

Procedural Complaints Policy

May 2014

Introduction

Fair Trade USA is open to feedback on their standards and standard setting process. The purpose of this document is to outline Fair Trade USA's policy for addressing complaints submitted about the standards-setting process. The Procedural Complaints Policy relates solely to complaints regarding Fair Trade USA's standard development and revision policy and allegations of violations of the spirit of Fair Trade in standards-setting. Any individual, organization, or representative may submit a complaint. Fair Trade USA will make a good-faith effort to investigate and resolve all allegations following the procedure outlined below.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to provide a framework for addressing and resolving procedural complaints about the standard-setting process in a fair and transparent manner.

Complaints will be addressed and evaluated in the spirit of Fair Trade, characterized by respect, collaboration, transparency, sustainable development, equity, integrity, long-term relationships, and justice.

Scope

This policy is applicable to procedural complaints related to Fair Trade USA's Standards Development and Revision Policy and the implementation of the policy.

As defined by *ISEAL Code of Good Practice in Standard-Setting for Social and Environmental Standards*, "Procedural complaints relate to the way in which the standard was developed. Procedural complaints can include complaints about the process for deciding on the content of the standard, but not about the content of the standard itself."

Any complaints regarding violations of the Fair Trade standards should be referred to the Fair Trade USA [Grievance and Allegations Policy](#), and will be addressed separately. Substantive complaints related to the content of any of Fair Trade USA's Standards are addressed through the standards development and revision process

Process for Submitting Procedural Complaints

Procedural complaints can be submitted to proceduralcomplaints@fairtradeusa.org and will be reviewed by an individual from the Certification Department of Fair Trade USA who will serve as the Standards Procedural Complaints Manager. The Manager will confirm the receipt of the complaint within 10 business days. The Manager will then begin the process of evaluating whether the complaint is valid and should be accepted or rejected based on its applicability to the scope of procedural complaints and content of the formal complaint.

Initial Assessment

The Manager will assess whether to accept the complaint and thereby escalate the complaint, or whether to reject the complaint. The Manager responds directly to the petitioner with the initial assessment within 30 business days. If the complaint is rejected, a response is sent to the petitioner with the rationale behind the decision and an opportunity for petitioner to appeal.

Appeals

Should the complaint be rejected, the petitioner will have 30 business days to appeal the decision. The petitioner may appeal the decision by providing follow-up information on applicability and scope of the complaint to the Manager and addressing the rationale behind the rejection of the complaint. If no additional information is provided within this time period, the complaint case will be fully closed and the petitioner will be informed. Appeals will be considered following the timeline and procedure of the initial submission after which the petitioner will receive a second decision on the acceptance or rejection of the complaint. If the complaint is rejected upon appeal, a notice will be sent to the petitioner of the decision and the case will be considered fully closed.

Grievance Panel

If the complaint is accepted, the formal complaint review will be escalated to a cross-departmental Grievance Panel, comprised of 5 members of the Operations Team at Fair Trade USA. The purpose of the Grievance Panel is to impartially preside and deliberate on procedural complaints that are brought to Fair Trade USA and provide detailed recommendations to create a resolution report. Additional members may be called on to join the Grievance Panel if their expertise is necessary for the review. The Grievance Panel will conduct a formal review of all available information, and request more information if needed by contacting parties involved directly. The Grievance Panel will:

1. Determine the legitimacy of the claim.
2. Decide a course of action to be taken.
3. Create a resolution report to address and resolve the complaint and prevent future occurrences.

Should the Grievance Panel determine the complaint is not legitimate, the complaint will be rejected and the petitioner informed of the decision. The petitioner will have the opportunity to appeal the decision as outlined in the appeals section.

Conclusion & Follow-up

The Grievance Panel will respond to the petitioner outlining the resolution report and steps taken to resolve the complaint within 50 business days of the complaints' initial acceptance. Fair Trade USA will provide updates to the petitioner on the implementation of the resolution report until the issue is resolved.

Documentation

Fair Trade USA will keep a record of all complaints received, acceptance or rejection decisions, complaint summaries, and resolution reports. All documents related to procedural complaints will be kept on file at Fair Trade USA for a period of 5 years. Summary reports will be made available upon request. An outline of the final result of any complaint may be published on Fair Trade USA's website.

Procedure Flow Chart

