

Code of Conduct for Officers of the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI)

1. Preamble

The Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI) is a premier national institution mandated to conduct policy-oriented research, training, and advisory services in the agrarian and rural development sectors of Sri Lanka. The conduct of HARTI officers, both research and supporting non-research staff, directly influences public trust, national policy processes, and the livelihoods of farming and rural communities.

Accordingly, all officers are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, accountability, and ethical behavior in conformity with, the Establishments Code of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, rules, regulations, and circulars issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC), The HARTI Act (No.5 of 1972) and internal rules, regulations, and administrative orders; and other applicable written laws of Sri Lanka.

This Code of Conduct provides guiding principles and minimum standards of behavior expected of all HARTI officers. It complements, but does not replace, the Establishments Code and other applicable disciplinary procedures. Nothing in this Code shall be interpreted as restricting lawful academic freedom and professional independence granted to research staff under prevailing laws and regulations.

2. Scope and Applicability

This Code applies to all permanent, temporary, contract, and casual officers of HARTI, research staff and training staff, administrative staff, and supporting non-research staff performing official duties both within and outside the Institute, including fieldwork, training programs, consultancies, workshops, and official travel.

3. General Principles of Conduct

3.1 Compliance with Laws, Rules and Regulations

All officers shall comply with the Constitution of Sri Lanka, applicable laws, the Establishments Code, PSC rules, Financial Regulations, the HARTI Act, and all circulars, directives, and lawful instructions issued by competent authorities.

3.2. Duty, Loyalty and Accountability

Officers shall discharge their duties efficiently, diligently, and impartially, and shall be accountable for decisions and actions taken in their official capacity. Loyalty shall be owed to the State and to HARTI as a public institution.

3.3. Obedience to Lawful Authority

Officers shall obey lawful and reasonable orders issued by authorized officers. Willful neglect of duty, delay, or refusal to carry out assigned responsibilities without valid justification shall constitute misconduct.

4. Professional Behavior and Workplace Ethics

4.1. Respect, Equality and Non-Discrimination

All officers shall treat colleagues, subordinates, superiors, students, farmers, collaborators, and the general public with dignity, respect, and fairness, without discrimination based on gender, race, language, religion, ethnicity, political opinion, disability, age, marital status, or socio-economic background, in line with public service values.

4.2. Abuse of Authority and Harassments

Officers in supervisory or managerial positions shall not misuse authority to intimidate, harass, victimize, or unfairly disadvantage others. Sexual harassment, workplace bullying, and any form of coercion are strictly prohibited and shall be dealt with under applicable disciplinary procedures.

4.3. Personal Conduct and Public Confidence

Officers shall conduct themselves, both on and off duty, in a manner that does not bring disrepute to HARTI or the public service. Private conduct shall be subject to scrutiny only where it adversely affects official duties or institutional reputation, in accordance with the Establishments Code.

5. Standard specific to Research and Training Functions

5.1. Integrity in Research, Training and Policy Management

Research and training staff shall maintain the highest standards of honesty, objectivity, and scientific rigor in research design, data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination. Fabrication, falsification, selective reporting, or misrepresentation of research findings is strictly prohibited.

5.2. Intellectual Honesty and Authorship

- Authorship and acknowledgment shall be limited to individuals who have made substantial intellectual contributions.
- Gift authorship, ghost authorship, and plagiarism are serious offenses.
- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for research and writing may be permitted only where such use is transparent, appropriately disclosed, and consistent with institutional and publisher guidelines.

5.3. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

While academic freedom is respected, officers shall exercise such freedom responsibly, ensuring that public statements, publications, and policy advice are evidence-based and do not misrepresent HARTI's official positions unless duly authorized.

6. Conflict of interest and Outside Engagements

6.1 Conflict of Interest

Officers shall disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest that may influence, or appear to influence, their official duties. Officers shall not participate in decisions involving close relatives or personal interests, in accordance with the Establishments Code.

6.2 Consultancies, External Employment and partnerships

Engagement in partnerships, collaborations, consultancy work, teaching, employment or other engagement with external institutions either public or private shall be permitted only in accordance with PSC rules and with prior approval of the Director or an authorized officer. Such engagements shall not interfere or have any negative effect to with official duties, carrying out HARTI mandate or involve misuse of HARTI resources.

6.3. Use of Official Position and Resources

Officers shall not use their official position, confidential information, or Institute resources for personal gain, political purposes, or unauthorized private activities.

7. Confidentiality and Information

Officers shall safeguard confidential, sensitive, and unpublished information obtained through official duties. Disclosure of such information without proper authority, including research data, policy drafts, and personal information, is prohibited and punishable under applicable laws and regulations.

8. Use of Information and Institutional Assets

HARTI's IT systems, internet facilities, vehicles, equipment, and other assets shall be used responsibly and solely for authorized purposes. Accessing, creating, or disseminating content that is illegal, defamatory, obscene, or pornographic using institutional resources is strictly prohibited, except where expressly approved for legitimate research or training purposes.

9. Ethical Behavior Disclosure of wrongdoing

Officers have a duty to report instances of fraud, corruption, abuse of power, or serious misconduct to the appropriate authority. HARTI shall ensure confidentiality and protection of officers who report such matters in good faith, in line with national laws and public service regulations.

10. Misconduct and Disciplinary Procedures

Any act or omission inconsistent with this Code shall constitute misconduct and be dealt with in accordance with the Establishments Code of Sri Lanka, Public Service Commission rules and procedures and relevant provisions of the HARTI Act and internal disciplinary regulations.

Disciplinary action may include warnings, surcharge, suspension, or dismissal, depending on the gravity of the offense.

11. Interpretation and amendment

This Code shall be interpreted in conformity with the Establishments Code, PSC rules, and other applicable laws. In the event of inconsistency, the provisions of the Establishments Code and written law shall prevail.

12. Effective Date

This Code of Conduct shall come into effect on the date approved by the Director/CEO of HARTI and shall be binding on all officers of the Institute.