

# **Rail Arbitration Rules of the National Grain and Feed Association**

These Rail Arbitration Rules were originally adopted by the Association of American Railroads and the National Grain and Feed Association in 1998. Rail Arbitration is not intended to replace the private negotiation and resolution of disputes by parties. In all cases, rail users and railroads are encouraged to make reasonable efforts to resolve matters before pursuing formal dispute resolution procedures.

**Adopted: August 24, 1998 (Effective Date: October 1, 1998)**

**Amended March 23, 1999**

**Amended July 13, 1999**

**Amended March 28, 2003**

**Amended April 1, 2005**

**Amended March 20, 2007**

**Amended March 31, 2009**

## **Description and Purpose**

### **Section 1.**

These Rail Arbitration Rules amend and supplement the Arbitration Rules of the National Grain and Feed Association, which along with these supplementary rules, shall constitute the rules applicable to arbitration of disputes involving the transportation of grain, feedstuffs and/or grain products by a railroad in North America when one or more of the parties to the dispute is a railroad. These Rules and their application shall be enforceable under the provisions of the Federal Arbitration Act at 9 U.S.C. § 2, as now existing or hereinafter amended.

## **Matters to be Arbitrated**

### **Section 2.**

(a) A railroad and a rail user may agree to submit any dispute to arbitration before the National Grain and Feed Association where at least one party to the dispute is a NGFA member.

(b) Unless either NGFA member that is involved in a dispute has elected to withdraw from these Rail Arbitration Rules, as provided for in Article II, Section 3 (f) of the Bylaws, NGFA members shall arbitrate the following disputes arising between railroads and rail users involving rail transportation in the United States upon the filing of a complaint with the National Secretary:

(1) disputes involving the application of a railroad's demurrage rule(s) or term(s);

(2) disputes involving the misrouting of loaded rail cars or locomotives;

(3) disputes arising under receipts and bills of lading governed by 49 U.S.C. § 11706 (e.g., Carmack disputes such as loss and damage claims, etc.);

(4) except as otherwise mutually agreed, disputes arising from a contract between the parties for transportation between one or more rail carriers with one or more purchasers of rail services that has become effective under 49 U.S.C. § 10709;

(5) disputes involving the application of a railroad's special car or equipment program rules (e.g., certificates of transportation, vouchers, pool contracts, etc.);

(6) disputes involving the application of a railroad's general car distribution rules;

(7) disputes involving the mishandling of private cars or locomotives;

(8) disputes involving a lease by a rail user of real property owned by a railroad or railroad affiliate, subject to the limitations set forth in Section 4.

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(9) disputes involving property damage claims arising under or related to a rail sidetrack agreement, whether the sidetrack is owned and/or operated by a rail user member of the NGFA, a railroad or third party. The arbitrators shall decide such a case based upon the express terms of such sidetrack agreement between the parties unless the arbitrators find that the relevant liability provision(s) in such agreement is/are commercially unreasonable. In that event, the arbitrators may decide the case based upon what they find to be commercially reasonable under the facts of the particular case.

10(A) Except as provided in (B), specific railroad-rail user disputes involving the reasonableness of a railroad's published rules and practices as applied in the particular circumstances of the dispute on matters related to transportation or service (including demurrage), that otherwise

would be subject to the unreasonable practice jurisdiction of the Federal Surface Transportation Board under 49 U.S.C. § 10702(2).

(B) Disputes involving the following are not subject to arbitration hereunder: (i) a railroad's rates or charges, including rate levels and rate spreads, (ii) whether an industry or station is or should be open or closed to reciprocal switching, (iii) a railroad's credit terms, or (iv) a railroad's car allocation/distribution rules or practices.

(C) In determining whether the application of a particular rule or practice is reasonable, the arbitrators should consider, among other things, (i) the practical effects on the operation of both the railroad and rail user involved, and (ii) whether the rule or practice, or its absence, has a disparate negative impact on either the rail user or the railroad.

<u>STCC</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>STCC</u>	<u>Description</u>
01-131	Barley	20-465	Corn oil
01-132	Corn	20-466	Other starch
01-133	Oats	20-467	Wet process corn or similar mill by-products
01-135	Rye	20-469	Wet process corn milling or by-products
01-136	Sorghum Grains	20-471	Bird Food or Seed, Domestic
01-137	Wheat	20-619	Beet Pulp Pellets
01-139	Grain, NEC	20-823	Spent Grains
01-141	Cottonseeds	20-831	Malt
01-142	Flaxseeds	20-839	Malt Products
01-144	Soybeans	20-859	Distillers By-Products
01-149	Oil Kernals, nuts or seeds	20-914	Cottonseed Meal or By-Products
01-152	Popcorn	20-921	Soybean oil
01-159	Seeds	20-923	Soybean meal and hulls
01-191	Fodder Hay or Roughage	20-933	Nut or Vegetable Oils
01-341	Beans, Dry Ripe	20-939	Oil Seed Meals and By-Products, NEC
01-342	Peas, Dry	20-942	Fish Meal
01-343	Cowpeas, Lentils or Lupines	20-144	Animal Protein Products
01-992	Alfalfa Meal	01-134	Rough Rice
20-411	Wheat Flour	20-449	Milled Rice, Rice By-Products, etc.
20-412	Wheat bran, middlings	20-442	Rice Flour
20-413	Corn meal or flour	20-933	Rice Oil
20-414	Rye flour	20-442	Rice Bran
20-415	Oat flour	37-422	Freight cars moving on own-wheels
20-418	Grain mill by-products	28-184.45	Ethanol
20-419	Flour or other grain mill products, NEC		
20-421	Prepared Feeds		
20-461	Corn syrup		
20-462	Corn starch		
20-463	Corn sugar		
20-464	Dextrine, corn, tapioca or other		

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(c) The disputes for which a party to the “Agreement on Predispute Consent to NGFA Arbitration” is obligated to arbitrate under subsection (b) above shall be limited to those involving grain, feedstuffs and/or grain products, which shall be deemed to include commodities designated by the following Standard Transportation Commodity Code (STCC) definitions:

The 5-digit STCC categories listed above shall be deemed to include all commodities with codes derived from the 5-digit categories. For example, the STCC 20-939 shall be deemed to include STCC 20-939-39 (Rapeseed or Canola Meal).

(d) A party against whom a complaint has been filed may file a counterclaim or offset, and assert any defense it may have against the plaintiff arising out of the same transaction upon which the complaint is based so long as such claim or defense is one of the issues included in subsection (b). The National Secretary may, upon application of one of the parties, stay an arbitration pending the resolution of non-arbitrable issues if the National Secretary is satisfied that such a stay will not unfairly prejudice the other party and provided that the applicant is not in default in the arbitration proceedings.

(e) A party shall not be obligated to arbitrate claims seeking more than \$200,000 per occurrence, exclusive of interest and legal costs. A party shall not be obligated to arbitrate personal injury claims.

(f) The original complaint in connection with any disputed matter proposed for arbitration under these Rail Arbitration Rules must be filed with the National Secretary within twelve (12) months after the claim arises, or within ninety (90) days after a claim is first rejected by the railroad, whichever occurs last; provided, however, in no event shall arbitration be brought more than fifteen (15) months after a claim arises.

## Substantive Law Unaffected

### Section 3.

These rules do not change substantive law and thus shall not be construed as either creating or limiting the general or specific substantive law applicable to disputes arising between parties to

an arbitration case. All decisions rendered pursuant to these rules shall be binding upon the parties as provided for in the NGFA Arbitration Rules, subject to vacation only on such grounds as are set forth in the Federal Arbitration Act at 9 U.S.C. § 10, as now existing or hereinafter amended.

## Real Estate Leases

### Section 4.

Real estate leases subject to arbitration under Section 2(b)(8) of these rules and the standards and limitations applicable to arbitration of such disputes, are as follows:

(a) A dispute involving the application of a lease of real property owned by a railroad or railroad affiliate (“Rail Lessor”), on the one hand, and leased by a rail user member of the NGFA which operates a grain elevator, feed mill, processing plant or other agricultural facility, receiving or entitled to receive rail service as provided herein, on the leased premises (“Facility Lessee”), on the other, except for specific disputes arising under Chapter 109, 111 or 113 of Subtitle IV, Part A, Title 49 U.S.C. The arbitrators shall have no authority to modify or refuse to apply the existing terms of a lease in resolving such disputes. Railroad affiliate means any person which succeeds to the real property interest of a Rail Lessor after this provision takes effect if that person continues to provide rail service to a Facility Lessee which is subject to Subtitle IV, Title 49 U.S.C.

(b) A dispute involving termination, expiration or renewal of a lease of real property owned by a Rail Lessor and leased by a Facility Lessee, except for specific disputes arising under Chapter 109, 111, or 113 of Subtitle IV, Part A, Title 49 U.S.C., subject to the following:

(1) The arbitrators shall have no authority to resolve a dispute concerning such termination, expiration, or renewal where:

(A) The lease covers real property which the Facility Lessee has not used to receive or forward rail shipments for a continuous period of twelve (12) months or more, unless such disuse has been caused by any act of force majeure or unwillingness or inability of the serving railroad to provide rail service when reasonably requested to do so,

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(B) Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 4(b)(1)(D), the Facility Lessee is in material default under the terms of the lease, and such default either has not been cured after reasonable notice, or as required by the lease (This, however, does not preclude the arbitration of the question of whether the Facility Lessee is in material default),

(C) The Rail Lessor's title to the leased premises is reversionary and the reversion has occurred,

(D) The dispute involves a matter other than rental or liability terms,

(E) The Rail Lessor provides an affidavit verifying that it intends to use the premises for rail or rail-related operations that justify non-renewal or termination of the lease, or

(F) The Rail Lessor sells the premises on terms that are the same or more favorable to the Rail Lessor than sale terms presented in writing by the Rail Lessor to the Facility Lessee and not accepted in writing by the Facility Lessee within thirty (30) days.

(2) In the event a Rail Lessor and a Facility Lessee are unable to agree on the rental rate for renewal of a lease of real property, the arbitrators may establish the rental rate. However, the arbitrators may not require the Rail Lessor to accept a rental rate which is less than the fair market rental value of the leased premises based on the highest and best use, but not including the separate value of tenant improvements attributable to the current tenant.

(3) In the event the parties fail to agree to the liability terms proposed for renewal of a lease of real property, either party may submit the liability terms proposed for review to NGFA arbitration. The arbitrators may reject and revise the terms proposed to the extent that they are commercially unreasonable (giving consideration, but not limited, to the nature of the Facility Lessee's operations, the rental rate relative to potential liabilities assumed by each of the parties, and customary commercial real estate practices), or unconscionable. The arbitrators shall not require a party to bear any liability for environmental contamination caused by the other party.

(4) The arbitrators may not require renewal or extension of a lease of real property for a term exceeding five (5) years. If, at the expiration of such lease, the Rail Lessor and Facility Lessee are unable to agree on the rental or liability terms for renewal or continuation of the lease, either party may seek prescription of such terms under this subsection (b).

(5) The arbitrators in making a decision on the renewal or extension of a lease of real property shall consider whether the Rail Lessor has demonstrated other uses for the property which justify a refusal by a Rail Lessor to renew or extend a lease.

### Amendments

#### Section 5.

The chairman of the National Grain and Feed Association shall appoint a Rail Arbitration Rules Committee comprised of fourteen (14) persons who are officers, partners or employees of NGFA-member railroads and rail users. At least seven (7) members of the committee shall be representatives of railroads. It shall be the duty of the committee to consider amendments to the Rail Arbitration Rules and report its recommendations to the membership at any annual meeting or to the Board. Changes to these rules shall be approved by the Rail Arbitration Rules Committee before being considered for approval by the NGFA Board of Directors or the general membership. All railroad members of the association shall be entitled to vote on changes to the Rail Arbitration Rules at any annual meeting considering the adoption, ratification or amendment of such rules.

### Arbitration Service Fees

#### Section 6.

The arbitration service fees paid by a disputant under these Rail Arbitration Rules shall be the same as those set forth in the NGFA Arbitration Rules, except that the fees paid by nonmembers under these rules shall be 150% of the fees paid by NGFA members.