



Customer feedback on Quality

2017 results

The present Annual Statistics provide an overview on all requests handled by the Credibility Assurance Unit at FLOCERT in 2017 in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Appeals, Reviews, Allegations and Complaints.

The intent of this report is to:

- Know the type, object and origin of the complaints, in order to identify areas of potential improvement as well as risks.
- Evaluate our service performance over the years.
- Share information, both internally and externally, on the role of Credibility Assurance Unit in FLOCERT, to promote complaint reporting from any interested party.
- Evaluate the robustness of our procedures and our own compliance with them (timelines)

What types of complaints does the Credibility Assurance Unit deal with?

Appeal: Appeals against certification decisions can be placed if a customer does not agree with a certification decision such as a suspension, a decertification or a denial of an application. FLOCERT's Appeals Committee is in charge of confirming or overturning such certification decisions.

Review: A request to review an evaluation decision related to detected non-conformities, suggested corrective measures and/or objective evidence. FLOCERT's Review Committee is in charge of confirming or overturning such evaluation decisions.

Allegation: This is a statement of facts provided by a third party against a FLOCERT customer holding a Fairtrade certificate, claiming that this certified customer is non-compliant with applicable Fairtrade Standards, FLOCERT policies or other contractual obligations.

Complaint: Complaints relate to the manner in which FLOCERT provides services. They can be presented by anyone.

For more details please consult the Standard Operating Procedures, which are published on FLOCERT website: <https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>

Certifier for



Summary of received Appeals, Reviews, Allegations and Complaints

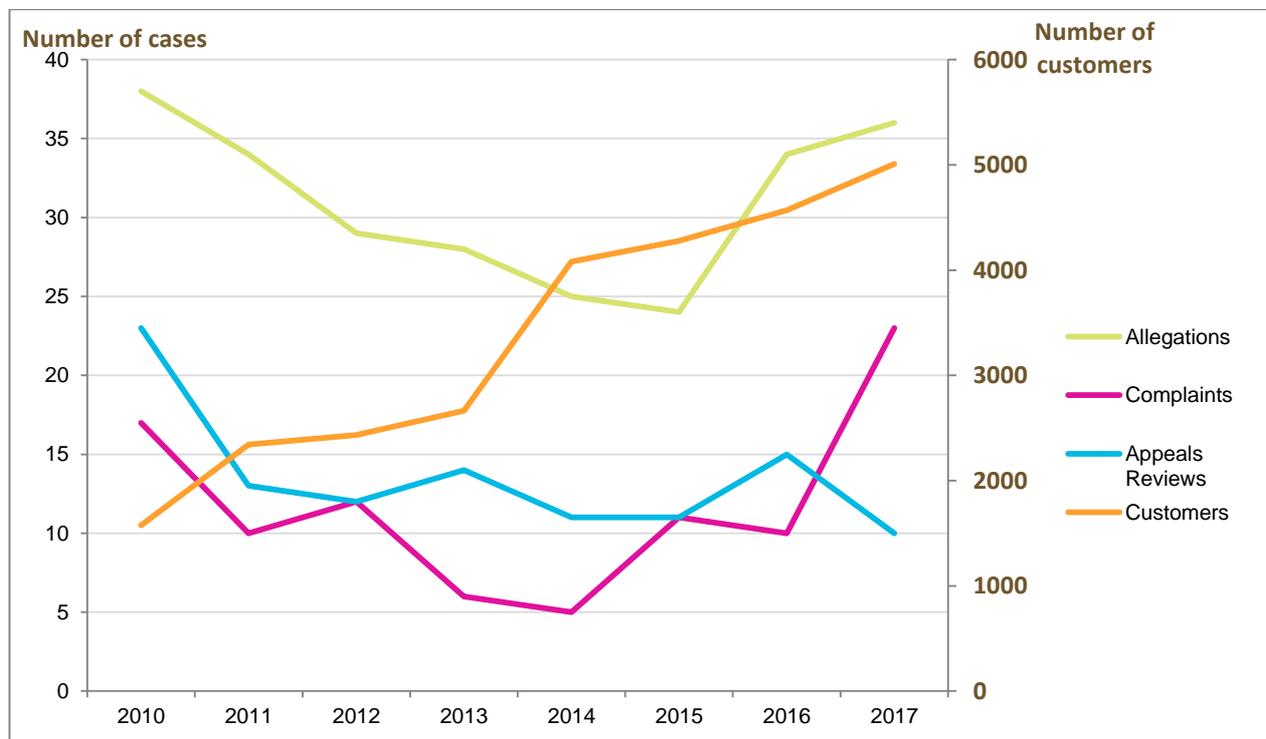
The table below shows the overall figures of received and processed appeals, reviews, allegations and complaints for the year 2017:

	Appeal	Review	Allegation	Complaint
Submitted in 2017	9	6	40^a	22
Acknowledged	5	5	36	22
Not accepted by CA ^b	4	1	4	0
Resolved in 2017	4	5	33^c	21
Decision reconfirmed	4	5		
Decision overturned	0	0		

Notes:

- In addition, CA received 39 potential allegation cases in 2017, which were not formalized by the customer.
- Reasons for not accepting the appeals: 3 cases were submitted too late, 1 case included documents created after the audit and hence could not be validated. The review case was dropped by the customer, who eventually decided to work on the NCs raised.
- Partly corresponds to resolved allegation cases which were submitted in previous years.

Trend 2010 – 2017



- The number of acknowledged allegations presented a descending trend until 2015. During 2016, the amount of acknowledged allegations increased and reached the same level in 2017.
- The number of complaints increased in 2017, reaching a maximum of 22 complaints. This might be explained because of the increasing number of customers.
- The number of appeals and reviews is stable over the years.

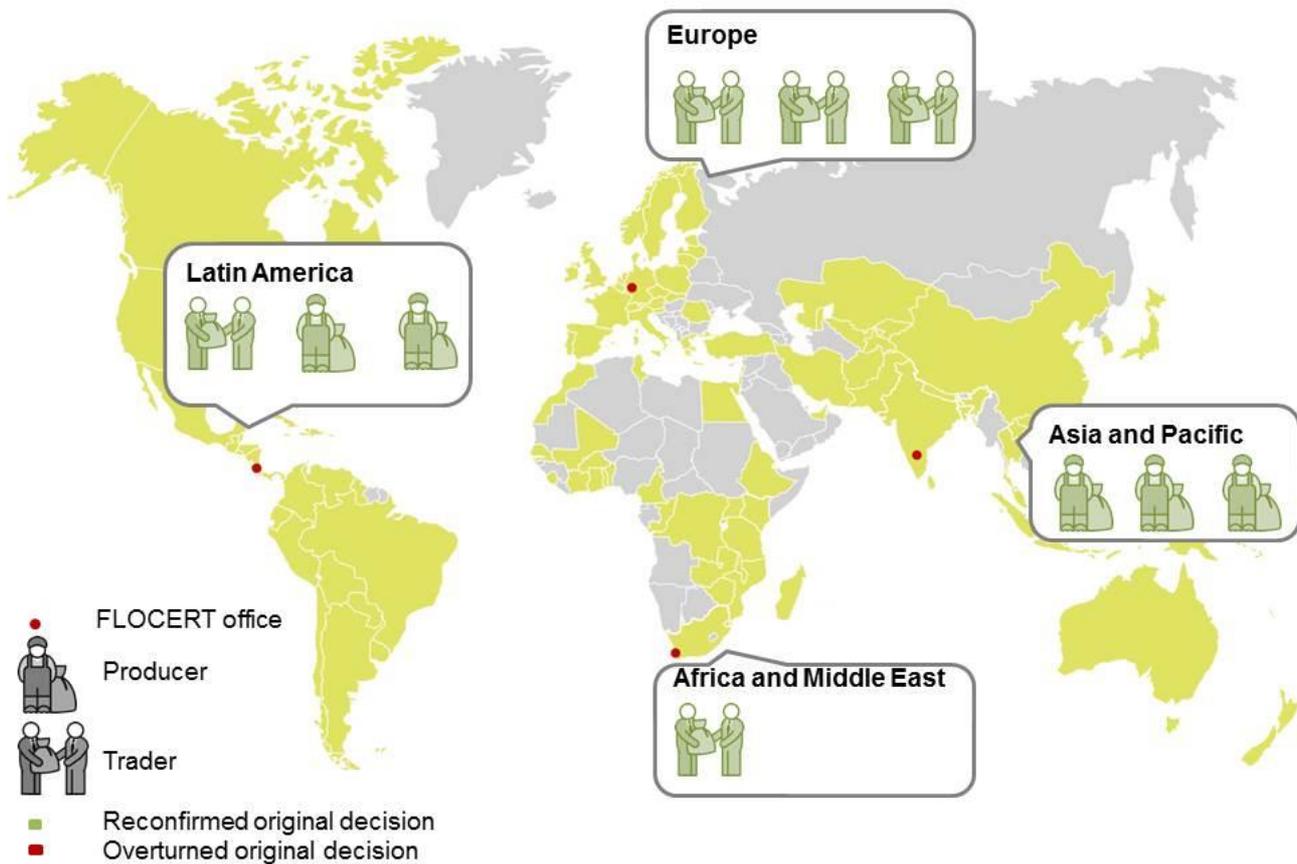
Appeals and Reviews

Appeals and Reviews raised in 2017 involved Fairtrade customers only (no Appeals from EDGE customers). The numbers of appeals and reviews raised in 2017 are equivalent between regions and categories (traders vs. producers), except in Africa where there was one review request only.

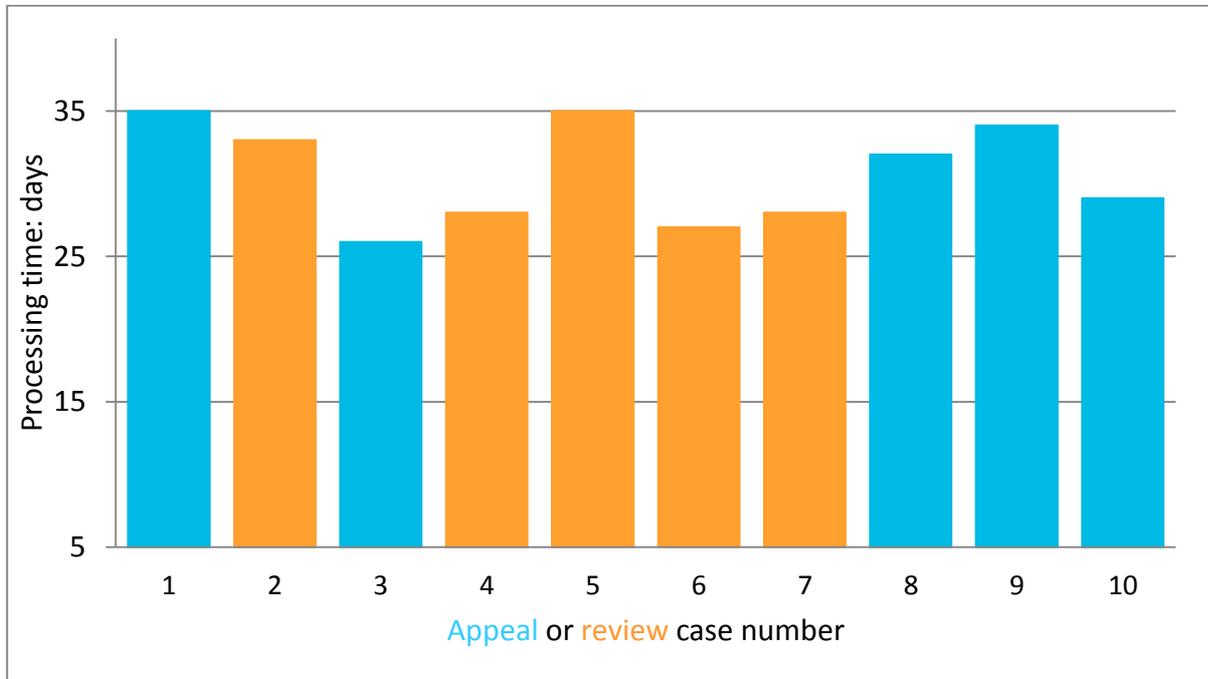
Out of the 4 appeals concluded in 2017, 1 was against a decertification decision and 3 against a suspension decision. The 5 review requests included 2 cases concerning immediate suspension, 2 cases concerning detected non-conformities and 1 was formulated against the corrective measures requested.

One Appeal Case was received in the end of 2017 and closed in January 2018 (appeal against a decision not to certify initially).

All the original decisions were reconfirmed by the Appeal or Review Committees.



Processing times of appeals and reviews

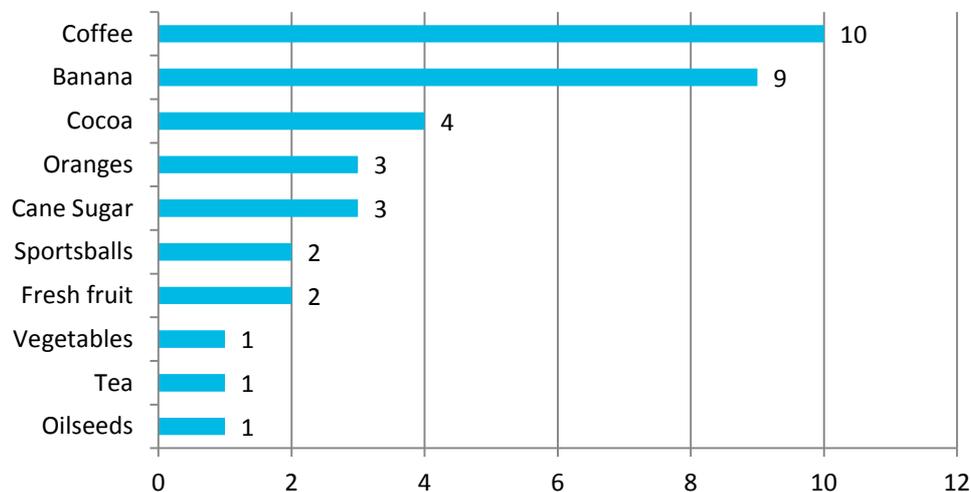


Our Standard Operating Procedure states that the Appeals or Review Committee will take a decision within 35 days after receipt of the completed submission form. All the appeals and review requests acknowledged were processed in time. The average time to close a case is 31 days.

Allegations

The 36 acknowledged allegations concerned Fairtrade certified organizations mainly working in coffee or banana.

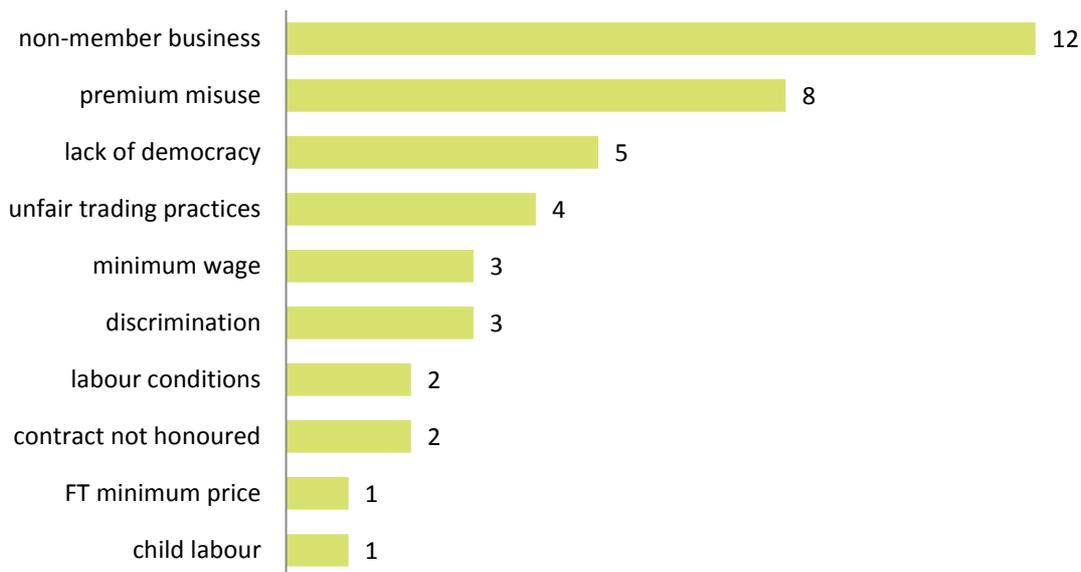
Number of cases



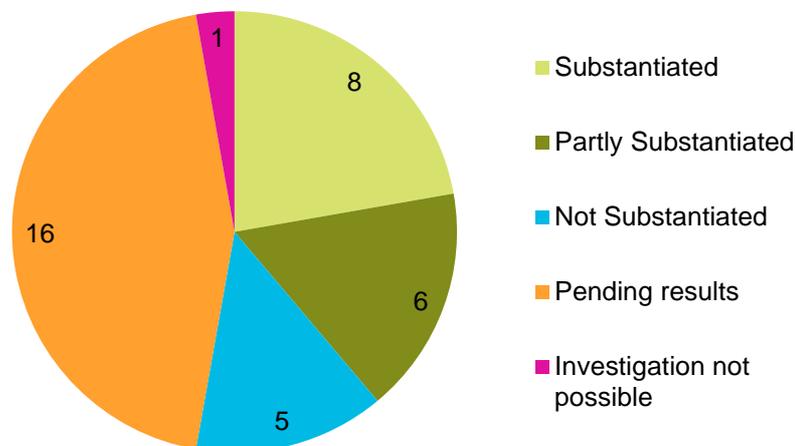
63% of the acknowledged allegations came from Latin America (23 out of 36). The Credibility Assurance Unit also received 7 allegations against organizations in Asia, 4 in Europe and 2 in Africa.

Of these cases, 25 were raised against producers and 11 against traders.

The **Compliance Criteria concerned** were mainly related to the topics of Non-member business and Premium management.



*In the graph, the amount of cases in which a topic is covered does not coincide with the total of allegations received, because some covered several topics.



During 2017, 19 out of the 36 acknowledged allegations have been investigated by means of an audit and closed by informing the outcome to the alleging party. Out of these investigations, 15 were carried out during a regular audit and 4 by means of an unannounced audit.

One case could not be investigated because the customer was decertified in the meantime.

The closed cases, as the graph shows, include 14 allegations which were completely or partly substantiated and 5 which could not be confirmed during the audit.

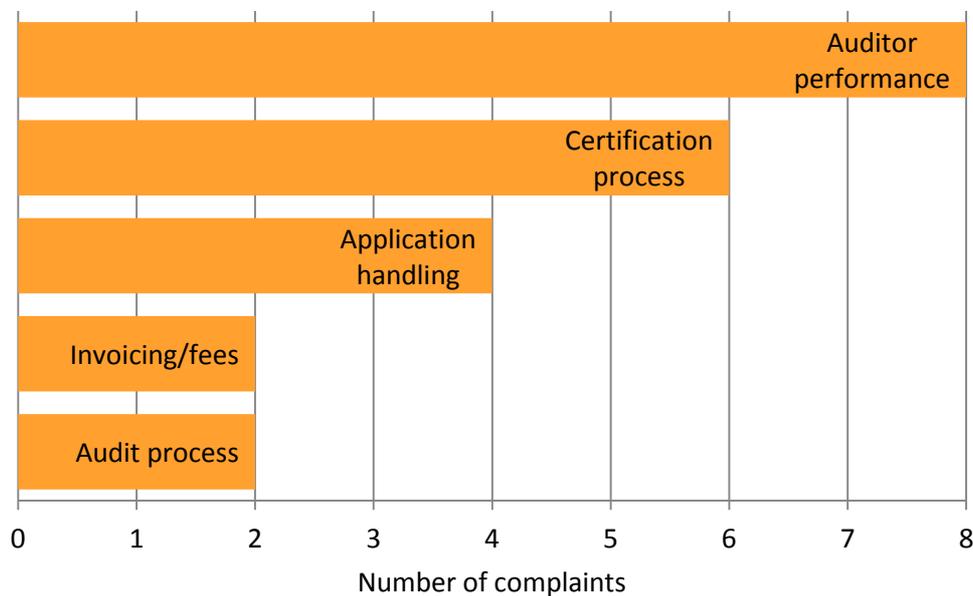
Finally, 16 allegations have been investigated during a recent audit or will be investigated in the near future, thus their results are pending. It is important to point out here that 12 of these cases were received only in the last quarter of 2017.

The average time between reception of an allegation and final response is 280 days (> 9 months).

Complaints

Complaints relate to the manner in which FLOCERT provides its services; they may include for example the failure to respond to a customer within a reasonable timeframe or unprofessional behavior by a FLOCERT team member.

Of the 22 complaints received by the Credibility Assurance Unit, 8 were raised by clients that were dissatisfied with the performance of our auditors. 8 came from Latin America, 7 from Europe, 6 from Africa and 1 from Asia.



One complaint triggered a change in our system, thus changing the way we work henceforward (complaint regarding application process). The corrective measures following the other complaints were mostly training and clarification in our documents.

One case was submitted at the end of 2017 and closed in January 2018.

Our Complaints SOP states that any complaint should be answered within a month. In 2017, the average time between reception of a complaint and final response is 28 days, with 10 complaints exceeding 30 days.

Conclusion

The overall number of complaints increased in 2017, which can be explained by an increasing number of customers, also by the fact that our customers might know better how to reach us. The new FLOCERT website, launched in end 2017, makes it even easier to submit any complaint to Credibility Assurance (online form). In this context however, the number of appeals remains low and constant over the years, showing that our certification decisions are perceived as fair by our customers.

Non-member business and premium management are still the main topics triggering allegations towards certified organisations. They will remain major areas of focus for FLOCERT to check when auditing customers.

As many allegations were still pending results at the end of the year 2017, the allegations process will be improved in 2018, introducing short timelines to investigate and close cases. The timelines will depend on the risk category of the allegation. More information will be shared in due time with interested parties.

Because the auditor performance remains the main cause of complaints, FLOCERT will continue its emphasis on training our auditors and sharing knowledge among staff, with the help of the Competence Management unit, newly created in 2017.

We trust these actions will bring still more confidence and trust in our services.