

Complaints

Standard Operating Procedure

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1 Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure outlines the principles and responsibilities with regards to complaints. Furthermore, it describes the process for handling complaints.

2 Application

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to all parties that are involved in the process, including the party raising the concern, the concerned FLOCERT customer, FLOCERT Credibility Assurance Unit and any other concerned FLOCERT staff member.

3 Definitions

Complaints relate to the manner in which FLOCERT provides services, including but not limited to:

- failure to respond to certification relevant correspondence within a reasonable amount of time,
- unprofessional behavior by a FLOCERT staff or auditor.

Fairtrade International, National Fairtrade Organizations, Producer Networks, Audit Bodies, customers or any interested party may make a complaint under this procedure.

If a customer submits an **AuditServiceEvaluationbyCustomer FO** to the Competence Management Unit where three or more statements have been rated with “disagree”, this will automatically be forwarded to Credibility Assurance and considered as a complaint.

4 Confidentiality

In general, all submitted complaints will be treated strictly confidential by the responsible staff in order to ensure that identities of involved parties are protected.

Where confidential information from the complainant such as workers, suppliers, buyers or other stakeholders would reveal the information provider's identity, FLOCERT will:

- Not disclose that confidential information to any other party except the responsible staff within FLOCERT on a need to know basis,
- Not use that confidential information in any way that may allow identification of the individual(s) or organisation(s) that provided the information.
- Use the confidential information to identify which aspects should be investigated.

5 Process

5.1 Submission

A complaint must be submitted to credibility@flocert.net either in writing, via FLOCERT website <https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/> or by phone, skype or any other communication means. Complaints will be documented and managed centrally by the Credibility Assurance Unit of FLOCERT.

If required, for example in communication with individuals with restricted ability to communicate in writing oral communication will take place so that the person has an opportunity to explain their case fully and beyond any submitted documentation. This communication is documented in writing by FLOCERT.

Complaints should contain enough information to make investigation possible including, wherever possible, details of:

- the individuals involved
- the events giving rise to the complaint,
- date, time and location
- relevant communication regarding the complaint should be attached.

5.2 Confirmation

FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit will conduct an initial evaluation of the complaint and within 7 calendar days confirm receipt and inform the submitting party whether or not the submission contains an actionable complaint, or if the request should be dealt with according to a different procedure such as the Review or Appeal SOP.

Credibility Assurance maintains a log of all Complaints.

5.3 Investigation

The CA Unit is responsible for the investigation of all complaints.

When necessary, the CA Unit may request the Operations Director or any other staff member to assist in the managing of a complaint. In case of complaints concerning external auditors, CA Unit will contact the Regional Auditor Responsible (RAR) of the same region, in order to conduct a meeting with the auditor and bring conclusions to CA. If the complaint concerns an internal auditor, the same process applies but with the line manager instead of the RAR.

Furthermore, a summary of the feedback from our clients, including all submitted complaints, is presented by the Credibility Assurance Manager in the Management Review Submission Report to the attention of the FLOCERT Leadership Team.

When a complaint concerns a Credibility Assurance Officer, the Business & IT Services Director is responsible for managing the complaint. In case a complaint concerns the Credibility Assurance Manager, the FLOCERT CEO is responsible for handling it.

5.4 Response

The CA Unit is responsible for the investigation of all complaints and for replying within 35 calendar days from the day of acceptance of the complaint.

6 References

- EXE AppealReview SOP
- CA Allegation SOP
- AuditServiceEvaluationbyCustomer FO

