



# Dolphin Safe AEI Thailand

*National 1990*

Dolphin Safe

*Global/Transnational/International 1990*

## Thailand Fisheries

***The project's primary subject:*** Tuna fisheries, dolphins

***Additional focus points of the project:***

***Main governance mechanisms that the project uses:*** maintenance of existing market access, non-monetary regulations (making access to the resource contingent on following rules), shame and guilt, Negative media and losing face

***Target market of the resource or product:*** North-Western market, especially the USA

## Introduction

Dolphin-safe tuna is a label that gained international importance in the 1990s, based on a successful, consumer-driven campaign in the USA that brought attention to dolphin deaths by tuna fishing. The USA-based organisation brought its label to Thailand in the 1990s, but was disputed by the Thai media. Even though the certifier linked many organisations part of the production chain, and established impressive networks, the introduction in Thailand exposed issues of power, and conflicts with Thai concerns.

***Actors involved in creating the project:*** private corporate (foreign), NGO (transnational), NGO (domestic)

***Actors regulated by the project:*** small-scale producers, medium-scale producers, large-scale producers, corporations

**Main goals of the project:** maintain/improve marine ecologies, protect a specific species/biodiversity protection, traceability, reduce reputational risk  
Dolphin-safe's goal is to pledge companies to no encircling of dolphins or other marine mammals during fishing, and to no accidental dolphin deaths or serious injury, and to no usage of gillnets.

**Scope of the project:**

Dolphin-safe is a worldwide brand, since the scheme is operating in all of the marine areas where tuna can be fished and where dolphins are known to swim. This is in almost all of the world's ocean areas.

**History of the project:**

Thailand in the early 90's emerged as the number one canning industry, and established status through buying Bumble Bee Seafood, a top three canned tuna company at the time. However, the dolphin-safe label produced significant negative media about Bumble Bee, directly influencing their market position. In the 1990s, the Thai media produced an article negatively framing the dolphin-safe label as U.S. protectionism. The EII realised they needed to create a certification project in Thailand, and therefore set up the Association of the EII (AEII), which was focused on including Thai concerns.

**History of the scheme:**

In 1990, the Earth Island Institute, after a successful campaign that used visual marketing to create awareness for dolphin deaths, created the Dolphin Safe label together with Heinz Corporation. The label was endorsed and adopted by many corporations and quickly rose in importance and influence. More than 90% of tuna fisheries are now following the standards, and the by-catch or wounding of dolphins has decreased significantly.

**Is the project currently active?**

Yes

## Regulation and compliance

**Parties that were involved in creating the project:**

Earth Island Institute (EII), Heinz Corporation, International Marine Mammal Project (IMMP), individuals from radical Thai NGOs.

**Who are being regulated by the project:**

Tuna fishers and canning companies

**Means of monitoring compliance:**

buyer monitoring (second-party certification)

**Monitoring organisation:**

Earth Island Institute

**Consequences of failing compliance:**

expulsion from the scheme/decertification, denial of market access, shame and guilt

## Assessment of the project\*

The dolphin-safe label was struggling with issues of power and values, considering the label standards were designed and monitored by the same organisation, in a 'one size fits all' scheme, lacking Thai participation. This created struggles for the Thai tuna industry. For example, the use of gillnets was forbidden by dolphin-safe, however there was not enough research into the different uses of gillnets by for example small scale fisheries. The label lacked the institutional framework in order to listen to and incorporate the Thai concerns. The AEII was set up to set this right.

**Additional researcher comments:**

**Sources:**

Baird, Ian G. and Quastel, Noah(2011) 'Dolphin-Safe Tuna from California to Thailand: Localisms in

Environmental Certification of Global Commodity Networks', Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 101:

2, 337 — 355, First published on: 15 February 2011 (iFirst);

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2010.544965>

[http://www.earthisland.org/immmp/Dol\\_Safe\\_Standard.html](http://www.earthisland.org/immmp/Dol_Safe_Standard.html)

<http://savedolphins.eii.org/campaigns/dsf>

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\*All assessments of the project are made by the researcher or the authors of the main sources.

