



## **American Cheese Society (ACS) Member and Events Code of Conduct**

General Applicability. This professional Code of Conduct (Code) outlines ACS's expectations for all ACS members, volunteers, attendees, vendors, partners, officers, and event participants (jointly "Members and Participants") as adopted by the ACS Board of Directors. Abiding by this Code is a condition of membership in ACS. Member and Participant Organizations are expected to communicate this Code to all Organization employees and representatives.

Communication. ACS expects its Members and Participants to communicate professionally and constructively, whether in person or virtually, handling dissent or disagreement with courtesy, dignity, and an open mind; to be respectful when providing feedback, and to be open to alternate points of view.

Representation of ACS. When sharing information about the organization or via public communication channels, ACS expects its Members and Participants to share responsibly, and to clearly distinguish whether they are speaking as an individual or speaking on behalf of ACS.

Confidentiality. ACS Members and Participants who engage with the association through volunteer, committee, or advisory roles shall respect and uphold the confidentiality of fellow members and ACS. This ensures free sharing of information and ideas while respecting and upholding ACS's spirit of educational access.

Conflict of Interest. ACS Members and Participants shall avoid conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is a situation in which one's individual or professional interests are in opposition to the interests of ACS, its Members, or Participants.

### **Statement of Inclusivity**

ACS is committed to supporting and promoting diversity and inclusiveness both internally and in our work with members and stakeholders. At ACS events and in our virtual environments, it is our top priority to ensure a safe, healthy, discrimination-free atmosphere that values all individuals of diverse age, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or any other group identity.

ACS expects that any Member or Participant with whom we work will share and uphold our standards related to inclusivity, safety, and security. This requirement plays a key factor in determining whom we choose to work with, including the selection of states and cities where our events are hosted.

## **Unacceptable Behavior**

ACS and its Members and Participants commit to providing a friendly, safe, supportive and harassment-free environment for all ACS Members, Participants, and employees, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion, or other group identity.

ACS does not tolerate harassment of or discrimination against ACS Members and Participants, employees or other persons involved in ACS events and activities, or events and activities in which ACS takes part.

Harassment or discrimination includes offensive verbal or written comments and negative behavior, either in real or virtual space, including those that are related to or are based upon gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, relation, opinion, or other group identity.

Harassment or discrimination also includes display of sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of presentations or other events, and unwelcome physical contact or sexual attention. Sexual language and imagery are not appropriate for any Member or Participant venue, including events, talks, workshops, social events, committee activities, email, and social media.

All ACS Members and Participants are expected to observe these rules and behaviors in all ACS venues, including online venues and conference events where ACS Members and Participants seek to learn, network, and enjoy themselves, free from any type of harassment. ACS Members and Participants shall act responsibly and with respect for the rights of others.

## **Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior**

If an ACS Member or Participant, in either real or virtual space, engages in inappropriate, harassing, abusive, or destructive behavior or language, the ACS Board of Directors will determine and carry out the appropriate course of action, including but not limited to:

- Investigating the report to ascertain the facts, including but not limited to contact with the complaining party, his or her employer, and the individual accused of misconduct
- Warning the offender to stop the conduct
- Suspension or expulsion from membership in accordance with ACS's Bylaws and Policies with no membership refund
- and/or banning the offender from future ACS membership, events, and activities.

## **What to Do - Reporting**

If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns about an individual's conduct, please utilize the following incident reporting procedures.

File a written complaint with the ACS Executive Director or Board President. If you are not comfortable reporting to either of these individuals, report it to a different member of the Board of Directors. The investigation of the complaint will be objective and impartial. If a pre-existing relationship precludes objectivity and impartiality, the complaint will be forwarded to another member of the Board or to an outside third party for investigation.

The Board is the ultimate arbiter of complaints under this Code. After the investigation is completed, the Board will evaluate the concern and take the action it deems appropriate.

## **Policy on Compliance with Antitrust Laws**

By participating in ACS meetings, events, and activities, ACS Members and Participants agree to comply with all federal and state antitrust laws. This means all are prohibited from engaging in behavior which may be construed as anticompetitive or in violation of antitrust laws. This includes a number of topics that must not be discussed at our association meetings, or be the subject of any type of agreement, whether formal or informal, express or implied, among competitors with respect to their products or services, such as, but not limited to:

- Pricing: past, current, future, fair profit levels, price changes, standards, stabilization
- Terms of Sale: controlling sales, allocating markets, discounts, credit terms
- Salaries, benefits, and other terms of employment for staff
- Specific customers/vendors and their pricing or business practices

Members and Participants should be vigilant to steer clear of such topics in educational presentations as well as informal sessions at which prohibited topics may be introduced for discussion. By conducting business openly and avoiding even the appearance of engaging in activity which might be seen to have an effect on prices or competition, the association and its Members and Participants can protect themselves against charges of antitrust violations and anticompetitive behavior.

**Questions and feedback are always welcome and can be sent to [nweiser@cheesesociety.org](mailto:nweiser@cheesesociety.org).**