



FLOCERT
assuring fairness

Annual Complaints Statistics 2023

March 2024

FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit

Introduction

The Annual Complaints Statistics 2023 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, 2023.

2023 figures in a nutshell

In 2023, the Credibility Assurance Unit experienced another notable rise in the overall number of complaints cases, primarily driven by Allegations cases.

From 2019 to 2023, Allegations increased significantly by 65%, with a 15% growth in cases alone from 2022 to 2023. FLOCERT's initiative to enhance awareness and accessibility through the addition of a WhatsApp channel has also yielded positive results.

Appeals and Review requests from customers concerning certification decisions remained steady, showing a slight shift from Appeals towards Reviews. The trend of customers submitting Review requests in the early post-audit stage indicates a positive development, illustrating an improved understanding of raising concerns promptly rather than waiting until sanctions may already be in effect.



We at FLOCERT value the input we receive, recognising that complaints play a crucial role in enhancing our assurance maturity and customer compliance

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



Five-year overview

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Allegations	80	110	113	115	132
Appeals	23	18	17	33	34
Reviews	14	9	15	15	20
Complaints	38	47	33	44	30
Customers	5.560	5.731	6.003	5.980	5.984

Status overview 2023

	Total received	Accepted	Closed	Open	Rejected, stalled, withdrawn	Decision re-confirmed	Decision overturned	Decision partly confirmed
Allegations	132	90	75	50	42	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals	34	13	11	2	21	9	0	2
Reviews	20	17	16	1	3	8	3	5
Complaints	30	26	23	3	4	N/A	N/A	N/A

Allegations 2023

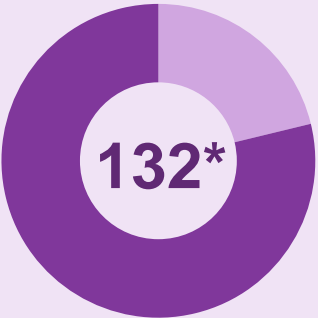


The number of allegations increased 15% from 2022 to 2023.

Producer
104



Trader
28



*Total number of allegations by service



Americas
48



Africa
48

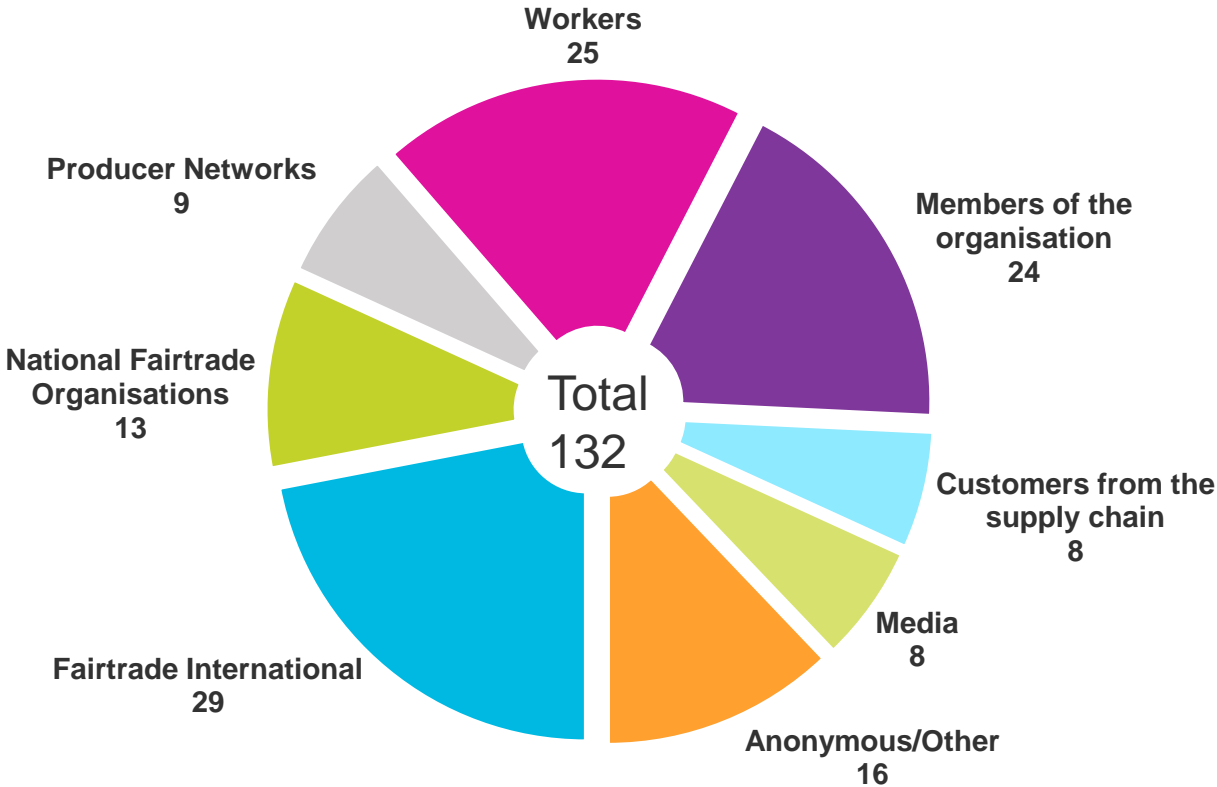


Asia
30



Europe
6

Allegation sources in 2023



Allegations: focus topics & focus products

Top 4 topics

- Misuse of Fairtrade Premium
- Working conditions
- Harassment
- Payment Price/Premium



29

Banana



22

Tea



18

Coffee



18

Flowers



15

Cane Sugar



12

Cocoa

Investigated allegations

Method of investigation

Unannounced + remote unannounced audit

23 + 1

Focused + remote focused audit

21 + 3

Renewal audit

22

Not investigated

3

Result of investigation

Not substantiated

24 = 32%

Substantiated

29 = 39%

Partially substantiated

15 = 20%

Not investigated*

7 = 9%

Average
processing time

4.3
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.

Appeals 2023

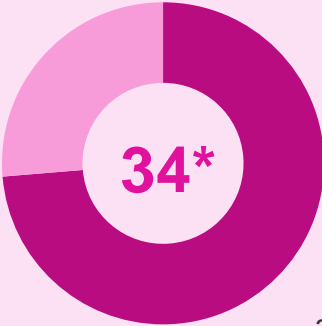


The number of allegations increased 3% from 2022 to 2023.

Producer
29



Trader
5



*Total number of appeals by service



Americas
17



Africa
7



Asia
10



Europe
0

Appeals decisions



Decision
Reconfirmed*

9



Decision partly
Confirmed*

2



to close an appeal
(max. 35 days allowed)

*Only considered the 11 accepted cases

Reviews 2023



The number of allegations increased 33% from 2022 to 2023.

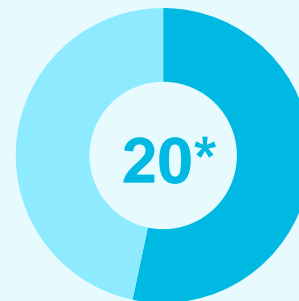
Producer

11



Trader

9



*Total number of reviews by service



Americas

13



Africa

4



Asia

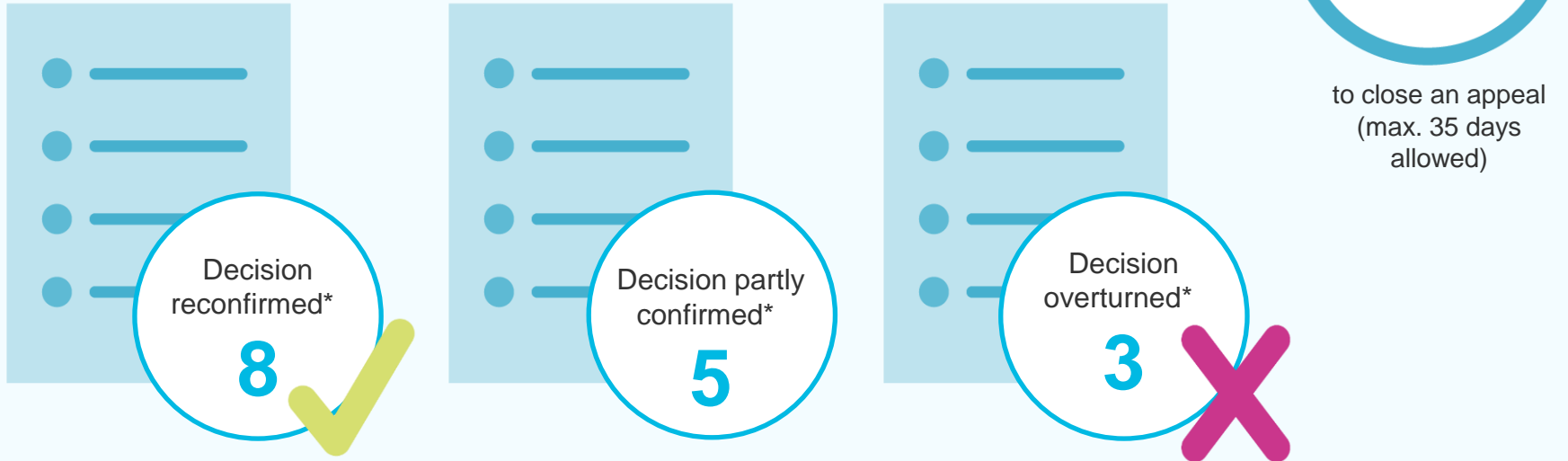
1



Europe

2

Review decisions

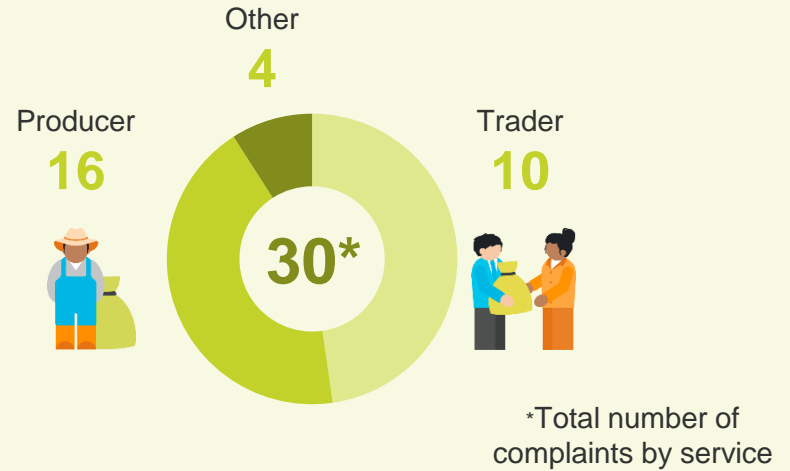


*Only considered the 11 accepted cases

Complaints 2023



The number of complaints decreased by 32% from 2022 to 2023.



Americas
8



Africa
5



Asia
13

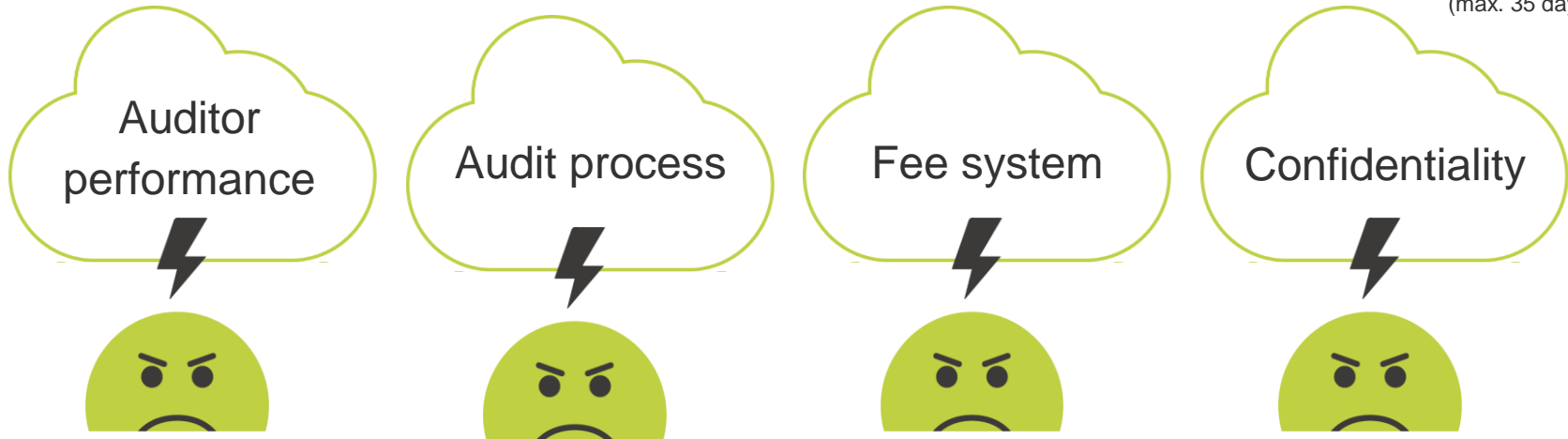


Europe
4

Complaints: focus topics

Average
processing time
17 days

to close a complaint
(max. 35 days allowed)



THANK YOU

credibility@flocert.net

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