Annual Complaints Statistics 2024

April 2024

FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit

Introduction

The Annual Complaints Statistics 2024 provides an overview of requests handled by FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit, following the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Allegations, Appeals, Reviews, and Complaints. This report encompasses all cases submitted and resolved between January 1st and December 31st, 2024.

2024 figures in brief

- From 2020 to 2024, the number of allegations steadily increased each year, with a notable 33% rise from 2023 to 2024 alone. Our efforts to raise awareness and improve accessibility through various channels have shown positive results. We're proud that people trust us to thoroughly investigate and handle each case with care.

- Although the number of appeals and review requests regarding certification and evaluation decisions stayed nearly the same, the rate of acceptable cases dropped significantly. It seems customers are having trouble understanding the information we need to accept a case. To improve this, we will publish a Q&A to make the process clearer and more accessible.

- On a positive note, the total number of complaints decreased, although one key focus remains auditors. We've noticed that audit results often tie closely to customer satisfaction levels. While we understand this connection, we work with customers to ensure every case is fully understood. This is especially important since auditor competence is the foundation of any certification or assurance work.

FLOCERT values feedback, recognising that complaints play a crucial role in enhancing our assurance maturity and customer compliance

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Definitions

What types of complaints does the Credibility Assurance Unit manage?

- **Allegation**: a statement of assertion or assertions by a third party against a customer holding a Fairtrade certificate or being in the process of applying for a certificate (applicant) claiming that this customer is non-compliant with applicable Fairtrade Standards or is in breach of policies or other contractual obligations with FLOCERT.

- **Appeal**: An official request by the customer to revoke or reverse a Certification Decision, such as decertification or suspension. The appeals procedure would apply to EDGE customers wanting to challenge the audit findings.

- **Review**: An official request by the customer to review an Evaluation Decision, such as a review of non-conformities, corrective measures, or objective evidence.

- **Complaint**: related 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 and unprofessional behaviour by a FLOCERT staff member or auditor.

For more details, please consult the Standard Operating Procedures on the FLOCERT website.

Number of Fairtrade certified organisations

Bar chart showing number of Fairtrade certified organisations (Producers, Traders, Total) from 2020 to 2024:

Year	Producers	Traders	Total
2020	1875	3856	5731
2021	1928	4075	6003
2022	1910	4070	5980
2023	1894	4090	5984
2024	1829	4093	5922

■ Producers   ■ Traders   ■ Total

Five-year overview

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Allegations	**110**	**113**	**115**	**132**	**176**
Appeals	**18**	**17**	**33**	**34**	**28**
Reviews	**9**	**15**	**15**	**20**	**20**
Complaints	**47**	**33**	**44**	**30**	**27**
Customers	5.731	6.003	6.003	5.984	5.922

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Status overview 2024

	Total received	Accepted	Closed	Open	Rejected, stalled, withdrawn	Decision re-confirmed	Decision overturned	Decision partly confirmed
Allegations	176	115	119	40	61	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals	28	3	3	0	25	2	0	1
Reviews	20	7	7	0	13	2	1	4
Complaints	27	22	22	0	4	N/A	N/A	N/A

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Allegations 2024

The number of allegations increased by 33% from 2023 to 2024.

Allegations affected 113 different customers. This represents 1,9% of customers certified in 2024.

Producer
126

Trader
50

176*
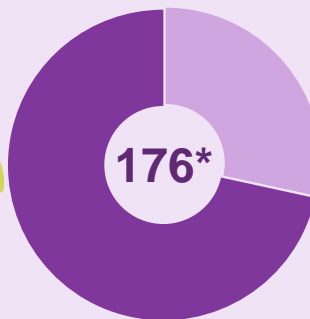
*Total number of allegations by service

Americas
87

Africa
48

Asia
31

Europe
10

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Allegation sources in 2024

Members of the organisation
35

Customers from the supply chain
17

Media
1

Anonymous/Other
38

Fairtrade International
7

National Fairtrade Organisations
13

Producer Networks
28

Workers
37

Total
176

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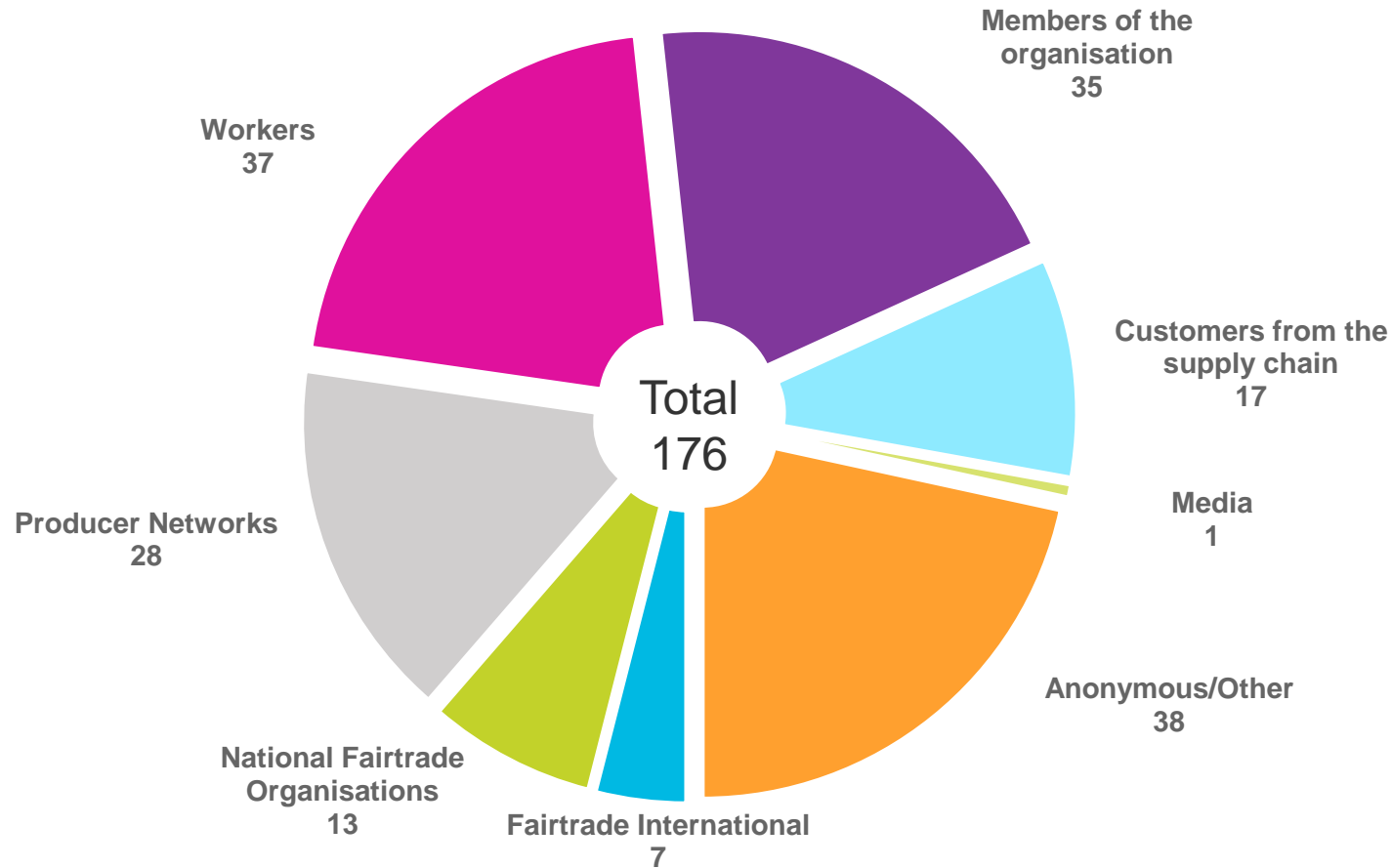
Allegations: focus topics & focus products

Top 4 topics

- Harassment/discrimination
- Price and Premium payment
- Organisational issues/ democracy
- Working conditions

52
Banana

35
Flowers and plants

28
Coffee

24
Cane Sugar

12
Cocoa

6
Honey

Investigated allegations

Method of investigation

Unannounced + remote unannounced audit

29+ 5

Focused + remote focused audit

47+5

Renewal audit

26

Result of investigation

Not substantiated

45 = 38%

Substantiated

37 = 31%

Partly substantiated

27 = 27%

Not investigated*

5 = 4%

Average processing time

5.5

months

to close an allegation
(max. 6 months allowed)

*Reason: The customer is no longer certified, or the required onsite audit was not possible as the region could not be visited.

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Appeals 2024

The number of received appeals decreased by 18%. The number of acceptable appeals decreased unfortunately significantly.*

*Appeals must be submitted within the timeline outlining fact-based reasons for disagreement. The Appeals Committee evaluates against procedures but cannot grant exceptions.
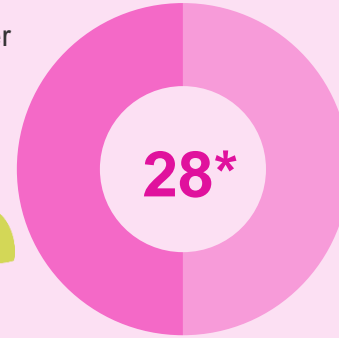
Producer
14

Trader
14

28*
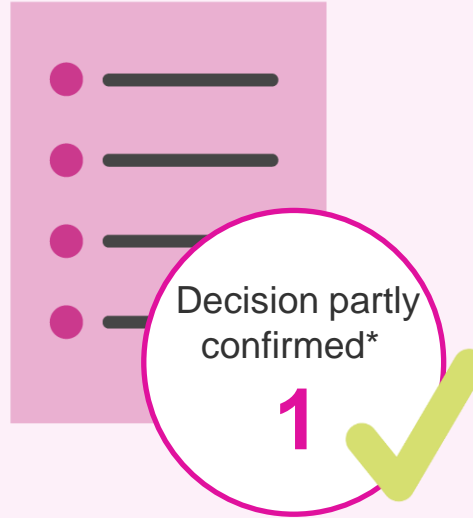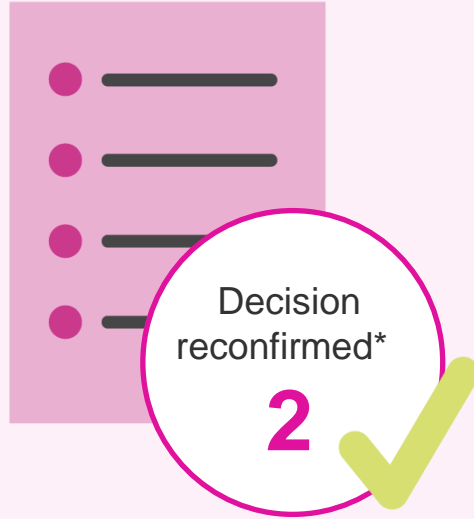
*Total number of appeals by service

Americas
13

Africa
8

Asia
6

Europe
1

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Appeals decisions

Decision reconfirmed*

2

Decision partly confirmed*

1

Average processing time
28 days

to close an appeal
(max. 35 days allowed)

*Only considered the 3 accepted cases

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Reviews 2024

The number of reviews received increased by 5%. The number of acceptable reviews unfortunately decreased by 36%.*

*Reviews must be submitted within the timeline outlining fact-based reasons for disagreement. The Review Committee evaluates against procedures but cannot grant exceptions.
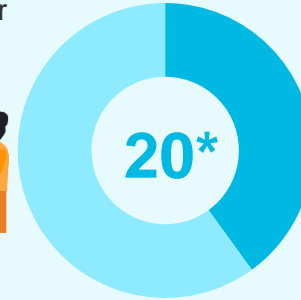
Trader
12

20*

Producer
8

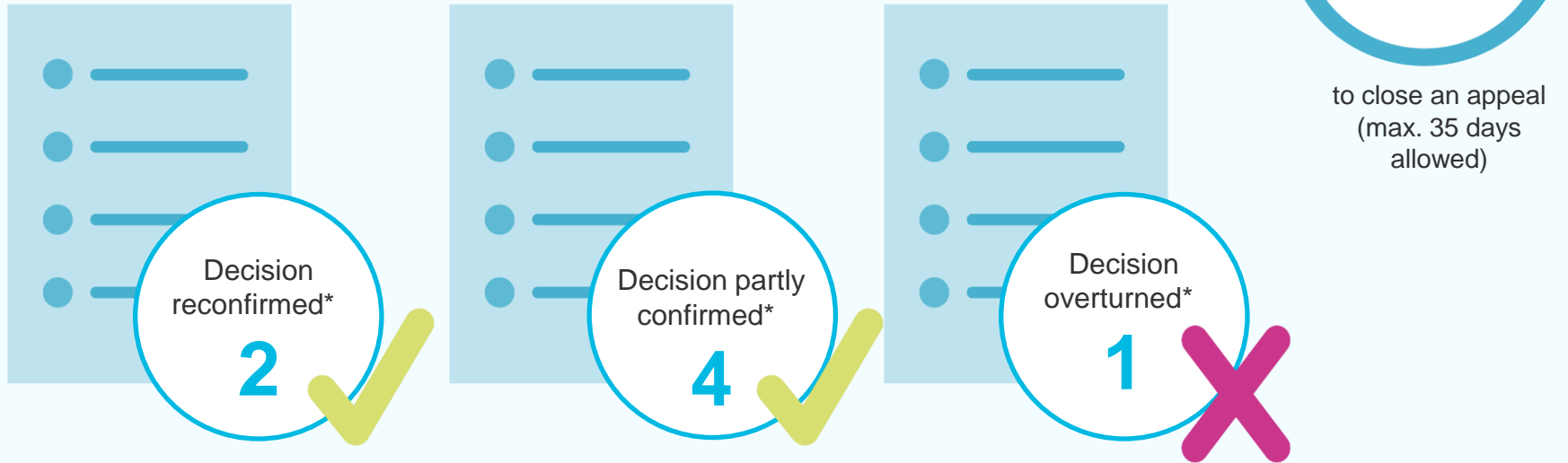*Total number of reviews by service

Americas
8

Africa
5

Asia
4

Europe
3

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Review decisions

Average processing time
25 days

to close an appeal
(max. 35 days
allowed)

Decision
reconfirmed*

2 ✔

Decision partly
confirmed*

4 ✔

Decision
overturned*

1 ✖

*Only considered the 7 accepted cases

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Complaints 2024

⚠ The number of complaints decreased by 10%.

Trader
10

Non certified
3

Producer
14

27*

*Total number of complaints by service
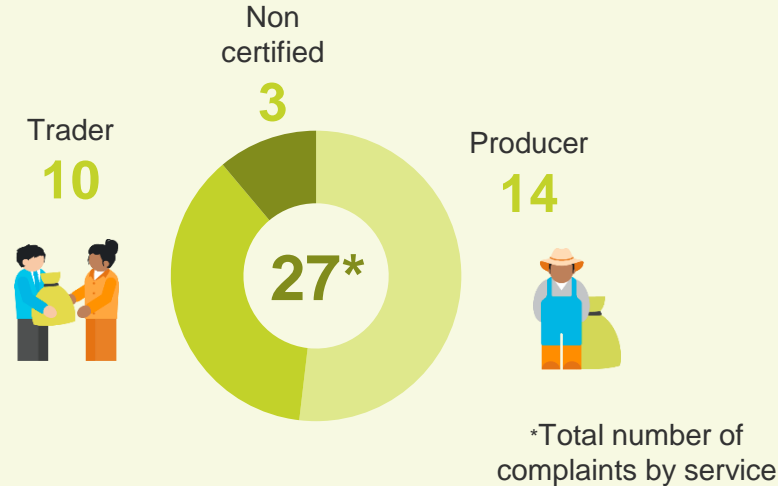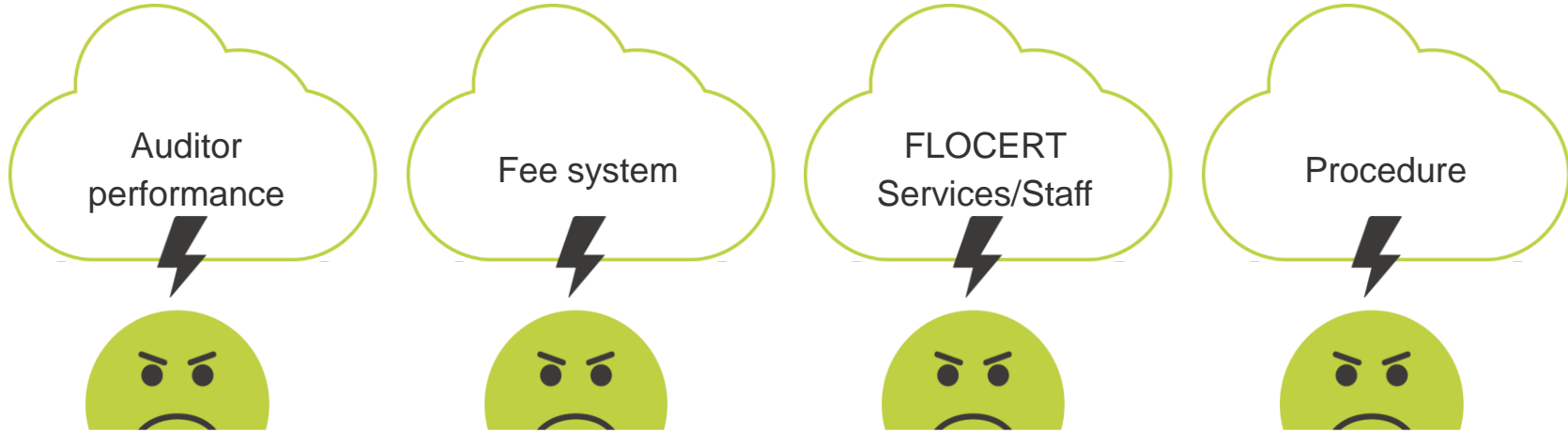
Americas
10

Africa
5

Asia
4

Europe
8

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Complaints: focus topics

Average
processing time
21 days

to close a complaint
(max. 35 days
allowed)

Auditor
performance

Fee system

FLOCERT
Services/Staff

Procedure

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THANK YOU

credibility@flocert.net

https://www.flocert.net/submit-an-allegation-appeal-or-complaint/

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