



**FLOCERT**  
assuring fairness

# Complaints Statistics 2021

**Credibility Assurance,  
February 2022**

# Definitions

The present Annual Complaints Statistics provides an overview on requests handled by the Credibility Assurance Unit at FLOCERT in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Appeals, Reviews, Allegations and Complaints. It includes all submitted and closed cases from 1<sup>st</sup> of January until 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2021.

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

**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. In the case of EDGE customers wanting to challenge the audit findings, the appeals procedure would apply.

**Review:** An official request by the customer to review an Evaluation Decision such as: 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, unprofessional behaviour by a FLOCERT staff or auditor.

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/>

# Summary

In 2021, FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit faced a relatively stable number of complaints cases.

Allegations which had increased significantly from 2017 to 2021, were stable on a high level. It demonstrates the confidence stakeholders have in our systems and that concerns would be investigated diligently and confidentially.

The Allegations process in 2021 has been additionally supported by increased accessibility through measures like the Fairtrace Confidential Allegations, the WhatsApp Allegation Channel & constant encouragement to customers, stakeholders and third parties to flag non-compliances to FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit, wherever and whenever noticed.

An additional aim of the WhatsApp Allegations Channel was to receive direct inputs from farmers and workers on the compliance situation of a certified organisation. It is even more important to have "eyes in fields" as it was still difficult for FLOCERT to conduct onsite audits during the ongoing pandemic.

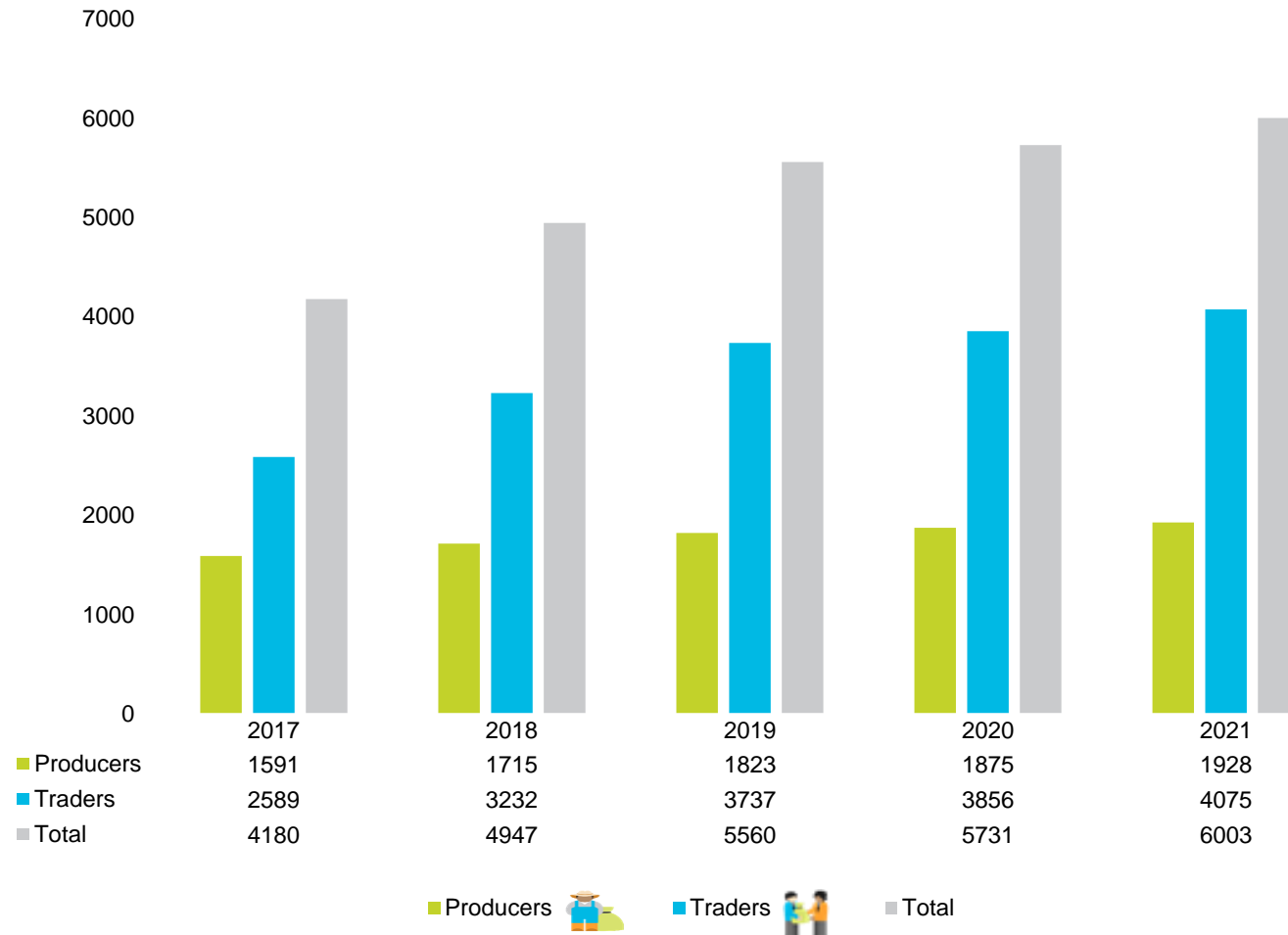
In 2021, the switch to remote investigation continued, again due to the inability to visit all customers onsite. As remote methodology allows for greater flexibility, one of the results was decreased processing time from 5 to 4 months in 2021, compared to the previous year.

Banana and coffee remained the main targets of allegations, but with a decrease for bananas (45 in 2020 vs 33 in 2021) and an increase of coffee (18 in 2020 vs 28 in 2021).

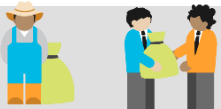
Appeals and Reviews compared to 2020 show a slight increase from 27 to 32 in 2021.

Complaints decreased slightly from 0,8% to 0,5% compared to the number of customers. Financial issues such as the certification fee and financial sanctions remain one of the major topics followed by auditor performance. The previous being possibly related to the world-wide economic situation.

# Number of certified organisations



# Five-year overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Allegations	40	40	80	110	113
Appeals	7	7	23	18	17
Reviews	6	7	14	9	15
Complaints	19	42	38	47	33
	4,180	4,947	5,560	5,731	6,003

# 2021 – Status overview

Total	Accepted	Closed	Open	Rejected, stalled or withdrawn	Decision reconfirmed	Decision overturned
<b>Allegations 113</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Appeals 17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Reviews 15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Complaints 33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>



**6,003**

# Allegations 2021

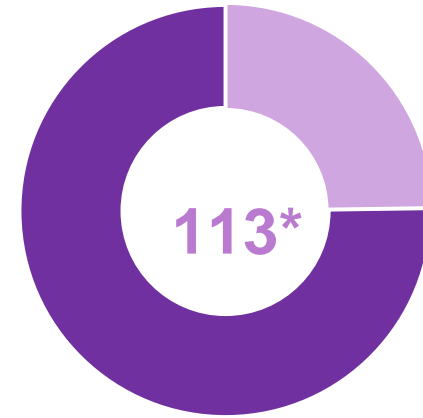
Producers

85



Traders

28



\*Total number of allegations by service



The number of allegations increased almost 3x since 2017



Americas

63



Asia

22



Africa

24



Europe

4



## Top 3 topics

- Lack of democracy
- Non-member business
- Misuse of Fairtrade Premium



**33**

Banana



**28**

Coffee



**9**

Flowers



**11**

Cocoa



**14**

Cane sugar/sugar



**7**

Fresh fruits



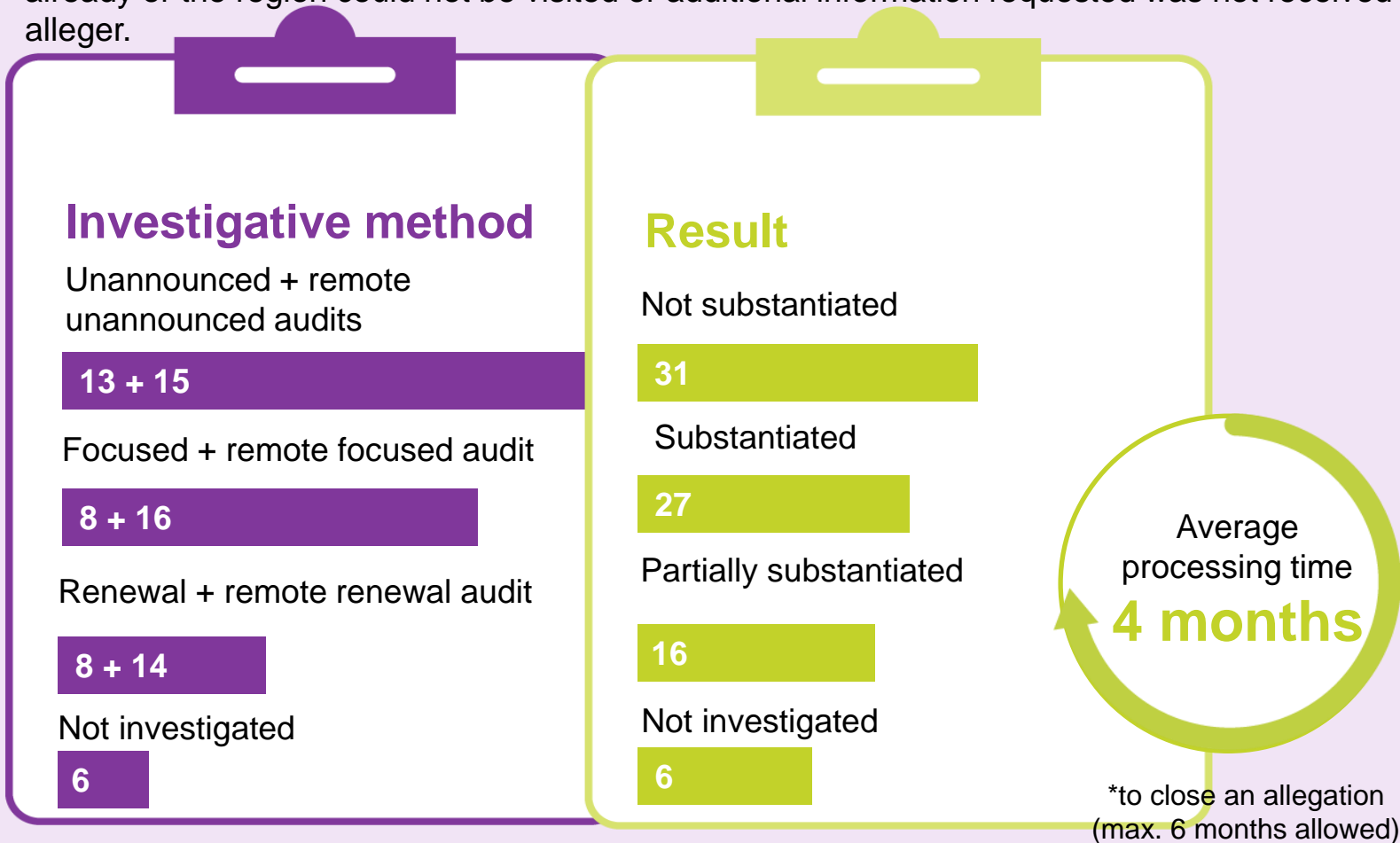
**11**

Other



# Investigated allegations:

The method of investigation was usually remote unannounced or remote focused audit. **38,75% of allegations** were **not substantiated**, **33,75%** were **substantiated** whereas **20%** were **partially substantiated** and lastly **7,5%** were **not investigated** mainly because the customer was decertified already or the region could not be visited or additional information requested was not received from the allegor.



\*Only considered 80 cases received in previous calendar years but closed in 2021

# Appeals 2021:



The number of appeals decreased slightly in 2021.

Decertification 9

Suspension 8

Not init. certified 0



Americas  
**13**



Africa  
**2**

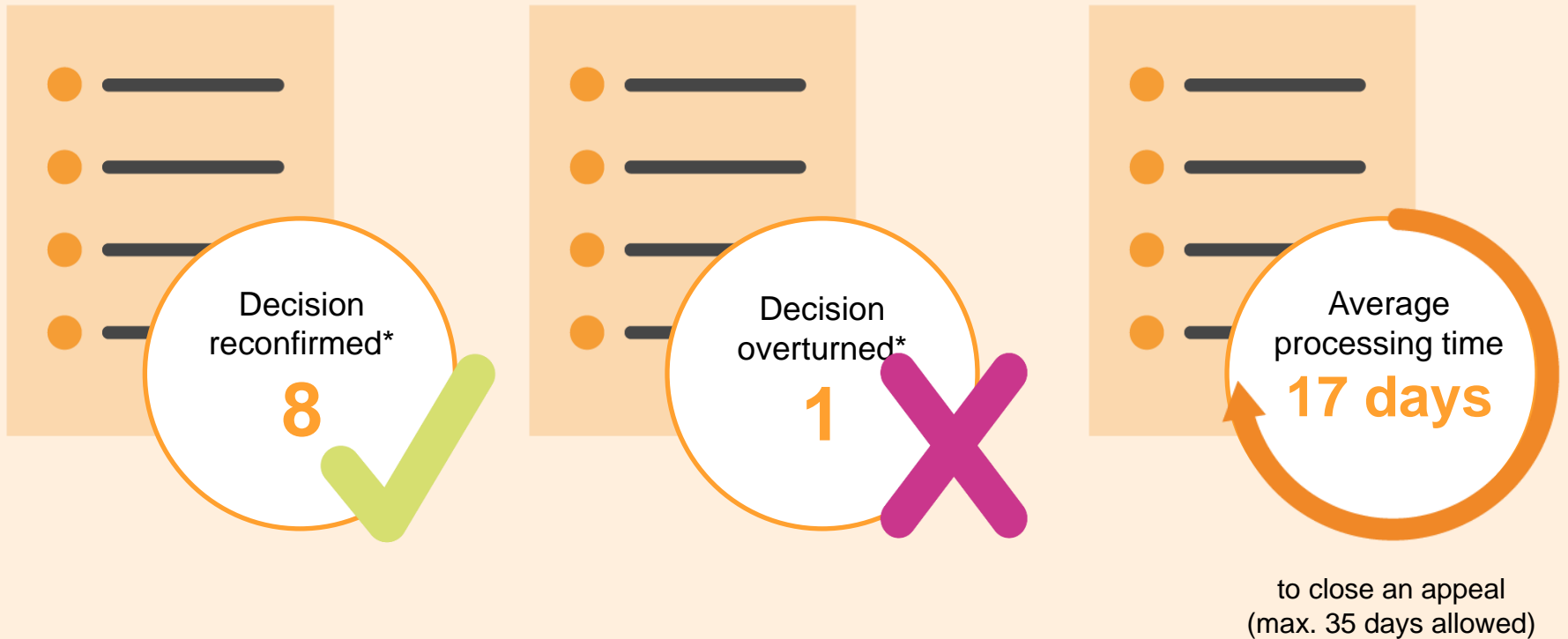


Asia  
**2**



Europe  
**0**

# Appeal decisions:



\*Only considered the 9 accepted cases.

# Reviews 2021:

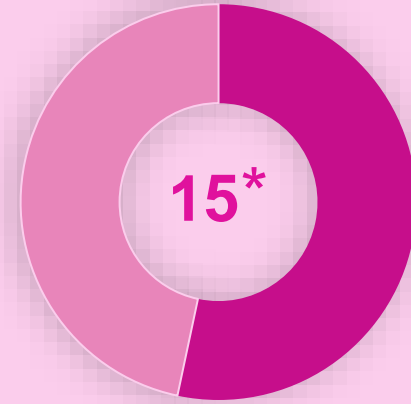
Traders

7



Producers

8



Non-conformity  
15

Corrective measures  
0



The number of reviews increased by 6 compared to previous year.



Americas

9



Africa

1



Asia

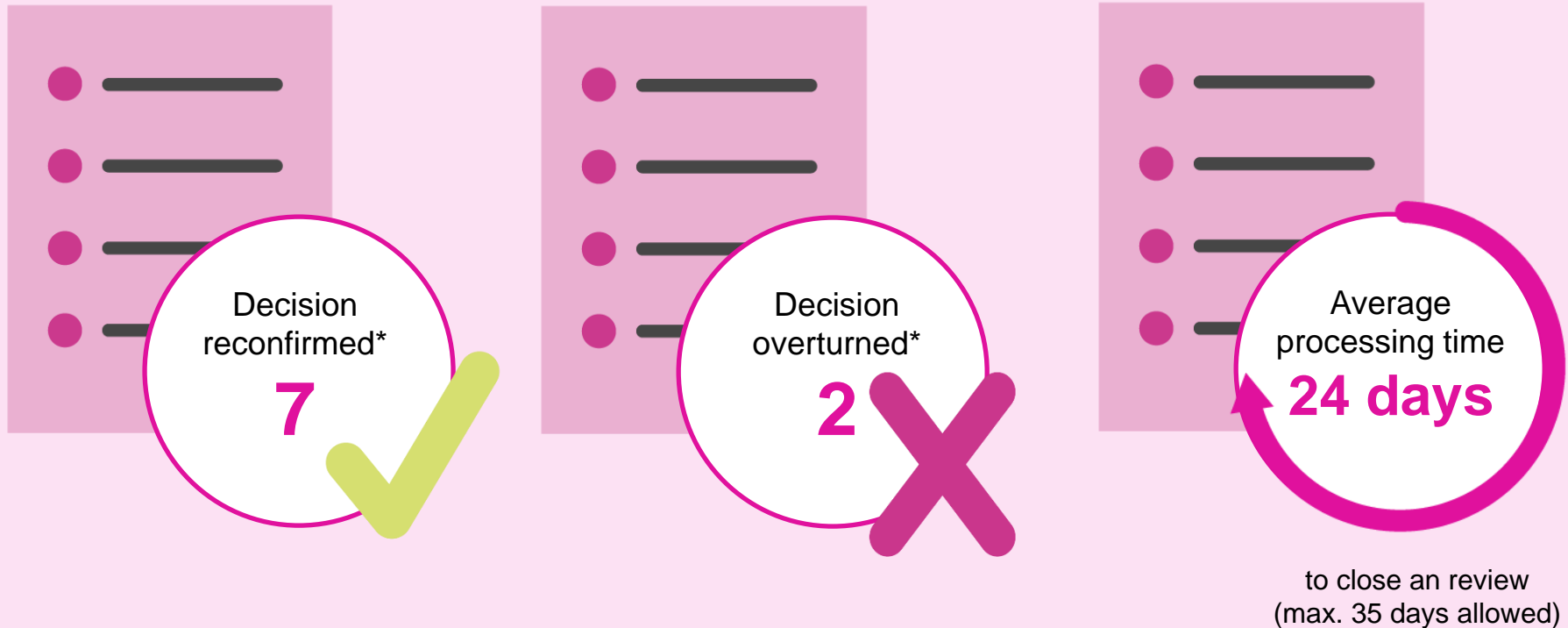
3



Europe

2

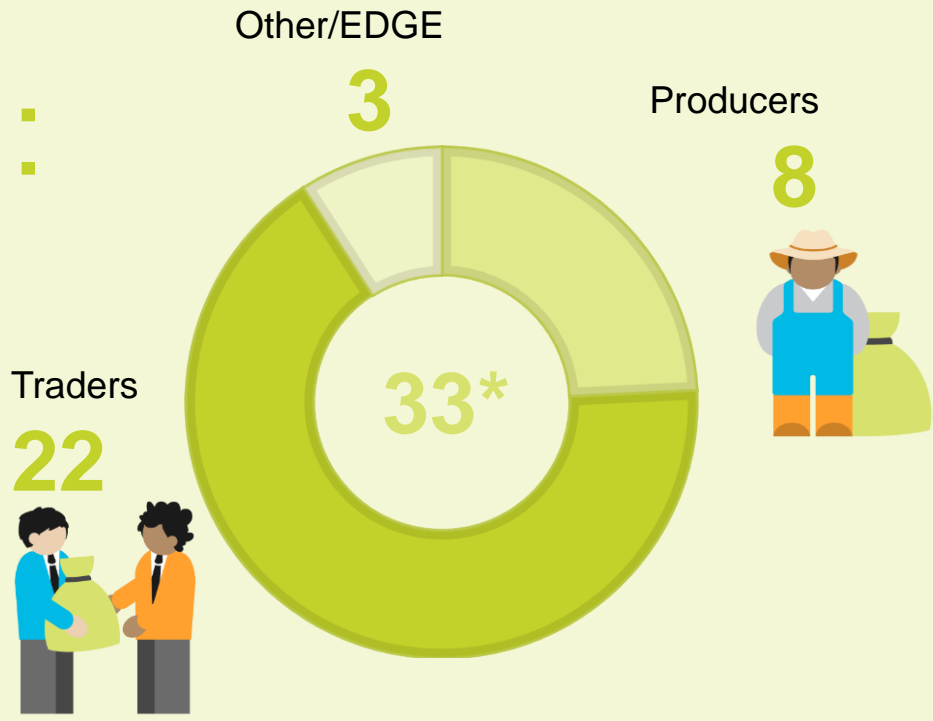
# Review decisions



\*Only considered the 9 closed reviews.

# Complaints 2021:

 The number of complaints increased by 8 compared to 2020.



Americas  
**7**



Africa  
**2**



Asia  
**8**



Europe  
**16**

# Top complaint topics:

33 complaints represent 0,5% considering the total number of customer: 6003

Fee System  
13

Auditor's  
Performance  
10

Application  
process  
6

Other  
4

## Time

Average  
processing time  
**15 days**

to close a complaint  
(max. 35 days allowed)

# THANK YOU

## for your support for continuous improvement.

Please report any concerns regarding the mentioned topics to Credibility Assurance via:

E-mail: [credibility@flocert.net](mailto:credibility@flocert.net)

WhatsApp channel: <https://www.flocert.net/flocert-launches-whatsapp-for-allegations>

Website form: <https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>