



# Complaints, Allegations and Appeals Operating Procedure

Version: v.1

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Please submit complaints and appeals to:  
[License@fairtradeamerica.org](mailto:License@fairtradeamerica.org)

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe Fairtrade America's procedure for dealing with complaints, allegations and appeals. This procedure reflects Fairtrade America's commitment to transparency, oversight and compliance with Fairtrade International's Requirements for Licensing Bodies and Standards.

## 2. Scope

In order for Fairtrade America to review a complaint, allegation or appeal, the subject of the complaint must fall within in Fairtrade America's scope, such as:

- Complaints regarding the conduct of personnel, including all staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors;
- Complaints regarding confidentiality, conflict of interest and non-discrimination;
- Complaints or allegations regarding Fairtrade America's licensees;
- Complaints or appeals regarding Fairtrade America's licensing decisions.

Complaints and appeals are reviewed and processed according to the procedure outlined below. All personnel investigating a complaints or appeal must be free from any conflict of interest that may influence the outcome of the complaints and appeals process.

**Complaints** may be lodged by any interested party that is not satisfied with operations or decisions pertaining to Fairtrade America.

**Appeals** may only be brought forward by a party about which a licensing decision was made. All decisions related to the status of the applicant operator or licensee remain in force until the complaint is settled.

**Allegations** may be submitted by a third party, claiming that a Fairtrade operator is violating Fairtrade America's policies and procedures, is damaging Fairtrade America's reputation or is misusing the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark.

## 3. Submission

Complaints, allegations and appeals must be submitted in writing to Fairtrade America's Licensing Department, clearly stating that a complaint, allegation or appeal is being lodged, explaining the nature of the complaint, allegation or appeal and accompanied by documented evidence to support the claim and the signature of the complainant. A complaint or appeal must also contain a full explanation of the perceived problem including dates of events associated with the complaint, allegation or appeal and the names of the involved parties. Complaints, allegations and appeals must be submitted by email to [License@fairtradeamerica.org](mailto:License@fairtradeamerica.org)

Once the complaint, allegation or appeal has been submitted, the Licensing Manager opens a case file of the complaint, allegation or appeal, and evaluates whether the

complaint, allegation or appeal meets the criteria described above. The Licensing Manager submits the complaint or appeal case file for preliminary review by the Leadership Team before moving forward.

- If a complaint or appeal is accepted for review, the Licensing Manager notifies the claimant within 10 working days, outlines the next steps of the process and may request additional information from the claimant.
- If a complaint or appeal is rejected for review, the claimant is informed within 10 working days and provided with an explanation of the rejection. The claimant may amend their complaint or appeal and resubmit. In this case, the Leadership Team will appoint alternative personnel to review the complaint or appeal.

#### **4. Decision**

Once a complaint, allegation or appeal has been determined to have merit, the Licensing Manager determines what further action and/or decision-making is needed to address the complaint or appeal. In cases of appeals, the Leadership Team will appoint personnel not involved in the previous decision to review the claim. The Licensing Manager or appointed personnel may also request additional information, collate data from other sources or commission an investigation. A corrective action plan for the complaint, allegation or appeal is submitted for review by the Leadership Team

Once a decision has been made and verified by the Leadership Team, the claimant is informed of the final decision and if applicable steps for remediation within 10 working days. The decision is final and no further complaint against the decision is possible.

#### **5. Documentation**

Fairtrade America reserves the right to inform certifiers (FLOCERT), authorities, licensees and the general public of the outcome of complaint, allegation or appeal.

A log of complaint, allegation or appeal, including all related records, and their outcomes are maintained by the Licensing Department for at least five years.