

STANDARD OPERATING

PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS AGAINST

FAIRTRADE STANDARDS

SETTING

Approved by: Andreas Kratz

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Audience: Fairtrade stakeholders

Contact for comments: standards-pricing@fairtrade.net

For further information: www.fairtrade.net



Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Procedure for complaints	3
2.1. Review	3
2.2. Acceptance	3
2.3. Rejection	4
2.4. Pursuit	4
3. Information	4
4. Documentation	5
5. References	5



1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the procedure for dealing with complaints against Fairtrade Standards setting. A chart illustrating the procedure is found at the end of this document.

The procedure is designed in compliance with all requirements of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The term 'standard' refers to all initiated or finalized projects related to generic and product Standards, which include Fairtrade Minimum Prices and Fairtrade Premiums.

2. Procedure for complaints

Any relevant stakeholders can submit a complaint against the setting of a Standard. Standards & Pricing (S&P) receives complaints and forwards them to the Quality Manager, who follows a formal procedure to deal with them. Complaints must be sent to the SU by submitting the properly filled in 'complaint form' via standards-pricing@fairtrade.net.

Substantive complaints relate to the content of the standard and are dealt with through the standard development or revision process. Substantive complaints are NOT dealt with in this procedure.

Procedural complaints relate to the way in which the standard was developed. These can include complaints about the process for deciding on the content of the standard, but not about the content of the standard itself. Procedural complaints are described in this standard operating procedure (SOP).

2.1. Review

Upon the receipt of a complaint, the Quality Manager confirms receipt within 10 days. The Quality Manager evaluates whether the complaint is valid and qualifies to be accepted. A complaint might reasonably be made on the following grounds:

- The determination of a standard not adhering to the SOP Development of Fairtrade Standards
- The determination of a standard not adhering to the project assignment available on the website

A decision on the acceptance of a complaint is made by the Quality Manager within 30 days from receipt.

The rationale behind the decision is explained and documented, and this documentation may be requested by any interested stakeholder.

2.2. Acceptance

When a complaint is accepted, information about the acceptance is provided by the Quality Manager to the body making the complaint within 10 days from announcing the decision by sending the 'complaints action list' for following up on the respective case. This normally means that S&P proceeds to review the relevant standard as described in the SOP Development of Fairtrade Standards. In this case, a new project is said to be initiated. By publication of the project assignment, the body making the complaint will be informed about the further process.



2.3. Rejection

If a complaint is rejected, information about the applicable reasons is provided by the Quality Manager to the body making the complaint within 10 days from announcing the decision. The body making the complaint may accept the reasons and the outcome. In this case the complaint is abandoned but still reported to the Standards Committee (SC).

2.4. Pursuit

After rejection (see above section 2.3.) the body making the complaint may choose to pursue the complaint. In this case, the body making the complaint would be expected to amend its complaint in consideration of the reasons for rejection. The amended complaint is submitted to the Quality Manager who confirms receipt within 10 days. The Quality Manager then makes preparations to refer the complaint to the SC, and informs the body making the complaint about the further steps and timelines of the complaints procedure.

The Quality Manager's preparations for referral of the complaint to the SC includes requesting additional information from the complaint making body, collating data from other sources and drafting a response to the complaint in the name of Fairtrade International. The response reconsiders the grounds for the validity of the complaint, taking into account the complaint's amendments and the additional research of the Quality Manager. Appropriate decision on the complaint is recommended by the Quality Manager to the SC. Both, the body making the complaint and the SC receive the amended complaint and Fairtrade International response.

Arrangements are made for the body making the complaint to be present or represented at the meeting of the SC where the complaint will be considered.

There are a number of possible outcomes of the review of a complaint by the SC:

- The SC may accept a complaint; in this case a new project would be carried out by S&P following guidance from the SC as appropriate.
- The SC may reject a complaint; in this case the Quality Manager would communicate the reasons for the rejection to the body making the complaint. No further complaint is possible.
- The SC may declare all or part of the standard against which a complaint is made as invalid and substitute alternate wording or declare the previous version of the standard as valid.
- The SC may declare that a complaint is valid but that reconsidering the standard as per the complaint would not affect the application of the standard in practice; in this case the complaint would be taken into account at the next review of the corresponding standard.

In any case, the body making the complaint is informed about the decision made by the SC within 10 days. The decision of the SC is final and no further complaint against the decision is possible.

3. Information

Whenever a project to review a standard is initiated as a result of a complaint, whether at the instigation of the Director of Standards & Pricing or the SC, the body making the complaint is formally notified of the outcome of the project.



4. Documentation

All records related to a complaint are kept for at least five years. Electronic copies are kept and back-ups are made as often as deemed necessary. Paper copies are kept in a traceable manner, and if applicable bear reference to the electronic copy.

5. References

SOP Development of Fairtrade Standards

