and Procedures found elsewhere in the Center's General Human Resources Policy manuals.

### **Submission of Complaints**

Any AfricaRice employee that notices, is convinced or has evidence or strong suspicion that there is abuse or misuse of resources, violation of ethical principles, or other wrongdoing at AfricaRice is encouraged to bring such information to the attention of his/her immediate supervisor. If that person is unwilling or incapable of addressing the concern or is for whatever reason an inappropriate recipient of such a complaint, the employee should submit complaints directly to the next level supervisor, to the Director General or to the Internal Auditor if the concern involves senior management. The Internal Auditor will report directly to the Board of Trustees and keep the Chair of the Board's Audit Committee apprised of all complaints submitted.

Staff can submit complaints either by letter or by e-mail. To preserve confidentiality of direct submissions to the Internal Auditor, there will be an external e-mail address that goes directly to the Internal Auditor. Complaints may be submitted anonymously, although this will limit the ability of the Internal Auditor to provide feedback to the complainant.

### **Treatment of Complaints**

All formal complaints submitted by employees will be investigated in a fair and timely manner through an Internal Audit Committee chaired by the Internal Auditor. It is not appropriate for the complainant to personally launch an investigation. The Internal Auditor will communicate its findings and recommendations to AfricaRice Management and to the Chair of the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees as

appropriate. Either or both of these bodies will facilitate implementation of the appropriate corrective action if needed.

### **Feedback**

The complainant will be informed of the disposition of the complaint by the Internal Auditor in the event that the submission was not made anonymously. The person(s) responsible for the situation being investigated will be also notified by management of the required corrective action. The Chair of the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees will be informed when the complaint has been resolved.

### **Confidentiality of Complaints**

The identity of the employee communicating the complaint shall not under any circumstances be disclosed or shared with persons whose decisions or actions are questioned by the complaint.

### **Prohibition of Retaliation**

Retaliation against an individual for reporting a complaint or for participating in an investigation is a serious violation of this policy and may be subject to disciplinary sanctions. All supervisors will be instructed to communicate this to their staff and should themselves demonstrate fairness and integrity in dealing with complaints that are brought to their attention.

### **Frivolous or Malicious Complaints**

Employees who use this policy and procedures to bring complaints that are found to lack merit or credibility and/or are made out of bitterness, personal vendetta, or other malicious intent will find themselves subject to disciplinary sanctions.

Approved by the Board, September 2008