

An account of the dolphin-safe tuna issue in the UK

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Abstract

Virtually all canned tuna in the UK is labelled as dolphin-safe despite the fact that the market is almost exclusively skipjack tuna. It is thus not implicated in the dolphin bycatch problem associated with the yellowfin tuna of the Eastern Tropical Pacific consumed in the USA. There were a range of different motives among processors and retailers in adopting the labelling scheme in the UK. The scheme may be more of a marketing ploy, promoted by the major processors, than an eco-label forced upon the market through consumer and environmentalist power. Environmental groups can nonetheless be credited with driving the development of initial first-party labelling schemes into the present, more independent, second-party scheme. The scheme now in place in the UK is different from that in the USA, being *preventative*, ensuring that tuna sold does not become dolphin-un-safe, rather than actively *addressing* a specific existing environmental problem.

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1. Introduction

Much of the tuna consumed in the USA originates in the Eastern Tropical Pacific (ETP), where dolphins often associate with yellowfin tuna. Because of this association, there have been problems of dolphins being killed or injured as bycatch during the capture of tuna in the area. Policies were first introduced in the USA in 1972 to reduce dolphin bycatch in the fishery. During the 1980s and 1990s, environmental groups vocally lobbied for these policies to be more stringent in content and implementation. Following this, government trade embargoes were introduced on tuna not caught in compliance with USA dolphin protection standards. An environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) consumer level labelling scheme was also introduced, demonstrating which tuna products are 'dolphin-safe'.

The dolphin-safe tuna issue has had a significant impact on the USA market, spreading throughout the global canned tuna market and affecting market, production and trade patterns. The dolphin-safe issue began to emerge in the UK in the early 1990s. This was despite the fact that virtually all canned tuna was

skipjack and thus did not suffer from the association with dolphins encountered with yellowfin tuna in the ETP. The dolphin-safe issue in the USA and ETP fishery has been covered extensively in the literature and discussed in terms of its biological, economic, trade and political implications from many points of view [1–5]. However, the developments in the UK have, to the authors' knowledge, not been fully reported anywhere in the literature, with very little information being available. This is despite the importance of this market both globally and nationally.

The UK is the world's second largest canned tuna importer, totalling 108,000 MT in 1999 [6] with a market value of \$US 270M [7]. UK imports more than doubled during the period 1988–1997, growing at a fairly consistent rate of between 48 and 99 MT per annum.¹ Over the same time, the industry has undergone substantial changes, with canned tuna increasingly being sold as a value added product, in pastas and sauces for example. The market has also become highly competitive, with the number of manufacturers reducing significantly and the market being increasingly dominated by John West Foods Limited and Princes Limited. The canned tuna market in the UK now accounts for the

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biggest value and volume share of the canned fish market, in which it experienced the highest growth between 1995 and 2000 [7].

Given the paucity of documented information, the purpose of this paper is to explore the evolution of the dolphin-safe issue in the important UK canned tuna market. In doing this, the motives of different players in the market are examined to test the hypothesis that the UK dolphin-safe labelling scheme is a marketing ploy with little environmental relevance, promoted by the major processors, rather than an eco-labelling scheme forced upon the market by the environmental NGOs. The discussions of past events and future issues are based on a combination of literature reviews and interviews with individuals in the industry. As dolphin-safe labelling originated in the USA, these developments are also briefly reviewed.

2. The origins of dolphin-safe labelling

Much of the tuna consumed in the USA originates from the Eastern Tropical Pacific (ETP), where dolphins often associate with yellowfin tuna. Because of the yellowfin/dolphin associations, tuna fishermen use dolphins in the ETP as a way of finding and netting tuna. Located tuna schools are encircled with a seine net, the bottom of which is tightened, then hauled onboard. Dolphins swimming above the tuna are consequently caught in the nets and normally drown or are crushed during the process.

Following concern expressed by biologists, the USA Congress enacted the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in 1972, which, among other objectives, addressed the dolphin bycatch issue in the ETP. With the resulting modification of fishing gear and introduction of onboard observer coverage, dolphin mortality fell from 252,000 in 1973 to 8258 in 1983 [5].

Despite the reduced numbers, dolphin bycatch nevertheless attracted public attention during the late 1980s. Controversial media coverage showing dolphins trapped in seine nets led to calls for consumer boycotts of canned tuna. In response, the USA government amended the MMPA in 1988 to extend extraterritorial obligations to other states. This meant that foreign dolphin protection standards only met those of the USA if certain criteria were met. However, these amendments were ignored by the USA government. This led to environmentalists, led by California-based Earth Island Institute (EII), to pressuring the USA to stop imports of tuna harvested in the ETP with purse seines. The USA government consequently imposed embargoes in October 1990 on Mexican tuna imports and tuna imported from intermediary countries. The effect was to close the USA market for tuna caught using dolphins [4].

Before this embargo ruling came into effect, the three largest tuna canners, accounting for about 80% of the USA market in canned tuna, adopted the EII dolphin-safe policy in April 1990, with other canners quickly following. This policy set out requirements that must be met to use the EII dolphin-safe label. The USA subsequently passed the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act (DPCIA) of 1990 prohibiting tuna products from being labelled as ‘dolphin-safe’ unless tuna nets were not set on dolphins for the entire fishing trip.

In 1991, Mexico contested the USA embargoes through a GATT dispute-settlement panel (*Tuna-Dolphin I*), contesting that they were disguised restrictions on free trade. The European Community (EC) also pursued the case (*Tuna-Dolphin II*) in 1994, focusing on the unilateral actions of the USA. In both cases the Panel noted that although there is a need for marine conservation and sustainable development, the USA trade measures were in violation of free trade under GATT, with the Panel showing favour towards multi-lateral rather unilateral agreements [1]. Following the first panel ruling, a multilateral approach was pursued by the USA through the 1992 La Jolla Agreement for the Reduction of Dolphin Mortality in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. This was subsequently endorsed by the 1995 Declaration of Panama, signed by 12 nations participating in the ETP tuna fishery, including the USA.² The International Dolphin Conservation Programme (IDCP) was founded under the auspices of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), establishing quotas on dolphin kills and a monitoring programme. The agreements were transposed into American law through the adoption of the 1992 International Dolphin Conservation Programme Act. This Act relaxed the definition of ‘dolphin-safe’ and enabled tuna from foreign producers to be imported into the USA provided that it was harvested in a manner consistent with the agreements.

3. UK history and developments

Although the dolphin-safe controversy was rooted in the USA, a combination of factors, including environmental movements and consumer concern, led to the issue also being taken up in Germany and then in the UK. In early 1990, the dolphin-safe issue began to emerge in the UK. This was despite the fact that virtually all canned tuna on the UK market was skipjack and thus not implicated in the dolphin bycatch associated with the ETP yellowfin fishery.

²The 12 nations signatory to the 1995 Declaration of Panama were Belize, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Spain, United States of America, Vanuatu and Venezuela.

3.1. Emergence of labelling in the UK

Following their programme in the USA, the EII networked with a number of environmental groups around the world with the aim of making the dolphin-safe campaign and certification global.³ In practice, this involved linking up with another tuna-related campaign focusing on large-scale driftnets. In early 1990, a number of environmental groups, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) principal among them, were campaigning in the UK to ensure that all canned tuna sold by supermarkets were caught by ‘dolphin-friendly’ (later changed to ‘dolphin-safe’) fishing methods [8]. Unlike in the USA, this campaign was against tuna caught by driftnets in the Western Pacific. Working closely with EII, the WDCS began establishing dolphin-safe criteria and attempted to establish a labelling scheme.

While the 1990 USA labelling standards were binding on American producers, they had no legal force in the UK or European Union (EU).⁴ As a result, producers in the EU started acting independently in developing their own self-declaration, or ‘first-party’, labelling schemes. One of the first companies to start labelling their products as dolphin-safe was John West in 1990/91, with their own policy and cannery inspections. Princes, their main competitor, also implemented their own cannery inspections. Unlike vessels in the tuna ETP fishery catching for the American market, where on-board observers were required to monitor dolphin mortality, these inspections were to ensure that tuna had not been caught using driftnets and thus involved checking for bruising and strangulation marks around the necks of tuna.

In the face of these different voluntary approaches, the WDCS lead the way in attempting to verify and standardise inspections and labelling. Representatives were sent to canneries to oversee monitoring programmes, visiting tuna companies, and working with EII. Difficulty in proving the dolphin friendly claims however led to a dispute between the canned tuna importers and the WDCS. It was reported in the national press [9] that supermarkets and manufacturers, including Safeway, Asda, John West and Princes, were criticised by WDCS for breaching agreements that had been made and were thus misleading consumers with their logos. These accusations were echoed by others in the industry, including the retailer United Co-operative and botanist David Bellamy, claiming that the label could not be justified without independent verification [9]. To add to the problems, Greenpeace began voicing

criticism of the EII and WDCS programme, despite having had the opportunity to participate in the early stages of establishing EII labelling criteria.

Despite some of the disagreements, a monitoring system was eventually established in the early 1990s through negotiations with the Wildlife and Countryside Link, a consortium of UK environmental NGOs. The trade body BACFID (British Association of Canned and Preserved Food Importers and Distributors) also began to play an increasing role in representing the canning industry, and has since dealt with dolphin-safe issues and negotiations. Member companies of BACFID accounted for approximately 80% of canned tuna imports in the early 1990s. The remaining 20% was imported by a number of retailers for their private labels [10].

The monitoring scheme that evolved was a voluntary ‘second party’ certification scheme. Voluntary criteria were established between EII and BACFID, canneries and retailers. An approved list of canners was composed and is currently held by EII and BFIDA (British Food Importers & Distributors Association) (formerly BACFID). This dolphin-safe criterion was and remains essentially the same as the standard used in USA law. It certifies that no driftnets are used and no dolphins encircled or killed by purse seine nets in order to catch the labelled tuna (see Appendix A).

By 1993, UK importers were increasingly unwilling to purchase and sell non-dolphin-friendly products and several had signed up to the EII monitoring programme and were providing funding annually [10]. By 1995 it was claimed by BACFID that all the supplying canneries conformed to EII’s policy [11]. EII now maintains the monitoring programme, with monitors stationed in various countries, including Thailand, Mauritius and the Philippines, who check canneries to ensure that tuna is caught in accordance with their dolphin-safe criteria. Monitors are also based in European importing countries, including the UK, Italy, Spain, and Germany. German and UK importers were the main financial contributors to the EII monitoring programme in 2001.

3.2. The variety of labels

With the evolution of the voluntary certification scheme and the absence of legislation or an industry agreement, there is no standard logo or claim on canned tuna in the UK. Companies often produce their own dolphin-safe label and attach different statements. While those retailers displaying the EII logo pay to do so, some retailers opt not to display the logo and correspondingly do not pay EII, despite using EII approved canneries. Statements are often made, either in addition to a logo or on their own, and include ‘dolphin-safe’, ‘dolphin-friendly’ and the Safeway claim that ‘*Safeway specify*

³Organisations included the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) in the UK, the global World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine in Germany.

⁴Known as the European Community (EC) up until 1993.

that their tuna be caught in a manner which minimises risk to marine mammals', despite being EII approved. The labelling originally established by WDCS initially said 'dolphin-free' but was changed to 'dolphin-friendly' on the basis that it gave the wrong impression that tins of tuna had dolphin meat in them.

While members of BFIDA all use EII approved products, those outside do not necessarily do so. One of the best known deviations is that of J Sainsbury plc, who market 'pole and line' caught tuna with a logo and statement of their own. While they claim to use approved canneries, some dispute this. However, all Sainsbury's tuna was pole and line caught from Fiji and the Solomon Isles before the dolphin-safe controversy emerged and was labelled as such for quality purposes, as tuna caught by this method is not damaged in the same way net caught tuna is. It was only later that the product was also marketed for its lack of environmental impacts. WDCS initially endorsed this and a label of theirs was used, but this was later dropped in favour of Sainsbury's own label. Sainsbury now use their own label to differentiate their tuna on the basis of quality, while maintaining their environmental policy but not paying EII to do so.

In the UK the WDCS no longer run their dolphin-safe campaign. The administration of collecting contributions and distributing information is now handled by the European Dolphin Safe Monitoring Organisation (EDSMO), which the EII has incorporated in the UK as a company limited by guarantee. A dolphin-safe logo has been registered in Switzerland since 2001 and as a European Community Trade Mark from October 2003. It is intended that this will become the common label of all dolphin-safe tuna products to eliminate the consumer confusion caused by different labels and statements. Users of this logo are required to sign a licensing agreement and contribute to the EII monitoring programme.

4. UK market impacts of dolphin-safe labelling

Until very recently almost the entire UK canned tuna market has been for skipjack tuna, with the average consumer being unaware of the differences between species. Yellowfin tuna products have only begun to appear in the UK market due to a recent fall in its price. Some retailers have supplied only skipjack to ensure consistency in quality and fish type, and hence product labelling. Some also wish to avoid the dolphin-safe issue, as it is largely species other than skipjack that associate with dolphins.

It is difficult to determine what effect the dolphin-safe claims had on the UK market. While there are visible trends over the period of the controversy, it is extremely difficult to identify the causal factors of changes, given

the market's complexity. When the dolphin-safe issue emerged in the USA, it affected the EU canners and markets particularly badly. Prices fell by approximately 40% over several weeks as the EU became a dumping ground for non-dolphin-safe yellowfin tuna, prompting the EU to introduce minimum import prices as a protective measure [12,13]. In the period 1991–1993 the market continued to be highly disturbed by many factors lowering prices, including supply and demand trends and monetary events, as well as the dolphin-safe issue [12].

BACFID commented in 1993 that the dolphin-safe issue restricted importers in Germany and the UK in their choice of suppliers [10]. In hindsight, however, most retailers do not consider their purchasing patterns to have been significantly affected as there was never a major problem with skipjack tuna and many claim they had always bought from reputable dealers. While this may be true in some cases, it could reflect weak certification schemes that did little to change fishing practices or restrict supply. Despite the dolphin-safe issue and changes in processing and retail market patterns, there did not appear to be any negative impacts on canned tuna consumption in the UK, which continued growing in 1990 and 1991 when the USA controversy was at its greatest [8].

Work has been conducted to determine the market effect of the dolphin-safe label in the USA where its introduction was more instantaneous across brands. Wallstrom and Wessells [14] and Bockstael and Strand [15] found no significant demand effects at the consumer and import level, respectively, in the USA, although problems may have been present with these studies due to the use of short post-label time series and the methodology employed [16]. Using a longer post-label time series, Teisl et al. [16] demonstrated that the dolphin–tuna controversy and the subsequent implementation of dolphin-safe labelling appeared to affect consumer behaviour and increase the market share of canned tuna. In a broader case study of USA developments, Körber [2] highlighted that consumer boycotts were already in place in 1988 when tuna consumption peaked, and that USA per capita consumption of canned tuna peaked in 1989 shortly *before* the USA canneries went dolphin-safe, when the controversy was at its peak.

The increased sales of canned tuna over the 1990s in the UK are considered by most retailers to be due to increased promotion, consumer acceptance and use in ready made sandwiches and recipes, rather than due to the dolphin-safe labelling profits [17]. When the labelling was initiated there was no major promotional effort at a national level, although some retailers may have done so individually. There was no pricing strategy either, as the cost per can was considered negligible, and with UK consumers being very price conscious, costs probably

came out of importing profits [17]. Despite this, the dolphin-safe label is an additional characteristic of canned tuna in the UK, and thus could be expected to be an additional factor in its demand.

5. Motives for the development of dolphin-safe labelling scheme

Considering the history of the dolphin-safe tuna issue in the UK inadvertently raises questions about the driving forces behind the different interest groups. Particularly: why was the UK targeted by environmental organisations when almost all tuna demand was for skipjack, and why did retailers and canners agree to pay for the monitoring programme when they did not perceive there to be a problem?

5.1. NGOs

The motives of the different environmental groups varied. The UK market was targeted by EII as part of their global programme of closing all dolphin-unsafe markets [18]. However, as previously mentioned, all UK canned tuna was skipjack so did not suffer from the association with dolphins found with yellowfin in the ETP, and this was a major point of objection from some of the retailers to the introduction of the monitoring scheme. Further to this, the EII has been accused of using their dolphin-safe monitoring programme simply as a means of raising revenue [19]. The targeting of the UK market where consumers are highly sensitive to environmental issues did nothing to alleviate such criticisms. EII, however, claimed that most of their funding came from individual donations and foundation grants and that the UK market had to be included in the programme to avoid the diversion of trade in dolphin-unsafe tuna to the UK market.

Some individuals in the industry considered the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) to have been simply jumping on the dolphin-safe tuna 'bandwagon' and using the cause to increase publicity and membership. This is perhaps reflected in the disagreements between WDCS and Greenpeace, which was perceived by some as a power struggle between the two organisations. Both the EII and a number of retailers, however, noted that Greenpeace were not constructive in their actions but persistently criticised the work. The motivations of Greenpeace were not always clear, with part of their argument being that while a fishery might be 'dolphin-safe', other species are still taken as bycatch. While this may be true, EII policy did appear to also address other bycatch problems, encouraging tuna companies to ban shark finning aboard tuna vessels and the reduction of birds caught by longlines, for example.

5.2. Canners

The response of the various importers to the pressure from the environmental groups often differed. As noted earlier, most of the negotiations for developing the certification scheme were conducted through BACFID, the member companies of which accounted for approximately 80% of canned tuna imports. BACFID initially objected to the level of payment to EII for their label [20]. Many canners resisted monitoring on the basis that they objected to any interference with their activities and the inspection of their books and facilities. Despite these initial objections, BACFID members John West and Princes, who led the way in developing first-party labelling schemes, pushed for EII labelling. Because John West and Princes were such key players in the UK market, accounting for approximately 70% of market share in 1993 [10], the smaller producers had little choice but to follow suit.⁵

Since the early 1990s the big UK importers also significantly strengthened their positions in a highly competitive market, with a number of smaller producers failing to compete. In addition to retail market impacts, the dolphin-safe labelling scheme may have played a role in these changes in canning and importing market structures. In particular, these developments lead one to question the driving forces behind the adoption of the labelling scheme by the canners when skipjack tuna was never considered a significant source of dolphin deaths.

Indeed, in the USA private gain was an evident driving force among the dominant tuna processing firms in adopting the dolphin-safe scheme [2]. This contrasts with the commonly held view that forcing a billion dollar industry to withdraw from the ETP was a major victory of the environmentalist pressure groups, and was an indicator of the increasing strength of the 'greens'. At the time these firms had lost interest in the ETP as a source of raw tuna as they were breaking their ties with the harvesting sector and turning to buying on the world market. The new USA environmental legislation was also behind the re-instatement of the embargo on imports from Mexico, and for raising costs of smaller domestic competitors. It was thus in the interest of larger canners to support the environmental policy. Without denying the role of the environmental groups, the adoption of the dolphin-safe labelling programme in the UK to maintain a competitive edge for the main players, as Körber suggests happened in the USA, appears possible given the timing of the developments described here. However, additional research into the changes in industry structure and the degree of vertical integration over the period would be needed to further substantiate this.

⁵ Anonymous personal communication, 2000.

Such potentially ulterior motives behind the adoption of labelling are also reflected in the action of the tuna canneries in Fiji, which catered for the UK market. During the early 1990s, Fiji was violently against driftnetting because the driftnetters in southern international waters were catching the juvenile albacore tuna that Fijian longliners targeted later in life when they migrated north. The dolphin bycatch issue was, therefore, heavily pushed as a basis on which to argue for the closure of the drift-net fishery [21]. This was also seen in the EU, with the Spanish pursuing a ban on driftnetting together with Greenpeace, arguably for the benefit of its own fishing fleet.

5.3. Retailers

Turning now to the retailers, although they were generally quicker to agree to the development of a dolphin-safe labelling scheme than canners, their attitudes were again not homogenous. Most retailers claim that they only stocked dolphin-safe tuna, as it was the ‘right thing to do’ and was what consumers wanted. Many have an ethical code-of-conduct and indeed some buy only ‘turtle-friendly’ shrimp by choice for example. Given the fact that all canned tuna used in the UK has traditionally been skipjack, the retailers claim of the moral high-ground can be interpreted as a wish to gain from good publicity of labelling and avoid any bad publicity and potential consumer boycotts similar to those EII promoted in the USA. On this basis, the UK label may simply be regarded as a marketing ploy [22]. EII disregard this however, on the basis that in addition to reducing dolphin mortalities EII have addressed other bycatch problems.

6. Conclusions

One of the key future issues surrounding UK dolphin-safe labelling is the standard use of the EU registered Trade Mark. In the mean time, canned tuna continues to be labelled as companies wish, such as ‘dolphin-friendly’, ‘dolphin-safe’ or some other description. Other than this, it is not anticipated that the situation is likely to change much from that at the current time. The major European importers continue to support the monitoring programme and require their suppliers to be part of the EII approval scheme [23].

There remains little need to develop national or EU dolphin-safe labelling legislation. The EU has signed the International Dolphin Conservation Programme (IDCP) as there are five Spanish registered purse seiners currently permitted to fish in the ETP [24]. The EU therefore implements a tuna tracking and verification system in the ETP. In accordance with the IDCP, this system only covers the identification and certification of tuna from

the time it is caught to the time it is ready for retail sale. The labelling of the consumers’ product is therefore not covered and will not have any implications for canned tuna sold in the EU, whether from the ETP or not.

In recounting the development of the labelling scheme in the UK, it is evident that there were a host of different motives driving the process. The NGOs promoted the labelling scheme on an environmental basis claiming that ‘consumer power’ demanded the adoption of the labelling scheme. It would appear however that among the canneries, the larger actors drove the process of adopting labelling schemes at a time when smaller canneries were increasingly struggling to compete. The retailers apparently passively adopted the scheme because they had always sold dolphin-safe tuna anyway. Coupled with the fact that cannery and retailer purchasing patterns changed little and demand increased throughout the period of controversy, the labelling scheme appears to have had little effect on processors, retailer and consumer purchasing patterns in the UK market, if any.

These events lend evidence to support the hypothesis that the UK dolphin-safe labelling scheme is a marketing ploy with little environmental relevance, promoted by the major processors, rather than an eco-labelling scheme forced upon the market by the environmental NGOs. It reveals that the adoption of the dolphin-safe scheme may not have been solely due to ‘consumer power’ and the submission of the private sector as it is often claimed. While the environmental groups claim a victory in their campaign to save the dolphins from driftnets, there are usually financial and competitive reasons behind companies’ decision making, and adopting the labelling scheme may be no exception. It should be added however that regardless of the driving forces behind adoption, the environmental groups can be credited with the evolution of initial first party labelling schemes into a more independent second-party scheme.

Bearing in mind that there was never any problem of skipjack tuna associating with dolphins, the end result has been a dolphin-safe scheme in the UK quite different from that in the USA. The scheme in the USA was developed to *address* a specific environmental problem in the harvesting of a fishery. In the case of the UK, the scheme has ultimately been a *preventative* programme, ensuring that dolphin-un-safe tuna does not enter the market and that the tuna originally caught for the market remained dolphin-safe.

While this paper has been concerned only with canned tuna, all fresh tuna in the UK tends to be longline caught yellowfin tuna, which is considered to potentially be the next source of controversy due to the associated bird and mammal bycatch issues. Actual environmental impacts however depend on the fishery and the way in which the gear is set. The issues are therefore complex and a ‘dolphin-safe’ or similar label cannot readily be

used in the same manner. Many retailers in the UK believe this problem should be dealt with by the fisheries eco-labelling organisation, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The MSC is a third-party independent organisation with internationally established criteria against which fisheries are certified. If labelling is developed it could well affect the market for fresh tuna, but also the canned tuna market since consumers tend not to differentiate between product type and species. However, initial fears that consumers would adversely react to the media attention given to depleted bluefin tuna stocks in the early 1990s [9] did not materialise, so the effects of a new yellowfin labelling scheme are difficult to predict.

It is possible that UK consumers will respond to developments in the USA's labelling system, especially as these are often reported in the British media, despite the species and areas of harvesting being different. High bycatch of turtles and sharks in the ETP is also receiving increasing attention in the USA and may thus affect tuna consumption in the UK if heavily publicised.

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Appendix A. Earth Island Institute dolphin-safe policy

International "dolphin safe" standards for tuna

These standards form the basis of policies utilized by the largest tuna producers in the world. It is required for approval and monitoring by Earth Island Institute (Fig. 1).



© Earth Island Institute.
European Community
Registered Trade Mark

Fig. 1.

In order for tuna to be considered "Dolphin Safe", it must meet the following standards:

1. No intentional chasing, netting or encirclement of dolphins during an entire tuna fishing trip;
2. No use of drift gill nets to catch tuna;
3. No accidental killing or serious injury to any dolphins during net sets;
4. No mixing of dolphin-safe and dolphin-deadly tuna in individual boat wells (for accidental kill of dolphins), or in processing or storage facilities; and
5. Each trip in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP) by vessels 400 gross tons and above must have an independent observer on board attesting to the compliance with points (1) through (4) above.

By agreement between Earth Island Institute and the participants in "Dolphin Safe" fishing operations:

- All processing, storage, and transshipment facilities and procurement records related to the purchase, processing, storage, transport, and sale of tuna must be made available for independent monitoring.
- Companies listed as "Dolphin Safe" must maintain "Dolphin Safe" policies approved by Earth Island Institute and apply them to all international aspects of their operations and related subsidiaries.

Further, Earth Island Institute and the 85-member Dolphin Safe/Fair Trade Campaign strongly encourage tuna fishermen and tuna companies to work to reduce bycatch of non-target species and to release alive, to the maximum extent feasible, any non-target species caught in purse seine nets.

These "Dolphin Safe" standards were developed in 1990 by Earth Island Institute and the H.J. Heinz Corporation (StarKist Tuna); endorsed by the U.S. Tuna Foundation, Chicken of the Sea, and Bumble Bee Tuna; and have been adopted by approximately 300 tuna companies, canneries, brokers, import associations, retail store, and restaurant chains around the globe.

By way of background, in 1997, only 2.9% of the world's tuna supply was caught by chasing and setting nets on dolphins. More than 90% of the world's canned tuna market has pledged to buy and sell only "Dolphin Safe" tuna in accordance with Earth Island's "Dolphin Safe" standards.

As a result of the "Dolphin Safe" commitment by tuna companies, dolphin mortality has dropped by more than 97% in the past ten years.

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