

## **Guidelines to the Ethical Responsibilities of Agrologists**

The purpose of the following guideline is to clarify the intent of the code of Ethics and the understanding of the nature of the professional obligations that arise out of that document. Throughout, it is recognized that membership is a right granted by the public to the regulated member (member) to practice Agrology in such a way that the public interest is served. It is also understood that, just as the individual member has an obligation to conduct business in an ethical and competent manner, colleagues and the Institute share the moral responsibility of protecting their members and the field of agrology against any unfounded and unjust criticisms.

1. Among the regulated member's professional obligations to the public are the responsibilities:

a) to practice only in those fields where the member's training, ability, and experience make him/her professionally qualified.

- The public has given a right to the Professional with the trust and expectation that those activities are undertaken with competence.
- A member will not make misleading statements regarding his/her qualifications.
- A member will actively pursue technical upgrading in order to remain competent in his/her field of expertise. A member will make referrals to, seek advice from, and enter into partnerships with other professionals in situations which require expertise that extend beyond the individual regulated member's competence.

b) to express a professional opinion only when it is founded on adequate knowledge and experience, and where the member has an understanding of the situation and context against which this opinion is being offered.

- Members must clearly distinguish among facts, assumptions and opinions in their preparation of reports and professional statements. Professional opinions should be clearly stated and should include clear indications of the constraints within which opinion holds, and the relevant qualifying circumstances, facts and assumptions.
- Members should exercise care that work they conduct cannot in any way be seen to support or make possible any morally suspect or illegal purposes. In the extreme, this caution might cause a member to refrain from association with enterprises or individuals whose objectives and probity are subject to questions.
- Members who act as expert witnesses and provide opinion evidence for the purpose of litigation should not take a partisan position. They must provide evidence as impartial experts and must not do so as advocates of their client or employer. While acting as an expert witness, a member's role is to assist the judge/jury/panel with technical matters which are beyond the expertise of the tribunal.

c) to advocate and practice good stewardship of agricultural and environmental resources based on sound scientific principle(s).

- Stewardship requires making complex choices based on a variety of relevant but not necessarily compatible factors. Good stewards must consider, but not necessarily be limited to: monetary matters, social values, the rational application of sound science, the lessons of valid experience, impacts on the economic health of the community at large, and the impacts on future generations. Because of the position of public trust, a member's duty is to uphold professional principles above and beyond the demands of employment.
- Conflict may arise between a member's duty to uphold professional principles and the duty to serve the needs of an employer or a client. Members must distinguish between the role they play as members and the role management plays. Managers have prerogatives and privilege for making decisions based on a wider range of constraints than those that might be appropriate for a member. The member must not confuse the role of providing others with information upon which to base a decision with the role of being responsible for making the decision him or herself.
- If a member believes there is a serious conflict between the requirements of employment and a member's professional principles, a member should inform and/or consult appropriate persons about the conflict. Members may seek advice and support for the position from the Institute.

d) to extend public knowledge of agriculture and the environment and to promote truthful and accurate statements on sustainable agricultural systems and environmental matters.

- Members should strive to develop appropriate involvement with schools, agencies, and organizations insofar as such outreach activities can help ensure the dissemination and discovery of sound and appropriate agricultural and environmental knowledge. Members should attempt to correct misleading or erroneous statements on agricultural matters whenever and wherever such statements are encountered.

e) to have proper regard for the safety of others in all work.

- Members must understand their obligation for promoting safety. They should consider the impact the exercise of their professional duties will have upon the health of the environment, industrial safety, the health of the consumer, construction safety, and the general operational safety of completed projects. Members must demonstrate concern for the immediate and long-term direct effects of agricultural practices on the safety of workers by being aware of and evaluating risks.
- The public expects and demands a safe supply of food and a safe environment, not only for current but also for future generations. Members must balance the claims of producers and consuming public against the potentially competing claims for safety of the environment, and the interests of individuals and businesses affected by their proximity to agricultural operations.

2. A member's responsibility to the client or employer is:

a) to act conscientiously and diligently in providing professional services.

- Members should endeavour to put service above gain and excellence above quantity. If a member becomes aware of errors or omissions in his/her work, he/she must report the same to his/her client or employer, and immediately work to remedy such errors or omissions.

b) except as required by law, to maintain the confidentiality of client and employer information unless given the explicit consent of the client or employer.

- A member should consider all information received from a client or employer as confidential unless such information is in the public domain. Information obtained during and specific to a professional contract situation is confidential and must not be disclosed to others or used by the members outside that contracted situation without the consent of the client or employer. However, technical expertise gained by a member through work may be used in subsequent projects without consent from other parties.

c) to obtain a clear understanding of the client's or employer's objectives.

- Members must clearly understand the objectives of the client or employer. Members must make inquiries regarding such objectives to ensure that professional services are provided in the context of complete and accurate information. It is recommended that all oral communication that is material to the delivery of professional services be confirmed in writing.

d) to inform the client or employer of any action planned or undertaken by the client or employer that a member believes is detrimental to good stewardship or in breach of known laws or regulations.

- It is a member's duty to advise a client or employer of the consequence of questionable actions and inform the client or employer of the facts that lead to the member's belief that the action is detrimental to good stewardship.

e) to refuse any assignment that creates a conflict of interest.

- A conflict of interest exists where the duties and loyalty owed by a member to one party are, or are likely to become, hostile to the duties or loyalties the member owes to another party.
- A member should not accept an assignment in which he/she has a personal or business interest unless that interest is disclosed and approved by the client or employer.
- Where a member is in a position of providing professional services to more than one party with different interests in the same or related matter, the member must explain the significance of acting for more than one party to each of the affected client(s) or employer(s) (the Parties) and obtain the written consent of the Parties to continue working for more than one party. If any of the parties fail to give their consent, the member must then determine whether it is possible to act on behalf of a subset of the Parties without conflict. If conflict cannot be eliminated by

acting only on behalf of some of the Parties, then the member should advise all the Parties that he/she cannot continue to act for any of them in the matter that generates the conflict of interest.

- Members must also advise the Parties that no information received in connection with the common matter from one can be treated as confidential so far as any of the other parties are concerned.

f) to not accept compensation from more than one employer or client for the same work, without the consent of all.

- Members need to distinguish between the data or product, which becomes the property of the client; and the process or technical experience, which remains the property of the member.

3. The member's responsibility to the profession is:

a) to inspire confidence in Agrolgy by maintaining high standards in conduct and work.

- A member must keep in mind that the work of a member is continuously open for public scrutiny and it is the responsibility of each individual to build and maintain a positive image of the field and the profession. Not only must a member perform his/her duties of employment to a high level of excellence, but the conduct of that member must also be of high standard.

b) to support activities for the advancement of the profession.

- Members have an obligation to participate in the activities of the Provincial Institute (i.e., meetings, elections, holding office, mentoring) as the individual member's situation and opportunities allow.
- Members need to be constantly aware they are members and should, by their conduct, provide a positive image of the profession. Each must be prepared to personally promote Agrolgy in personal contacts and communication, and to participate in specific promotional initiatives organized by the professional organization.

c) where a member believes another individual may be guilty of infamous or unprofessional conduct, negligence or breach of the regulated member Act or bylaws:

i) to raise the matter with that individual, and

ii) if not resolved or if otherwise deemed necessary, to inform the Registrar of the Provincial Institute of Agrolgists in writing.

- A member should ensure that the facts and understanding of the misconduct are correct. Consultation with a colleague or Registrar is encouraged if it may help clarify the issue. Members should make every effort to raise and resolve the issue in a candid and professional manner. Members should note that only in exceptional circumstances is it inappropriate to raise such a matter with the other member if done courteously and politely.

d) to state clearly on whose behalf professional statements or opinions are made.

- A professional opinion or statement prepared by a member is for a specific situation and set of circumstances. The content of a professional opinion should include the context in which it is made.

e) to sign and seal only those plans, reports, and other documents for which the members are professionally responsible and which were prepared by or under the direction of the member.

- Members who affix their seal and/or signature assume responsibility for and understand the document. The responsible professional must have exercised sufficient control and association with the document so he/she can sign and seal the document based on personal knowledge. Members will not associate themselves with documents, reports or statements that misrepresent, distort or omit material facts. Members should familiarize themselves with information that details the procedures and protocols that are associated with the use and practice of sealing professional works.

4. A member's professional responsibility to other members is:

a) to abstain from undignified or misrepresentative public communication with or about members.

- Conduct between members should be characterized by respect, courtesy, honesty, and good faith. Direct and honest criticism between professionals is acceptable and professional debate is encouraged when characterized by fairness and propriety.
- Members should be courteous when criticizing the work of another member and be as careful with a colleague's reputation as they would their own.
- An individual member will not make statements or representation on behalf of the Institute without prior authorization.

b) to give credit for professional work to whom credit is due.

- Members should always acknowledge the work and contributions of others when directly using that work in whole or in part. Members should clearly understand and appreciate that the unpaid use of marketable processes and technology developed by another member could jeopardize that other member's livelihood.
- Members will follow the rules and law of copyright. Members will secure releases for any data, process(es) and publication(s) obtained from written or electronic sources.

c) to share knowledge and experience with other members.

- Each member has a duty to new members and to the future of the Institute to be available as a mentor for new members.

- Individual members should offer and seek out constructive professional discussion and debates with colleagues to maintain a vibrant and progressive profession.

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