

Whistleblowing Policy

1. For whom and scope

Each Employee, including any contract worker, intern and temporary (agency) worker, performing activities for OCA, shall be encouraged to follow this Whistleblowing Policy in case of an abuse or suspected abuse within the organisation of OCA, in cases where the Employee believes this cannot be notified following regular channels.

2. Scope and objective

'Abuse' in the sense of this policy means issues where the public interest is at stake since the suspected abuse concerns a (threatening) breach of statutory regulations, a risk to public health, public safety or the environment, or an improper act or omission that jeopardises the proper functioning of the public service or an undertaking. OCA finds it important to be informed as soon as possible regarding the abovementioned issues and encourages its employees to notify such cases.

3. Requirements

The suspicion of abuse needs to be based on reasonable grounds. The reporter needs to be able to support his/her suspicion of abuse and the notification should be concrete and based on own observation and/or documents.

4. No personal issues

The Whistleblowing Policy is explicitly not meant for personal complaints of Employees regarding their own personal (legal) issues, for example working conditions, management styles or wrongful conduct. Support on these issues can be provided by HR.

5. Protection reporter

- 5.1. OCA shall not treat a reporter unfairly for having properly reported in good faith a suspected abuse as referred above either during or after the period in which this report is dealt with by OCA or the competent authority.
- 5.2. In case the reporter nevertheless has the feeling being treated unfairly within OCA as a result of notifying an abuse, the employee should contact the Executive Director.

6. Notification without good faith

If it turns out that the reporter did not make the notification in good faith, that the possibility to notify is being abused or if the reporter did not act in compliance with the procedure as established in this Whistleblowing Policy, this may have consequences for the reporter's employment.

7. First steps

When a reporter would like to share a claim, as a first step, he should notify the Whistleblower Representative at OCA – Bart Vollaard, Executive Director, contact e-mail: bart@organiccottonaccelerator.org (hereinafter: the Whistleblower Representative) of the suspicion of abuse. If the claim involves the Executive Director, the reporter may share his claim with the Board of Trustees. For the duration of the investigation, the reporter should stay away from further (internal or external) notifications or statements regarding the subject of the notification.

8. Procedure

In order to start the procedure, the reporter should orally or in writing notify the Whistleblower Representative at OCA. Subsequently the notification shall be passed on immediately to OCA's management team. The reporter shall receive an acknowledgment of receipt.

9. Oral notification

In case of an oral notification or an oral explanation in addition to a written notification, the Whistleblower Representative at OCA shall record this in writing and present this written record to the reporter for approval and signature. A copy of the record shall be given to the reporter.

10. Confidentiality

Each person involved in the investigation is obliged to keep secrecy and to handle the information concerning the notification confidentially. In case the notification is done to the person of trust and the reporter did not give his consent to disclose his identity, all correspondence with regard to the notification should be sent to the person of trust, which ensures that it will be passed on immediately to the reporter.

11. Data protection

OCA shall ensure that the information concerning the notification is stored and processed in such a way that it is only physically and electronically accessible to the persons involved in dealing with this notification.

12. Advisor

The reporter may consult an advisor about the suspicion of abuse on his expense. However, this should be a person that is bound to confidentiality due to his position. The reporter may request the advice department of the House for Whistleblowers for information, advice and support with respect to the suspicion of abuse. For more information regarding the House for Whistleblowers, OCA refers to: <https://huisvoorklokkenluiders.nl>.

13. Decision to not start an investigation

- 13.1. OCA's management shall set up an investigation into the reported suspicion of abuse unless:
 - a. the suspicion is not based on reasonable grounds; or
 - b. it is clear at the outset that the matter reported does not involve suspicion about abuse.
- 13.2. In case OCA decides not to set up an investigation, it shall inform the reporter of this in writing within fifteen working days following the notification. This communication shall also state the reasons why the suspicion is not based on reasonable grounds or that it is clear at the outset that the matter reported does not involve suspicion of abuse.

14. Information on start of investigation

The Whistleblower Representative shall inform the reporter immediately in writing of the fact that an investigation has been set up and the identities of the persons carrying out the investigation. The Whistleblower Representative shall also inform the people to which the notification is related, unless this could have a detrimental effect on the investigation or on enforcement.

15. Procedure

The investigation to the notification of abuse shall be carried out in a careful, confidential, independent, impartial and expeditious manner involving the minimum of people, on a “need to know” basis.

16. Third parties

Third parties shall only be informed about the notification of abuse; in case this is necessary in the context of their contribution to the investigation.

17. Interrogation reporter

The investigators shall give the reporter the opportunity to voice his concerns and they shall ensure that this is recorded in writing and present this written record to the reporter for approval and signature. A copy of the record shall be given to the reporter. The investigators may also interview other persons and they may consult and request all documents within OCA’s organisation that they reasonably consider to be necessary to carry out the investigation.

18. Report

The investigators shall prepare a draft investigation report and give the reporter the opportunity to comment on that report, unless serious objections exist to oppose this. The investigators shall then approve the final investigation report and the reporter will receive a copy of it, unless serious objections exist to oppose this.

19. Opinion

OCA’s management shall inform the reporter in writing, within approximately eight weeks, but no later than after twelve weeks following the report, concerning the specific position adopted with respect to the suspicion of abuse notified. This communication will also state the steps taken as a result of the report.

20. Disagreement

In case the reporter does not agree to the results of the investigation, or in case the reporter did not receive these results within a reasonable time twelve weeks after the report, the reporter is obliged to notify this to OCA’s management in writing and he may raise an internal notification at the House for Whistleblowers.

21. External

The reporter may make an external notification of suspicion of abuse immediately if he cannot reasonably be required to make an internal notification first. This might be the case in very exceptional circumstances, such as immediate danger where a significant and urgent public interest necessitates an immediate external report. In such case, the reporter is entitled to request the House for Whistleblowers for advice and assistance for the external notification.