§ 3022.3 Inquiry, investigation, and adjudication.

A research institution that conducts extramural research funded by USDA bears primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and for the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of research misconduct allegations reported directly to it. The research institution must perform an inquiry in response to an allegation, and must follow the inquiry with an investigation if the inquiry determines that the allegation or apparent instance of research misconduct has substance. The responsibilities for adjudication must be separate from those for inquiry and investigation. In most instances, USDA will rely on a research institution conducting extramural research to promptly:

(a) Initiate an inquiry into any suspected or alleged research misconduct;
(b) Conduct a subsequent investigation, if warranted;
(c) Acquire, prepare, and maintain appropriate records of allegations of extramural research misconduct and all related inquiries, investigations, and findings; and
(d) Take action to ensure the following:
   (1) The integrity of research;
   (2) The rights and interests of the subject of the investigation and the public are protected;
   (3) The observance of legal requirements or responsibilities including cooperation with criminal investigations; and
   (4) Appropriate safeguards for subjects of allegations, as well as informants (see §3022.6). These safeguards should include timely written notification of subjects regarding substantive allegations made against them; a description of all such allegations; reasonable access to the data and other evidence supporting the allegations; and the opportunity to respond to allegations, the supporting evidence and the proposed findings of research misconduct, if any.

§ 3022.4 USDA Panel to determine appropriateness of research misconduct policy.

Before USDA will rely on a research institution to conduct an inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of an allegation in accordance with this part, the research institution where the research misconduct is alleged must provide the ARIO its policies and procedures related to research misconduct at the institution. The research institution has the option of providing either a written copy of such policies and procedures or a Web site address where such policies and procedures can be accessed. The ARIO to whom the policies and procedures were made available shall convene a panel comprised of the USDA RIO and ARIOs from the Forest Service, the Agricultural Research Service, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The Panel will review the research institution’s policies and procedures for compliance with the OSTP Policy and render a decision regarding the research institution’s ability to adequately resolve research misconduct allegations. The ARIO will inform the research institution of the Panel’s determination that its inquiry, investigation, and adjudication procedures are sufficient. If the Panel determines that the research institution does not have sufficient policies and procedures in place to conduct inquiry, investigation, and adjudication proceedings, or that the research institution is in any way unfit or unprepared to handle the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication in a prompt, unbiased, fair, and independent manner, the ARIO will inform the research institution in writing of the Panel’s decision. An appropriate USDA agency, as determined by the Panel, will then conduct the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of research misconduct in accordance with this part. If an allegation of research misconduct is made regarding extramural research conducted at a Federal research institution (whether USDA or not), it is presumed that the Federal research institution has research misconduct procedures consistent with the OSTP Policy. USDA reserves the right to convene the Panel to assess the sufficiency of a Federal agency’s research