



FLOCERT
assuring fairness

Complaints Statistics 2022

**Credibility Assurance,
February 2023**

Definitions

The present Annual Complaints Statistics provides an overview on requests handled by the Credibility Assurance Unit at FLOCERT in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Appeals, Reviews, Allegations and Complaints. It includes all submitted and closed cases from 1st of January until 31st of December 2022.

What types of complaints does the Credibility Assurance Unit deal with?

Allegation: a statement of assertion or assertions by a third party against a customer holding a Fairtrade certificate or being in the process of applying for a certificate (applicant) claiming that this customer is non-compliant with applicable Fairtrade Standards or is in breach of policies or other contractual obligations with FLOCERT.

Appeal: An official request by the customer to revoke or reverse a Certification Decision, such as decertification or suspension. In the case of EDGE customers wanting to challenge the audit findings, the appeals procedure would apply.

Review: An official request by the customer to review an Evaluation Decision such as: review of non conformities, corrective measures or objective evidence.

Complaint: related to the manner in which FLOCERT provides services, including but not limited to: failure to respond to certification relevant correspondence within a reasonable amount of time, unprofessional behaviour by a FLOCERT staff or auditor.

For more details please consult the Standard Operating Procedures, which are published on FLOCERT website:

<https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>

Summary

In 2022, FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit faced a significant increase in the number of complaints cases:

Allegations had increased significantly from 2018 to 2021 and a slight increase is seen again in 2022 compared to 2021. The development demonstrates the confidence stakeholders have in our systems and that concerns would be investigated diligently and confidentially.

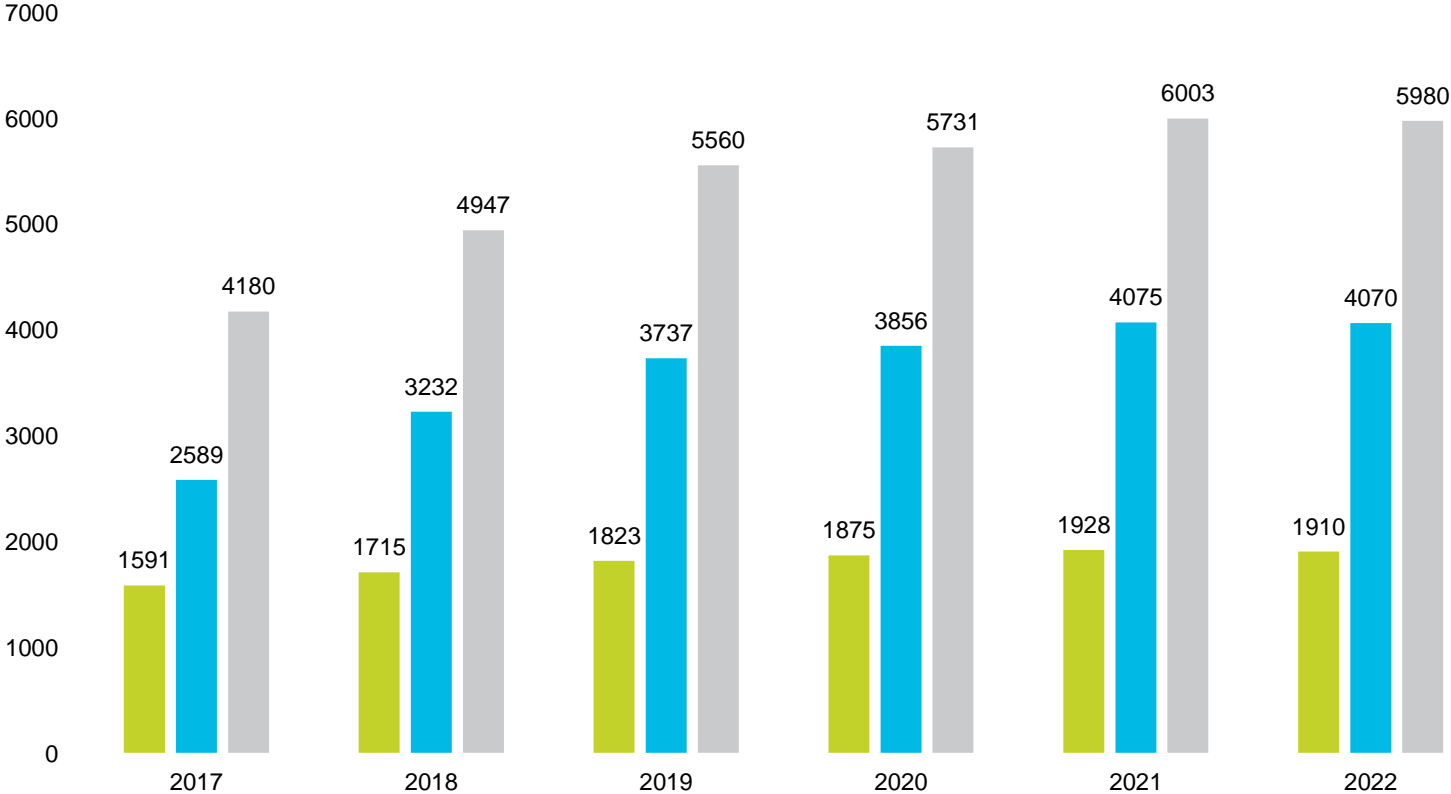
The Allegations process in 2022 has been additionally supported by increased accessibility through measures like the Fairtrace Confidential Allegations, the WhatsApp Allegation Channel & constant encouragement to customers, stakeholders and third parties to flag non-compliances to FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit, wherever and whenever noticed.

In 2022, the return to more onsite investigations allowed to tackle topics which could not be robustly investigated remotely when due to the pandemic travel was not option. As a side effect, there was slight increase of processing time from 4 to 4.5 months in 2022, compared to the previous year.

Appeals and Reviews requests of customers regarding evaluation and certification decisions had remained stable of the last years but increased significantly from 32 to 48 in 2022. One reason we assume is the lack of presence in the fields due to COVID pandemic which was not supportive for organisations with fragile compliance status. Once evident after onsite audits, customers wanted to double-check the validity of the findings.



Complaints increased from 0,5% to 0,7% compared to the number of customers. Financial issues such as the certification fee and financial sanctions remain one of the major topics followed by audit process, auditor performance, and delays in response. The previous being possibly related to the world-wide economic situation.

Number of certified organisations



■ Producers  ■ Traders  ■ Total

Five-year overview

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Allegations	40	80	110	113	115
Appeals	7	23	18	17	33
Reviews	7	14	9	15	15
Complaints	42	38	47	33	44
 	4,947	5,560	5,731	6,003	5,980

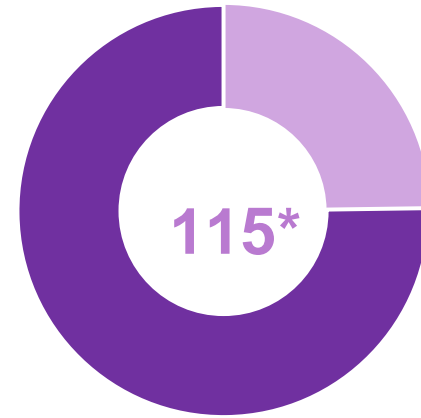
2022 – Status overview

Total Received	Accepted	Closed	Open	Rejected, stalled or withdrawn	Decision reconfirmed	Decision overturned
Allegations 115	74	90	30	41	N/A	N/A
Appeals 33	14	15	0	19	9	5
Reviews 15	13	15	1	1	10	3
Complaints 44	35	38	2	7	N/A	N/A

Allegations 2022

Producers

87



Traders

28



The number of allegations increased slightly compared 2021

*Total number of allegations by service



Americas

57



Africa

37



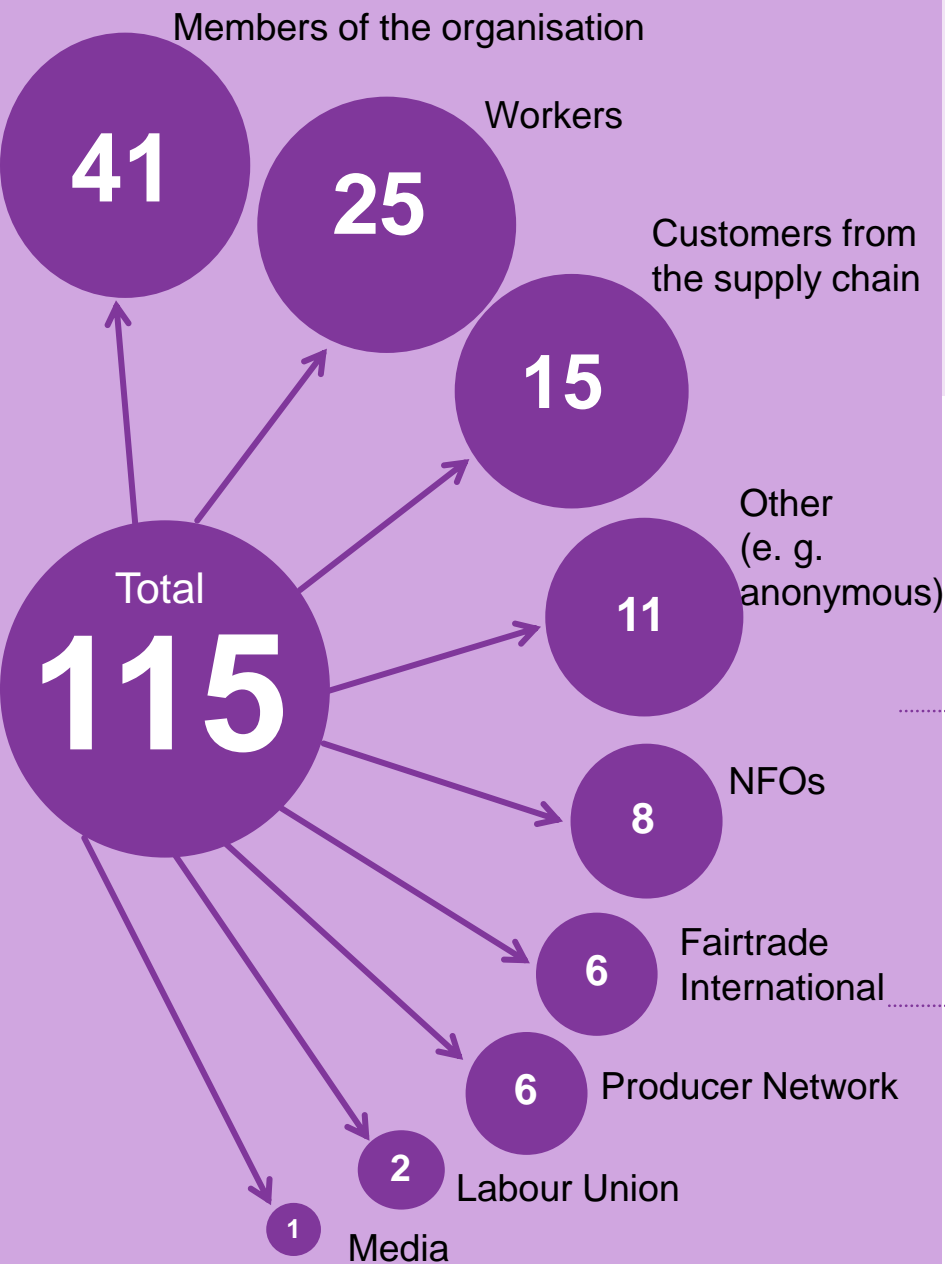
Asia

13



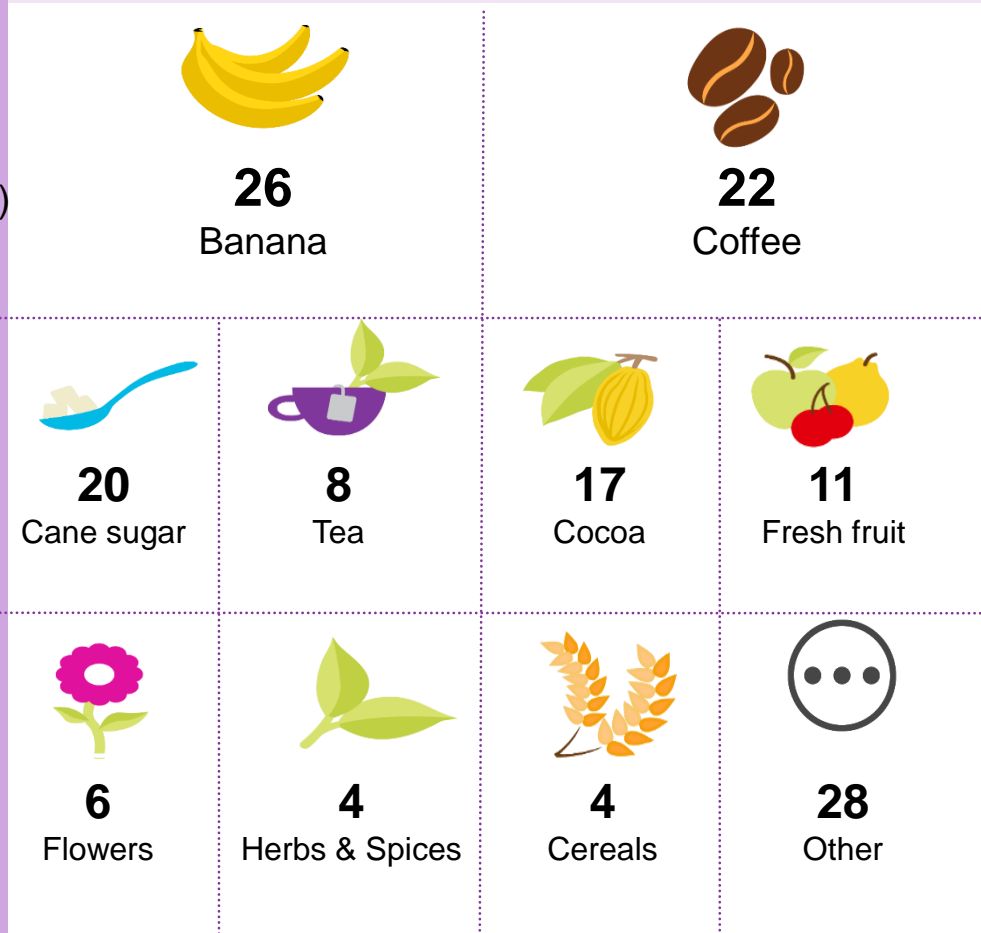
Europe

8



Top 4 topics

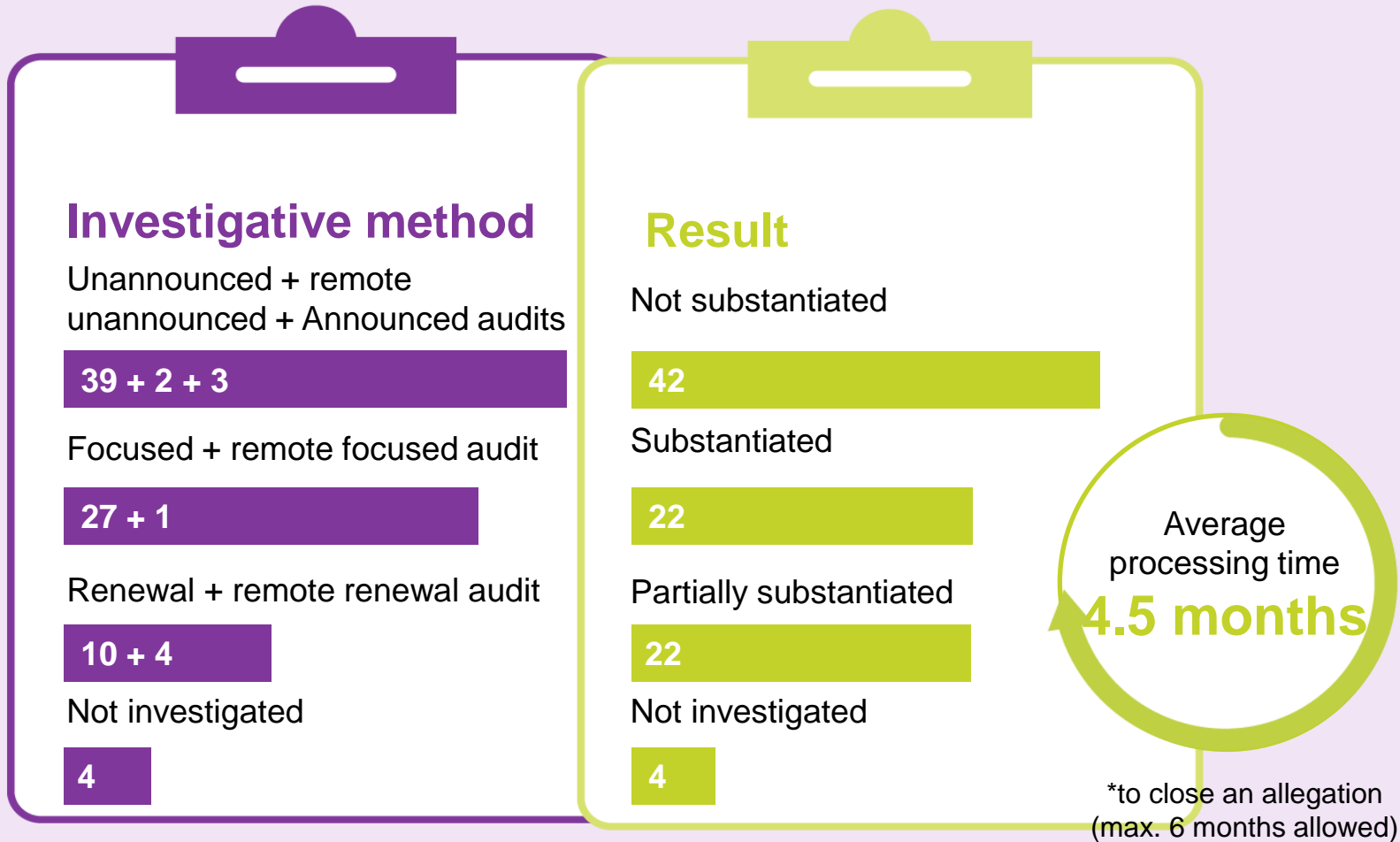
- Misuse of Fairtrade Premium
- Workers dismissal
- Child labour
- Working conditions and safety



*Only considered cases received in 2022

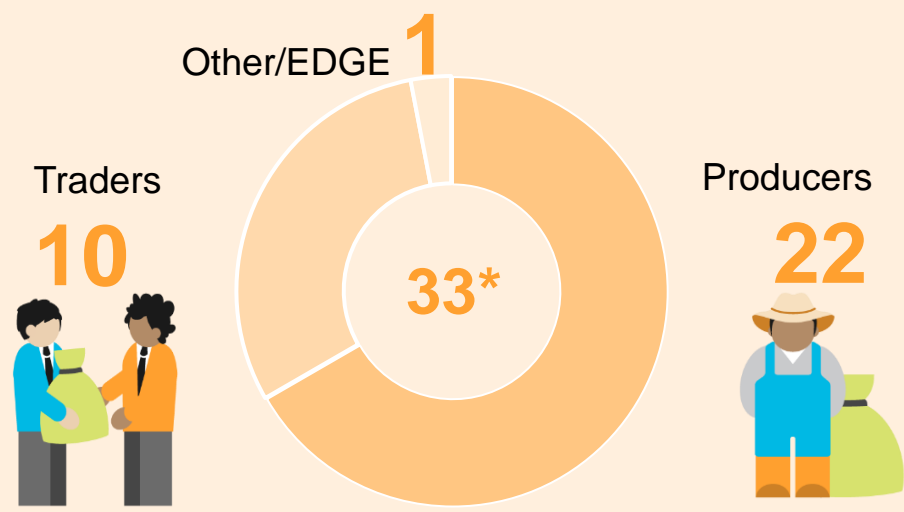
Investigated allegations:

The method of investigation was usually an unannounced or focused audit. **25% of allegations** were **substantiated**, **25%** were **partially substantiated** whereas **47%** were **not substantiated**. **4%** were **not investigated**, mainly because the customer was not certified anymore, or the required onsite audit was not possible as the region could not be visited.



*Only considered 90 cases received in previous calendar years but closed in 2022

Appeals 2022:



*Total number of appeals by service



The number of appeals increased 2x in 2022 compared to 2021.



Americas
18



Africa
10

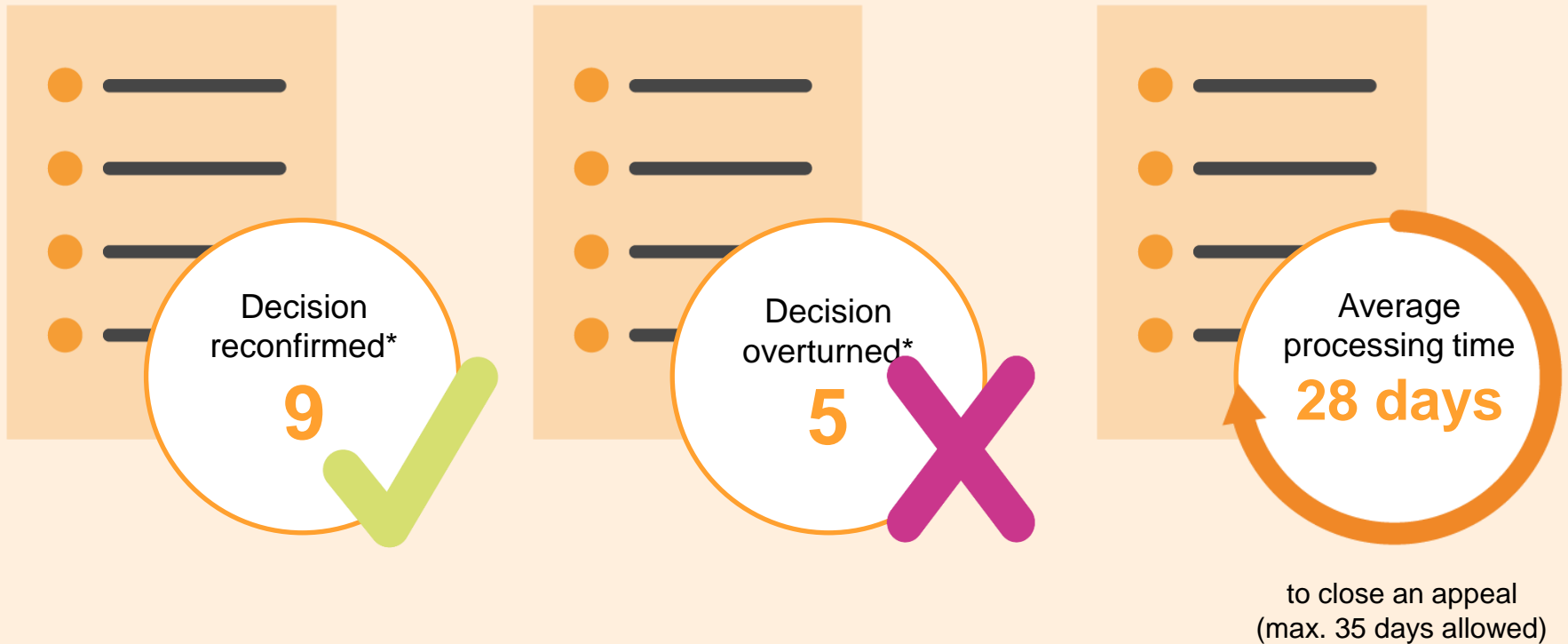


Asia
3



Europe
2

Appeal decisions:



*Only considered the 14 accepted cases

Reviews 2022:

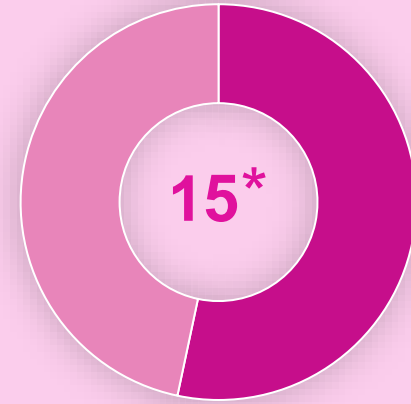
Traders

6



Producers

9



*Total number of reviews by service



The number of reviews remained the same compared to 2021.



Non-conformity
12



Corrective measure
2



Objective evidence
1



Americas

8



Africa

2



Asia

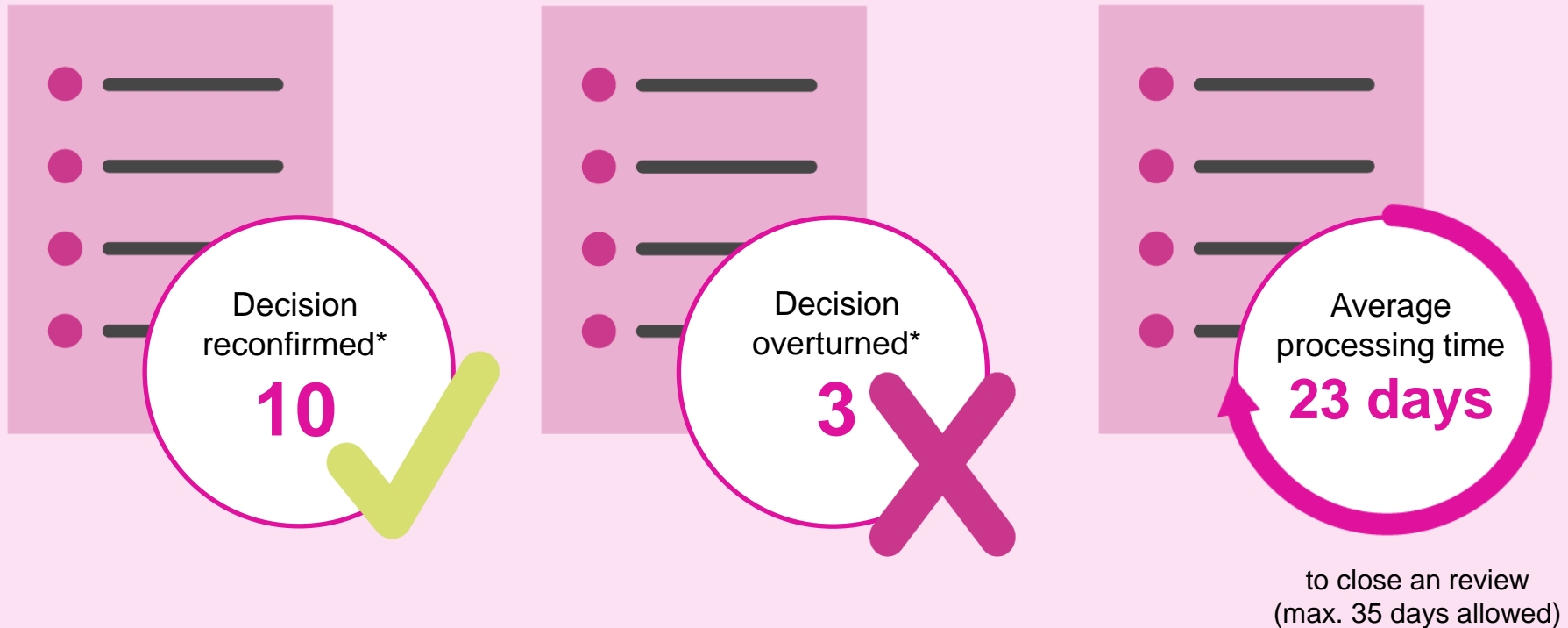
1



Europe

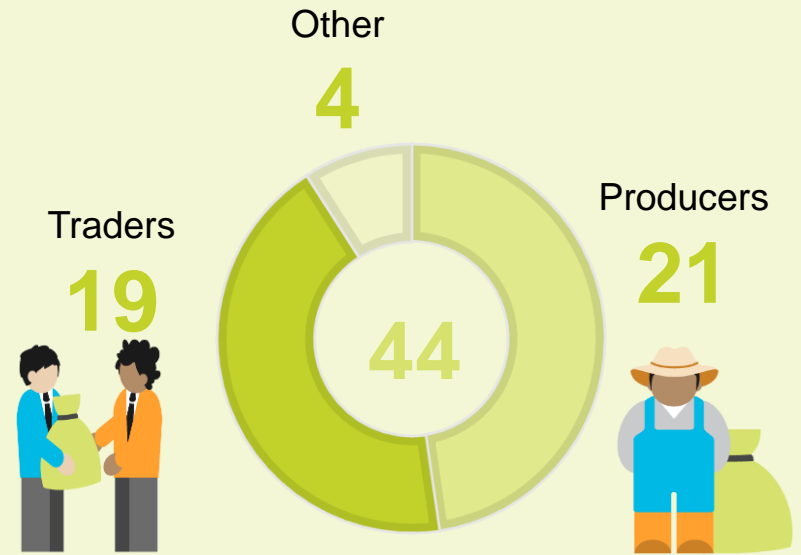
4

Review decisions



*Only considered the 13 accepted cases

Complaints 2022:



The number of complaints increased by 25% compared to 2021.

*Total number of complaints by service



Americas

20



Africa

4



Asia

9

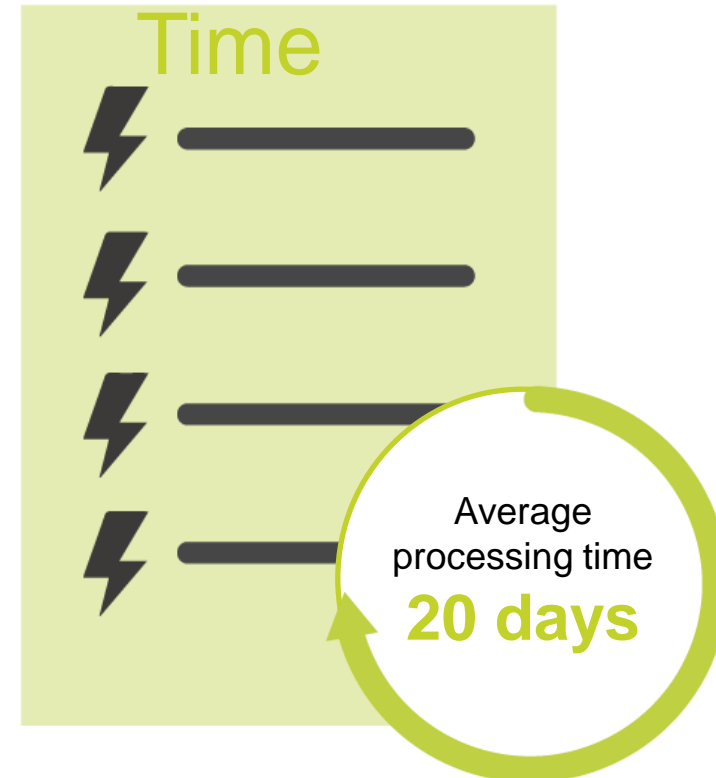
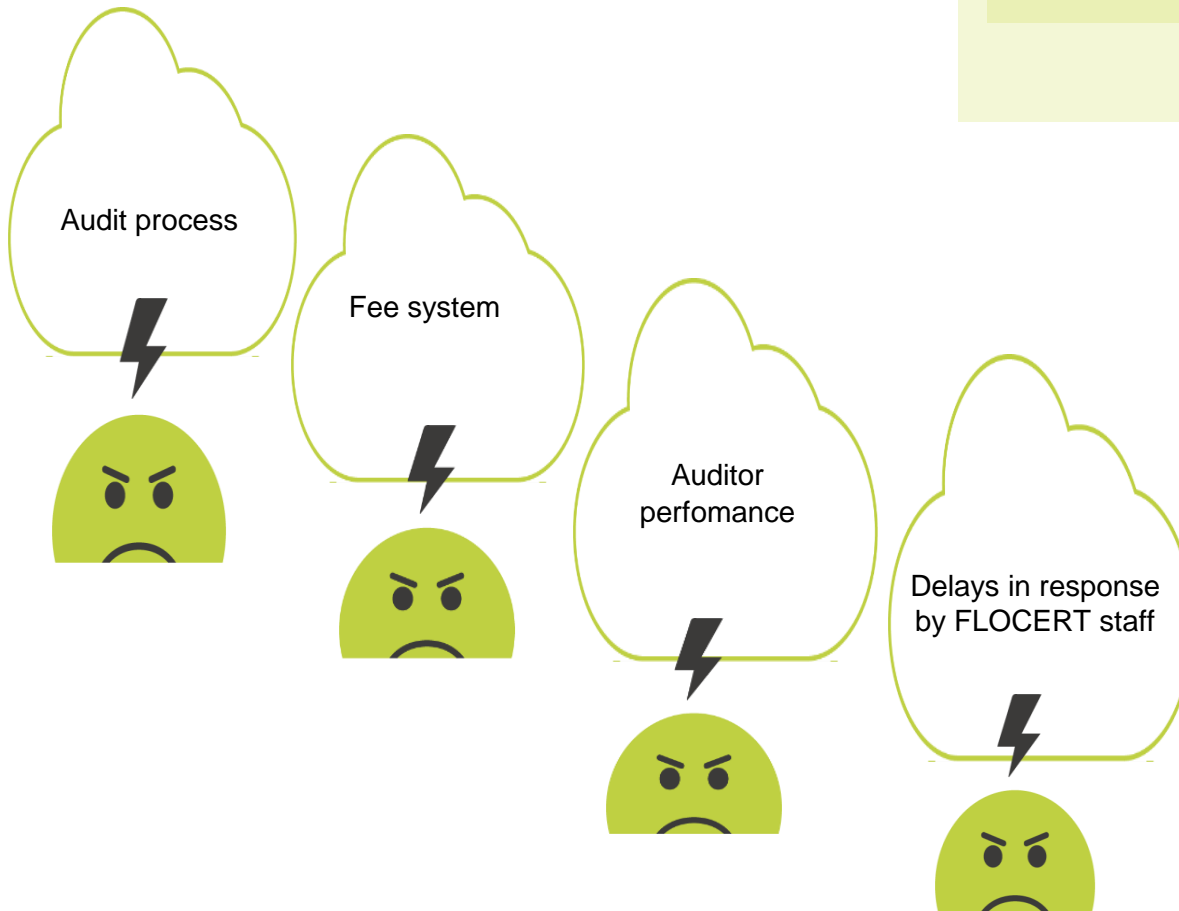


Europe

11

Top 4 reasons:

44 complaints represent **0,7%** considering the total number of customers: **5980**



to close a complaint
(max. 35 days allowed)

THANK YOU

for your support for continuous improvement.

Please report any concerns regarding the mentioned topics to Credibility Assurance via:

E-mail: credibility@flocert.net

WhatsApp channel: <https://www.flocert.net/flocert-launches-whatsapp-for-allegations>

Website form: <https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>