



COMPLAINT OR APPEAL PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This procedure is applied when reporting a **complaint**, an **appeal** or a **comment** about the actions of members of group certificates managed by DuraCert or about the actions of DuraCert itself. DuraCert is responsible for collecting and verifying all necessary information for the matter to lead to a decision. The **reporter** is expected to first report the issue to the relevant party before having the matter dealt with through this procedure.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint: A written expression of dissatisfaction regarding activities of DuraCert and/or members of the group certificates managed by DuraCert, requesting a response from DuraCert. A complaint must be substantiated as described in this procedure.

Appeal: A request by a **customer** of DuraCert for a formal reconsideration of a decision relating to a certification status. An appeal must be substantiated as described in this procedure and submitted within 30 calendar days of notification of the disputed decision.

Comment: Information or an opinion regarding compliance with applicable standards by members of group certificates managed by DuraCert, as well as expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated as **complaints** and anonymous complaints. Comments will be taken for notice but will not be dealt with further according to this procedure.

Reporter: A party making a report of a **complaint**, **appeal** or **comment**.

Customer: A party who has a valid contract with DuraCert at the time of a notification of a **complaint**, **appeal** or **comment**.

DATA REPORTER

Although DuraCert will only use the most necessary information to deal with the matter, it is not possible to prevent the **reporter's** data from becoming known to the parties involved. The data will be processed according to the procedures surrounding DuraCert's General Data Protection Regulation, see also DuraCert's [privacy statement](#). Anonymous reports are only considered as **comments**.

NOTIFICATION

Notification of a **complaint** or **appeal** should be made via the relevant [form](#) on the DuraCert website.

NECESSARY INFORMATION

To qualify for this procedure, a notification of a **complaint** or **appeal** must contain the following information:

- Contact details of the **reporter**;
- A clear description of the basis of the **complaint** or **appeal** and which parties or persons are involved. Each element or aspect of the **complaint** or **appeal** should be supported by objective evidence;
- An explanation of how the issue would violate or be inconsistent with a standard;
- In the case of a **complaint** against a **customer's** actions, rather than DuraCert itself, the **reporter's** description of the efforts made to resolve the matter directly with that **customer**, and;
- A proposal of the actions that, in the opinion of the **reporter**, would correct the issue.

HANDLING OF COMPLAINT OR APPEAL

Upon receipt of a **complaint** or **appeal**, DuraCert's quality manager will take the following actions:

1. Confirm the receipt of **complaint** or **appeal** to the **reporter**;
2. Inform stakeholders of this procedure and provide the **reporter** with an initial response within a period of two (2) weeks;
3. Forward a **complaint** regarding Controlled Wood risk designations in the relevant FSC risk assessment to the responsible body;
4. Gather as much information as possible to properly assess the **complaint** or **appeal**. Full cooperation is expected from the **reporter** in this regard;
5. Conduct a preliminary assessment to determine whether or not the evidence provided in a **complaint** or **appeal** is substantial, for example by weighing the evidence provided against the risk of using material from unacceptable sources. A **complaint** or **appeal** is assessed on the following issues:
 - a. Cause of **complaint** or **appeal**;
 - b. Causer of the **complaint** or **appeal**;
 - c. Effect of the **complaint** or **appeal**;
 - d. Likelihood that the **complaint** or **appeal** will be repeated.
6. Dialogue with **reporter** to resolve the **complaint** or **appeal** assessed as substantial before taking further action;
7. Forward a substantial **complaint** about Controlled Wood to the Certification Body and the relevant National Office of the label for the region or country of origin within two (2) weeks of receiving a **complaint**. Information on the steps to be taken to resolve the **complaint**, as well as how a precautionary approach will be used, will be attached to the **complaint**;
8. If applicable, adopt a precautionary approach towards the continued procurement of the material in question while a **complaint** is pending;
9. Implement a process (e.g. field verification and/or desk verification) to verify a **complaint** or **appeal** assessed as substantial within two (2) months of receipt;
10. Determine the corrective action to be taken and the means to enforce its implementation if a **complaint** or **appeal** has been assessed and verified as substantial. If corrective action cannot be identified and/or enforced, the relevant material and/or supplier (if applicable) will be excluded;
11. Take corrective and preventive action if the **complaint** or **appeal** proves justified;
12. Check that corrective actions have been taken and are effective;



If applicable, exclude the relevant materials and suppliers if corrective action has not been taken.

13. Inform the **reporter**, the certification body and the relevant National office of the label of the results of the **complaint** and any actions taken to resolve the **complaint**, and keep copies of relevant correspondence, and;
14. Record and archive the **complaint** or **appeal** received and actions taken.

INVESTIGATION COSTS

While DuraCert is committed to the principle of broad access to this procedure, the costs associated with investigating a **complaint** or **appeal** cannot be borne solely by DuraCert. Depending on the nature of the **complaint** or **appeal**, DuraCert reserves the right to charge a fee to the **reporter** to cover at least part of the costs of the investigation. Such fees will only be considered in situations where the time required to investigate a **complaint** or **appeal** is expected to be significant.

For a **complaint** against a **customer's** actions, DuraCert reserves the right to charge time and costs incurred to investigate a **complaint**. If the **customer** does not agree to pay these additional costs or otherwise cooperate with the investigation of a **complaint**, this may be grounds for termination of the agreement with DuraCert.

DuraCert is committed to giving due consideration to a substantial **complaint** or **appeal** by any **reporter** committed to the long-term goals of DuraCert. However, if these proceedings are initiated maliciously and without valid cause by a **reporter** who is not acting in good faith with the aim of harassing or embarrassing an opponent or for reasons contrary to DuraCert's long-term goals, DuraCert reserves the right to immediately transfer the matter to the National Office of the label for further processing and reject the **complaint** or **appeal** as without merit.