Carbon Farming Project – Grievance and Complaints Procedure

1. Purpose

This Grievance and Complaints Procedure describes the formal process for stakeholders to raise concerns, complaints, or requests related to the Carbon Farming Project. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all grievances are handled in a fair, transparent, timely, and consistent manner. The procedure aims to provide an accessible channel for stakeholders to seek clarification or resolution while supporting continuous improvement in project implementation and stakeholder engagement.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all grievances and complaints arising from or related to the Carbon Farming Project. It covers concerns raised by participating farmers, landowners, workers, local community members, business partners, and other interested stakeholders. The procedure applies to issues related to land use, land tenure, operational control, project participation, monitoring and verification activities, contractual relationships, and potential social or environmental impacts associated with the Project.

3. Principles

The grievance mechanism is guided by key principles including accessibility, transparency, fairness, confidentiality, proportionality, and non-retaliation. All stakeholders must be able to submit grievances without fear of discrimination or reprisal. Grievances are assessed objectively and handled in good faith, with due consideration of applicable legal requirements, carbon standard requirements, and project commitments.

4. Submission of Grievances

Grievances may be submitted by any stakeholder through multiple channels, including written correspondence, email, online forms, or verbal communication with project representatives. Where grievances are submitted verbally, the Project Proponent will document the grievance and confirm its content with the complainant where possible. Grievances may be submitted anonymously; however, anonymous submissions may limit the ability to provide feedback or clarification.

5. Acknowledgment

All grievances received by the Project Proponent will be formally acknowledged within seven (7) calendar days of receipt. The acknowledgment will confirm that the grievance has been received, assign a unique reference number for tracking purposes, and provide an estimated timeframe for review and resolution. This step ensures transparency and clarity for the complainant regarding the next stages of the process.

6. Initial Assessment

An initial assessment of each grievance will be conducted within fourteen (14) calendar days following acknowledgment. The purpose of the initial assessment is to understand the nature and scope of the grievance, identify relevant project components, and determine the appropriate response pathway. Grievances are categorized as minor, moderate, or severe based on their potential impact, complexity, and urgency.

7. Investigation and Resolution

Following the initial assessment, the Project Proponent or Grievance Redress Committee will investigate the grievance in a manner proportionate to its severity. Minor grievances are typically resolved through clarification or corrective action within thirty (30) calendar days. Moderate grievances may require additional consultation and are targeted for resolution within sixty (60) calendar days. Severe grievances may involve complex issues or potential material impacts and may require engagement of third-party experts, with a target resolution timeframe of up to ninety (90) calendar days.

8. Response to Complainant

Upon completion of the investigation, the Project Proponent will provide a written response to the complainant. The response will summarize the grievance, describe the investigation undertaken, outline findings, and explain the actions taken or proposed. The response will also inform the complainant of their right to appeal the decision if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

9. Appeal Process

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the initial resolution, they may submit an appeal within a reasonable timeframe after receiving the response. Appeals may be reviewed by senior project management or, where appropriate, by an independent mediator or review body. The appeal process ensures that grievances receive appropriate oversight and that decisions are subject to further review where necessary.

10. Grievance Log

The Project Proponent will maintain a comprehensive grievance log documenting all grievances received. The log will include the date of receipt, reference number, description of the grievance, categorization, actions taken, responsible parties, resolution status, and outcome. The grievance log will be regularly reviewed to identify trends, recurring issues, and opportunities for improving project practices.

11. Confidentiality and Non-Retaliation

All grievances will be handled with appropriate confidentiality and in accordance with applicable data protection requirements. Information will be shared only with individuals directly involved in the grievance review and resolution process. Retaliation, intimidation, or adverse treatment of any complainant or participant in the grievance process is strictly prohibited.

12. Review and Updates

This Grievance and Complaints Procedure will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued effectiveness and alignment with applicable carbon standards, legal requirements, and best practices. Updates may be made to reflect lessons learned, changes in project scope, or evolving stakeholder expectations, without reducing protections afforded to stakeholders.