

# **Allegation & Complaints**

## **Standard Operation Procedure**

**Valid from: 01.08.2010**

**Distribution: Fairtrade Internal**

## Change History

Version	Author / Reviser for approval	Date approved	Validity date	Changes made
01	Andrea Richert / Tuulia Syaenen	29.07.2010	01.08.2010	
			05.08.2010	Correction p6/ 6.2.3.: The party filing the allegation / complaint is <b>not</b> reachable at all.

## 1. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to describe the handling of allegations and complaints against FLO as an organization, against Fairtrade certified operators and complaints against FLO staff and consultants holding a contract with FLO ( FLO consultants).

## 2. Scope of this document

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to all Fairtrade certified operators, to all FLO staff and FLO consultants and any other third party who has a valid reason for an allegation or complaint.

Not covered within the scope of this document are:

- All allegations against FLO-CERT certified operators, claiming that the Fairtrade standards, FLO-CERT policies or other contractual obligations with FLO-CERT were violated / which need to be forwarded to QM department at FLO-CERT.
- All complaints related to the services and staff of FLO-CERT, which need to be forwarded to the QM department at FLO-CERT.
- All complaints related to a conflict of interest of FLO staff and FLO consultants, which need to be handled by the responsible line manager and the Human Resources department of FLO. FLO staff members may also involve the works council to solve a complaint about conflict of interest.

## 3. Confidentiality

Please note that all submitted allegations and complaints have to be treated as confidential by the member of staff responsible. This also includes the handling of all soft and hard copies of documents related to this specific case.

## 4. Definition

An allegation is an accusation, made by a third party, claiming that a Fairtrade operator is violating FLO policies and procedures, is damaging FLO's reputation or is misusing the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark. Furthermore an allegation can include claims against a Fairtrade operator not certified by FLO-CERT to violate the Fairtrade standards.

A complaint is an accusation, made by a third party, against FLO services and / or FLO staff or FLO consultant claiming that this person or organization violated FLO policies, procedures and regulations or FLO Services, or damaged FLO's reputation.

## 5. Roles and Responsibility

The overall responsibility is with the FLO CEO, COO, Finance Director or his/her designate.

### FLO CEO, COO and Finance director

- Accountable for communication to stakeholders and for action steps taken by FLO
- Responsible for communication to stakeholders about the final results / decisions of the investigation of the allegation / complaint

The COO is the responsible leading person and counter part for QM to handle an allegation / complaint. This function may be designated to another Leadership Team member who is then the direct contact partner for QM.

### FLO Communications Unit

- Responsible for communication activities to protect the external reputation of FLO/Fairtrade
- Responsible for communication to internal and/or external stakeholders as needed and for internal coordination with FLO-CERT communications department and/or with Fairtrade stakeholders / licensees if needed
- Responsible for the documentation of the communication itself and the recipients lists for all communication, received or send out by FLO Communications Unit, in the specific case
- All actions need to be agreed on beforehand with the COO or the designated responsible Leadership Team member

### FLO Quality Management (FLO QM)

- Responsible for registration, collection of all information, follow up on the agreed steps of action
- Responsible for the final reporting (results, decisions) on the specific allegation or complaint to the FLO CEO, COO, Finance Director and the project team as defined in the "Allegation / Complaint Action List"
- Responsible for completion of the "Allegation / Complaint Action List"

## FLO Mark Management

- If the allegation / complaint is related to the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark, the Trademark Coordinator (trademark@fairtrade.net) is responsible for the registration and collection of all information and for the necessary follow up in coordination with FLO stakeholders if needed
- Responsible for final reporting to Head of Market Development unit on the specific allegation or complaint.

## **6. Process**

All allegations/ complaints not related to the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark are processed in a consistent manner, following the FLO procedure as described below. The allegations / complaints related to the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark will be forwarded to [trademark@fairtrade.net](mailto:trademark@fairtrade.net) for further action (see 5. Roles and Responsibilities).

### **6.1. Submission**

- 6.1.1. An allegation / complaint can be filed by any party, including but not limited to, a Fairtrade operator, a NGO, a labour union or a member of the public.
- 6.1.2. The allegation / complaint must be submitted to Quality Management at FLO in writing and will be documented and managed centrally within FLO QM.
- 6.1.3. The party registering the allegation / complaint must submit the name of the concerned person / organization and all available facts related to this specific allegation to FLO QM.

### **6.2. Assessment**

- 6.2.1. QM evaluates the validity of the allegation / complaint.
- 6.2.2. If the allegation / complaint is considered valid,
  - QM informs the FLO CEO, COO or Finance Director and /or the responsible line manager and the investigation procedure starts.
  - The FLO CEO, COO or Finance Director and /or the responsible line manager decide on the responsible FLO person to lead the procedure.

- If the complaint is related to the FLO CEO, COO or Finance Director, the chair of FLO Board needs to be informed and he/she will be responsible for handling the allegation / complaint.
- The party filing the allegation / complaint will be informed in writing within 10 working days about the acceptance of the allegation and the initiated investigation.

#### 6.2.3. If the allegation / complaint is considered to be not valid,

- QM informs the party which has submitted the allegation / complaint that this case will not be followed up within this SOP.
- The responsible person (the FLO CEO, COO, Finance Director) or his/her designate or the responsible line manager may decide to send out communication to Fairtrade stakeholder and staff for information and to safeguard FLO's reputation.

Reasons for not following the SOP may be:

- The party filing the allegation / complaint is not presenting any evidence upon request.
- The party filing the allegation / complaint is not reachable at all.
- The allegation / complaint does not fall within the scope of this SOP.
- The complaint was against a person without any contractual relationship to FLO.
- The allegation was against an organization which does not belong to the Fairtrade system.

#### 6.3. **Definition of Action Points**

- In case of allegations / complaints the FLO COO or the designated Leadership Team member needs to define the next steps of action, methods and time lines by filling in an "Allegation or Complaint Action List".
- In case of complaints towards FLO CEO, COO or the Finance Director, the Chair of the FLO Board needs to handle the "Complaint Action List".
- The document will be reviewed / finalized by the QM and filed on a safe server place as a basis for follow up, documentation and reporting.

- The template “Action list” is available with [\FLO Files\Quality Management FLO\Allegations\\_ Complaints Procedure\Template Allegation\\_ Complaints Action List.xls](#)

This “Action Lists” may include the following action points:

- a. Collection of all missing information/ documents related to this allegation
- b. Request to the party who submitted the allegation / complaint to provide evidence
- c. Request for a written statement of the staff member / consultant or organization concerned
- d. Analysis of the written evidence provided by the allegation party
- e. Interviews with parties involved together with a third party if needed (e.g. Legal Support, Human Resources, Works council)

#### **6.4. Investigation of the case**

According to the action points defined in 6.3. the responsible FLO staff member takes action with the objective to finalize the investigation within 2 weeks time.

All documents sent to the parties involved need to be forwarded to FLO QM for documentation, follow up and reporting.

#### **6.5. Evaluation & Decisions**

- 6.5.1. If, following the investigation the allegation / complaint was not justified, the file will be summarily dismissed and the party making the allegation will be informed in writing by FLO Quality Management.
- 6.5.2. If the allegation or the complaint against FLO services was justified, the report including evidence and all information will be forwarded to the leading person as defined in the “Allegation / Complaint Action List” or his/her designate.

- 6.5.3. If the complaint against FLO staff and FLO consultant was justified, the report including evidence and all information will be forwarded to
- the leading person as defined in the “Allegation / Complaint Action List” or his/her designate
  - the responsible line manager and
  - the Human Resources department at FLO
  - In case of a complaint related to FLO CEO, COO or Finance Director the documents will be forwarded additionally to the Chair of the FLO Board.

### **6.6. Approval or changes of this SOP**

This SOP was approved by FLO COO and will be communicated to all FLO staff and FLO consultants and to the Chair of the FLO Board. All further content related changes need to be documented on page 2 of this document.

Bonn, the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2010

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Tuulia Syvaenen (COO FLO)

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Andrea Richert (Quality Manager FLO)

Attachment: - Template Allegation\_Complaints Action List.xls