



Title:	Processing complaints in the FSC Accreditation Program
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Contact person:	Andre Giacini de Freitas
E-mail for comments:	dispute.resolution@fsc.org

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PROCESSING COMPLAINTS IN THE FSC ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

FSC-PRO-01-008 (V1-0) EN

DRAFT 2-0

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organisation established to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC's vision is that the world's forests meet the social, ecological, and economic rights and needs of the present generation without compromising those of future generations.



1. Objective

- 1.1 This document describes the process to be adopted by the FSC Accreditation Program to ensure a timely, independent and effective resolution of complaints submitted by stakeholders.

NOTE: The FSC dispute resolution system is intended to address disputes related to FSC certification. It does not substitute or override the legal rights of any party to use the appropriate judicial system.

2. Scope and effective date

- 2.1 Individuals or organizations that would like to make a complaint in relation to the FSC Accreditation Program.
- 2.2 This procedure becomes effective on January 1st 2010.

3. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply:

ASI: Accreditation Services International GmbH, implementing the FSC Accreditation Program on behalf of FSC A.C..

Certification body (also referred to as conformity assessment body): body that performs conformity assessment services and that can be the object of accreditation (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011:2004 (E)).

Complaint: initial expression of dissatisfaction regarding an FSC accredited certification body compliance with FSC requirements or the performance of the FSC Accreditation Program, based on documented evidence and to which a response is expected (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011:2004 (E)).

Complainant: individual or organization filing the complaint or formal complaint.

Formal complaint: subsequent expression of dissatisfaction with the handling or results of a complaint regarding the compliance of an FSC accredited certification body with FSC requirements or the performance of the FSC Accreditation Program.

4. Associated documentation

FSC-STD-20-001 The application of ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996 (E) by FSC accredited certification bodies



FSC-PRO-01-009 V1-0 D2-0 Processing Formal Complaints in the FSC Accreditation Program (under consultation)

5. Procedures

- 5.1 The FSC Accreditation Program will endeavour to address promptly any claim of dissatisfaction that is brought to its attention regarding the performance of the FSC Accreditation Program or the performance of an FSC accredited certification body. This procedure deals with the process for evaluating complaints. The process adopted for dealing with formal complaints in the FSC Accreditation Program is detailed in FSC-PRO-01-009.
- 5.2 Complaints shall be sent to the Director of the FSC Accreditation Program through the FSC's online dispute resolution center at www.fsc.org, in one of the FSC official languages.

NOTE: Supporting evidence to the complaint may be submitted in digital format through the FSC online disputed resolution center or email, or as hard copies sent by fax or mail.

- 5.3 Upon receipt of the complaint, the FSC Accreditation Program shall acknowledge its receipt.
- 5.4 Only complete complaints, including documented evidence, shall be processed. If the Director of the FSC Accreditation Program considers that the complaint is incomplete or has not yet been adequately addressed at the most appropriate level, the complaint shall be rejected in writing within 14 days of its receipt. The notification shall include an explanation for the rejection and a recommendation to correctly submit the complaint.
- 5.4.1 In order for a complaint to be complete it shall:
- a) contain the name and contact information of the complainant;
 - b) specify the certification body and, if applicable, the certified operation the complaint is being made against, or if the complaint is being made against the FSC Accreditation Program;
 - c) provide a summary of the issues and state the specific FSC requirement(s) not being complied with by the FSC Accreditation Program, certification body or certified operation;



- d) contain evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint; and,
 - e) be in one of the official languages of FSC.
- 5.5 If a complaint is considered complete, the Director of the FSC Accreditation Program shall assign a staff member to deal with it.
- 5.5.1 If a complaint is made against the Director of the FSC Accreditation Program, it shall be forwarded to the Director of FSC A.C., who will ensure that it is duly evaluated, adapting the requirements in this procedure as appropriate.
 - 5.5.2 The assigned staff member shall contact the parties involved by e-mail or phone to attempt to informally resolve the issue in direct communication. The assigned staff member shall keep a record of the conversations, including date, time and a summary of issues discussed, as well as a copy of all hardcopy and electronic communication.
 - 5.5.3 The privacy and identity of the complainant shall be protected to the maximum extent possible, while recognizing that the identity of the complainant might be obvious depending on the circumstances.
 - 5.5.4 All parties involved in the process shall refrain from commenting publicly on the complaint until a decision is made.
 - 5.5.5 If an informal resolution is not possible, the assigned staff member will investigate the issue and provide the Director of the FSC Accreditation Program with a recommendation on the complaint.
- 5.6 Additional information may be requested from the complainant, third parties named as sources of information in the complaint or other parties likely to have information relevant to the investigation.
- 5.7 The Director of the FSC Accreditation Program shall provide the parties involved with a written formal response within 60 days from the filing of the complaint. The response shall include a conclusion on the complaint and, if applicable, any follow up measures to be taken.
- 5.8 Any corrective actions or disciplinary measures shall be communicated to all parties involved and compliance, when applicable, verified the appropriate staff of the FSC Accreditation Program.



- 5.9 The formal response shall include the information that if any of the parties involved is not satisfied with the response from the FSC Accreditation Program, it may submit a formal complaint according to FSC-PRO-01-009 Processing Formal Complaints in the FSC Accreditation Program.
- 5.10 If no further issues arises, the FSC Accreditation Program shall consider the complaint resolved and the respective case file closed.
- 5.11 The complainant can withdraw the complaint at any point in time of the process, at his/hers entire discretion.
- 5.12 Only complaints that have gone through the full process outlined in this procedure can be brought to the formal complaint level.
- 5.13 FSC A.C. shall establish a monitoring system to periodically evaluate the processing of complaints and assess if there are improvements needed in its system to prevent future similar complaints.
- 5.14 All incoming and outgoing correspondence, including the final decisions and follow-up actions, shall be filed in electronic and/or hard copy in the FSC Accreditation Program Complaints Register and maintained for a period of at least seven (7) years.