

1. Background

1.1 GFA Certification GmbH (GFA) is an international company specialized in independent third party certification.

1.2 Within the scope of accreditation the following activities are carried out:

- a) Certification of forest management (FM) according to the FSC® (FSC®A000511) or PEFC™ (PEFC/04-04-0099) standards,
- b) Certification of chain of custody (COC) for FSC, PEFC, RSPO,
- c) Certification according to the Sustainable Resources Verification Scheme (SURE)

1.3 This procedure applies to clients of GFA and not to stakeholders.

1.4 GFA maintains an appeals process which has the following objectives:

- a) To register and address appeals from GFA clients about certification decisions taken by GFA,
- b) To ensure that appeals which need to be taken to a higher level are identified and dealt with appropriately.

2. Appeals from clients

2.1 A client of GFA has the right to appeal GFAs certification decisions that are directly related to the clients certification process.

2.2 Notification of the intention to appeal must be made in writing and received by GFA within seven days of receipt of the certification decision. To be accepted and classified as an appeal, it shall be addressed to GFA (see contact details below) in writing and be submitted in German or English.

2.3 To be accepted and classified as an appeal, the issue shall be addressed to GFA (see contact details below) in writing and be submitted in German or English or in case of FSC FM certification in the local language the public summary report is published on the FSC website (www.info.fsc.org). The appeal shall include a detailed description of the situation of the basis for the appeal and include evidence to substantiate any appeal.

2.4 Within 14 days of receipt of the appeal the client is required to supply GFA in writing relevant facts and data for consideration during the appeals procedure.

2.5 Appeals received are forwarded to the GFA Quality Management Responsible.

2.6 An ad-hoc group of members from the GFA decision board or other experts as seen appropriate that were not involved in the appealed process are appointed as an appeal committee. The committee will gather and verify all necessary information and examine the evidence included in the reasons for appeal and report its decision to the GFA Quality Management Responsible.

2.7 GFA provides an initial response to the appealing client whether the complaint relates to certification activities for which GFA is responsible, including an outline of GFA's proposed course of action to follow up on the appeal, within two (2) weeks of receiving an appeal.

2.8 GFA keeps the appealing client informed of progress in evaluating the appeal.

2.9 GFA will have investigated the allegations and specified all its proposed actions in response to the appeal within three (3) months of receiving it.

2.10 Any certification decision (e.g. suspension of the certificate, etc.) of GFA will remain in force until the outcome of the appeal.

2.11 GFA will inform the appealing client about the outcome of the appeals process in writing.

2.12 The decision of the appeal's committee shall be final and binding on both GFA's client and GFA. Once the decision regarding an appeal has been made, no counter-claim by either party in dispute can be made to amend or change this decision.

2.13 GFA will keep a record of appeals received and actions taken.

3. General obligations

3.1 In instances where the appeal has been successful for the client of GFA, no claim can be made against GFA for reimbursement of costs or any other losses incurred.

3.2 If an appeal launched by GFA's client is not successful, GFA has the right to charge a handling fee of EUR 500,- per working day handling the appeal and the client agrees to cover all cost related to short notice surveillance audits carried out based on the appeal.

3.3 GFA reserves the right to add to, delete or change this procedure without prior notification.

4. Contact details

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