

## FSC PROCEDURE

### Processing Complaints in the FSC Certification Scheme

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



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## **PROCESSING COMPLAINTS IN FSC CERTIFICATION SCHEME**

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

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

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

## Contents

A	Scope
B	Effective date
C	References
D	Terms and definitions
1	General Principles
2	Lodging a complaint
3	Processing a complaint

## **A Scope**

This document describes the process to be adopted by FSC (AC/IC/GD) and ASI to ensure a timely, independent and effective resolution of (informal) complaints submitted by FSC stakeholders or CABs. These can be complaints regarding standard setting or the performance of the global FSC Network as well as complaints regarding the compliance of an FSC accredited certification body with FSC requirements or the performance of the FSC Accreditation Program.

## **B Effective date**

This procedure becomes effective on **01 November 2009**.

## **C References**

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

*ISO/PAS 17003:2004 Conformity assessment- Complaints and appeals - Principles and requirements*

*FSC-STD-01-005 FSC Dispute Resolution System*

*FSC-PRO-01-005 Processing Appeals*

*FSC-PRO-01-009 Processing Formal Complaints*

*ASI-PRO-20-103 Appeals*

## **D Terms and definitions**

For the purposes of this procedure, the terms and definitions given in *FSC-STD-01-005 FSC Dispute Resolution System*, and the following apply:

**FSC Certification Scheme** is developed by the Forest Stewardship Council A.C. (FSC AC) to enable independent third-party certification of environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable forest management as a market mechanism allowing producers and consumers to identify and purchase timber and non-timber forest products from well-managed forests. The FSC Certification Scheme contains the following programs:

**FSC Accreditation Program** is operated and managed by ASI on behalf of FSC AC. It includes activities in relation to the evaluation and the accreditation of a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) in accordance with the Accreditation Requirements and the ISO requirements referred to therein;

**FSC Certification System** includes activities with regards to the evaluation and certification of Forest Management Enterprises and Forest Product Enterprises against the FSC Certification Requirements;

**FSC Policy and Standards Program** is operated and managed by the FSC IC on behalf of FSC AC. It includes activities with regards to the development of normative and non-normative documents (e.g. Policies, Standards, Advice Notes) required to operate the FSC Certification Scheme;

**FSC Membership Program** is operated and managed by FSC IC and the FSC endorsed National Initiatives. It includes the activities with regard to members and supporters of FSC AC and/or FSC endorsed National Initiatives;

**FSC Global Partner Program** is operated and managed by FSC GD. It includes activities and partnerships with business that expresses the positive relationship between FSC and its business partners;

**FSC Communication Program** is operated and managed by the FSC IC on behalf of FSC AC. It includes activities with regard to communicating the activities of and developing and maintaining the communication tools for the FSC Global Network.

## **1 General Principles**

- 1.1 Any individual or organization may file a complaint against the FSC Certification Scheme (incl. the FSC Accreditation Program).

## **2 Lodging a complaint**

- 2.1 General complaints regarding the operation of the FSC certification system and the FSC Network should be brought to the attention of the Director of FSC A.C., complaints regarding the operation of the FSC Accreditation Program or FSC accredited certification bodies should be brought to the attention of the ASI Managing Director.
- 2.2 FSC and ASI will endeavour to address promptly any expression of dissatisfaction that is brought to their attention. This procedure deals with the process for evaluating informal complaints. The process adopted for dealing with formal complaints is detailed in *FSC-PRO-01-009*.
- 2.3 Complaints should be submitted to FSC or ASI in one of the FSC official languages.  
  
NOTE: Supporting evidence to the complaint may be submitted in digital format through the FSC online dispute resolution center or email, or as hard copies sent by fax or mail.

## **3 Processing a complaint**

- 3.1 Within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the complaint, an assigned staff member shall contact the parties involved in the complaint 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 All parties involved in the process shall refrain from commenting publicly on the complaint until a decision is made.
- 3.4 If an informal resolution is not possible, the assigned staff member will investigate the issue and provide the Director of FSC A.C. / ASI Managing Director with a recommendation on the complaint.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The Director of FSC A.C. / ASI Managing Director shall provide the parties involved with a response within sixty (60) days from receiving the complaint. The response shall include a conclusion on the complaint and, if applicable, any follow up measures to be taken.  
  
NOTE: The FSC Director General / ASI Managing Director may delegate the notification of the complainant to the assigned staff member.
- 3.7 If no further issue arises, the complaint is considered resolved and the respective case file closed.

- 3.8 The complainant can withdraw the complaint at any point in time of the process, at his/hers entire discretion.
- 3.9 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the process, he/she may elevate the complaint to the formal level and submit it formally according to the procedure *FSC-PRO-01-009*.