



Ontario

Ontario Farm Products
Marketing Commission

Newsletter

March 2003 – Issue #100

This is the 100th edition of the OFPMC newsletter. We've freshened its appearance a little and taken the opportunity to report on a subject that few could have envisioned a decade ago when the newsletter was just getting started. The following story was related firsthand at the Commission's 11th Annual Industry Seminar in December.

When Food Inspection is Run by Environmentalists

The world's largest, private, food monitoring system is run by environmentalists. It controls the canned tuna industry around the globe. This is the unlikely tale of how an obscure San Francisco office of dolphin lovers gained what all activists lust for: **real power.** It came about because the food industry failed to see the galvanizing of public opinion against their production practices.



them and at the same time, they want the brand identification that the environmentalists can offer. "We let their monitors into our factory. We don't want any problems. They can completely ruin our business," said industry representatives.

Specifically, the environmentalists are better known as the Earth Island Institute. They are a non-profit, non-governmental conservation organization based in California. The International Marine Mammal Project is just one of their undertakings. It is that project which has taken on the canned tuna industry. The Earth Island Institute has become the de facto global regulator of the \$2 billion-a-year canned tuna industry.

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As of late last fall, executives from the European tuna industry told NEWSWEEK that they comply with these environmentalists because they both fear



Apple Vote

A Producer Expression of Opinion Vote will be conducted in the spring of 2003 to determine the level of support among Ontario apple growers for a new marketing plan.

The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission will commence work on the vote starting with the creation of a list of producers eligible to cast ballots on the draft plan. One ballot will be distributed by mail to each apple grower who owns an orchard of ten acres or more. ■

Dolphin-Safe Labels

The Issue of Harvesting Practices



To understand why industry and environmentalists were at loggerheads, you have to understand how tuna was being harvested up to 1990.

The Yellow Tuna is a highly sought-after variety because of its large size. These tuna inhabit the Pacific Ocean along the South American and U.S. coast.

The Yellow Tuna, for reasons unknown, tend to school underneath pods of dolphins. So fishing boats would patrol the sea looking for dolphins. When the dolphins were located, efforts were made to corral the dolphins and tuna before encircling them with a purse-seine net. The corraling resembled a prairie cattle drive using speedboats instead of horses.

Once encircled in the mile-long net, its bottom would be drawn up. The dolphins that avoided being tangled up and suffocated were traumatized to the point of aborting young and being unable to defend themselves against shark attacks after the ordeal. It was possible that the same dolphins were being set upon over and over again by the fishing fleets.

More than 100,000 dolphins were killed annually as a side effect of catching tuna. In addition, their pods were further depleted by a reduction in birthrate that biologists link to the stress of being herded and netted.

This method of harvesting led to a battle for control of the world's canned tuna industry. ■

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When Food Inspection is Run by Environmentalists

Surprisingly, they operate on less than a million dollars per annum and about a quarter of that budget is paid by the world's tuna canneries who seek out their "Dolphin Safe" label and certification as dolphin-friendly.

You'll never see the name Earth Island Institute on any can of tuna so don't be surprised that you have never heard of them, but chances are you have seen the "Dolphin Safe" logo. According to Mr. Mark Berman, Assistant Director of the Marine Mammal Project, "97% of the world's canned tuna markets are now closed to dolphin-deadly tuna. We have decreased dolphin deaths by 98% in just 12 years. More than 300 companies worldwide have signed dolphin-safe agreements with Earth Island."

Why do the world's biggest tuna canners let environmentalists set harvesting standards for them? According to Berman, "they all hate the 'B' word." The 'B' word he is referring to means **BOYCOTT** and the tuna industry has seen how the Earth Island Institute can co-ordinate a boycott with full page newspaper ads, video footage for TV stations and help from celebrities. In the movie, *Free Willie*, actor Danny Glover throws cans of dolphin-deadly tuna in the trash after his daughter brings him up to speed on the issue. Glover's daughter is wearing an Earth Island Institute T-shirt in the scene. After describing this, it may not surprise you that Mark Berman's personal e-mail address refers to him as "The Bermanator."

While no industry likes to get pushed around by a special interest group, what happened in the tuna industry could be referred to as, 'what goes around comes around.' The tuna industry did their fair share of bullying from 1970 to 1990. Repeatedly during this span, the industry lobbied U.S. congressional committees to treat dolphin mortality as an acceptable side effect of fishing for tuna. They won repeatedly. The tables turned when the environmentalists, tired of industry indifference and government inaction, took the issue to the public. A consumer boycott was launched in 1986. The sought-after white flag was not waved until nearly midnight on April 10, 1990. It came in the form of a telephone call from H.J. Heinz, owner of the Star Kist brand and the world's largest tuna company. Heinz agreed to end all purchasing, processing and selling of tuna caught by setting nets on dolphins. Heinz also agreed to stop purchasing tuna caught by drift nets. A chain of events was set in motion by Heinz' move and within hours *Chicken of the Sea* and *Bumblebee* followed suit. The largest brands put their boats into reverse and started flying the "Dolphin Safe" flag.

A boycott is, undeniably, the big stick. The day-to-day procedures of the Earth Island Institute are really far more refined. While Earth Island's conviction is relentless, they have developed supervisory tactics that function much like other industry regulators. The certification process enabling a company to display the "Dolphin Safe" logo is clearly defined. So too is the ongoing monitoring each company agrees to.

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“ We had to create an emotional bond between the product and the consumer. ”

Branding Production Practices

In the drive to increase sales and profit margins, the trend of branding production practices is taking hold in many commodities. On December 10, 2002, the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission assembled an experienced panel to discuss this new marketing trend at the Commission's 11th Annual Industry Seminar.

“We needed a brand story,” according to Jennifer Haley, Executive Director of the Ontario Veal Association. “We had to create an emotional bond between the product and the consumer.” The story was the same for the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency. Cathy Lennon, Agency GM, said the industry's “Country Fresh” moniker had too limited a story. “It didn't promote the production practices behind the product. We wanted to develop a new program to promote Ontario lamb.”

Both commodities found themselves working with the Longo's Supermarket Chain in the Greater Toronto Area to develop their branding programs. Both are grateful for that alliance, because Longo's proved to be an action-oriented partner who could make decisions and move forward expeditiously. Longo's meat category manager, Danny Iuglio, was interested in “destination and signature” brands of veal and lamb that would differentiate his meat counter from his competition. Longo's had a track record since they helped launch ‘Prime Poultry’ and ‘Certified Angus Beef.’ According to Danny Iuglio, “Longo's built its stores on quality and service and that attitude is extended to customers and suppliers alike.”

With a motivated retailer on their side, and a processor equally willing to strive for the premium market, both commodity groups pursued the on-farm production regimes that they felt would appeal to consumers. The lambs in the program were to be fed a



diet of vegetarian feed without growth hormones so Longo's could promote the meat as a natural alternative. At the heart of the successful lamb promotion is a straight forward philosophy: “Say what you do. Do what you say and prove it.” In addition to the strict feeding regime and diligent record keeping, lamb producers also played up the fact that the lamb was raised on family farms.

Consumer surveys revealed that the veal industry had problems due to product

inconsistency so the Ontario association sought standardized production practices that became a prerequisite for producer involvement in the Certified Ontario Veal program. If producers could achieve this, they could differentiate Ontario's veal industry from their Quebec, American and Australian competitors. In addition to a strict feeding program, the veal program also introduced a grading system to ensure only the best carcasses made it into the program. It also enforces standards on the processors who must age each carcass for 4 days and sell the product to retailers as boxed meat.

Both branded programs have a lot to show for their efforts. There is a waiting list of producers who want to participate in the programs. Producers have built a strong alliance with a retailer who promotes their product as a signature brand and helps them balance supply and demand. There is increased market stability. The numbers of animals sold have increased and profit margins have also risen. Packers are, likewise, maximizing carcass profit and playing a positive role in the quality assurance chain.

In her closing remarks, Veal's Jennifer Haley repeated the assertion that, “if we hadn't started with Longo's, things could have been completely different. We were very lucky we went with them.” ■

When Food Inspection is Run by Environmentalists *continued from page 2*

If a company is caught breaking the principal they agreed to uphold, the logo is withdrawn and all downstream buyers are told of the breach of contract. Any buyer who fails to terminate a blacklisted supplier risks penalties as well. To avoid the domino effect, buyers tend to immediately terminate the suppliers identified by the Earth Island Institute. The company in disrepute is most likely forced out of business.

In addition to compliance with dolphin-friendly practices, suppliers wanting to display the "Dolphin Safe" logo must also agree to terms extended to other species. The companies must not harvest shark fins and cannot participate in whaling or the purchase of whale, dolphin or sea turtle meat. They are also prohibited from fishing for any species using long-lines unless the nets are equipped with a device to prevent injury to marine birds.

The key to Earth Island's influence is the list of certified, dolphin-safe companies that it distributes throughout the world and the vigilant, local monitoring it does to ensure no one on the list is cheating. The list contains around 300 companies in 36 countries.

In his closing remarks to Ontario's food industry representatives, Berman provided three thoughts that have emerged from the events in the tuna industry. Firstly, industry can make their practices acceptable, humane and sustainable. Secondly, if the cause is widely known, boycotts are extremely persuasive. Lastly, being branded as environmentally friendly is becoming very important in today's world. ■

Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions 2003

Date	Organization	Location	Telephone
Mar. 4	Ontario Fresh Grape Growers' Marketing Board Annual Meeting	St Catharines	(905) 688-0990
Mar. 7	Ontario Turkey Producers' Marketing Board Annual Meeting	London	(519) 748-9636
Mar. 10	Seed Corn Growers of Ontario Annual Meeting	Blenheim	(519) 352-6710
Mar. 12-13	Ontario Pork Producers' Marketing Board Annual Meeting	Toronto	(519) 767-4600
Mar. 24-25	Ontario Egg Producers Annual Meeting	Toronto	(905) 858-9790
Mar. 24	Chicken Farmers of Ontario Annual Meeting	Mississauga	(905) 637-0025
Mar. 24	Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board Annual Meeting (District 5)	Leamington	(905) 688-0990
Mar. 25	(Districts 3 & 4)	Simcoe	
Mar. 26	(Districts 1 & 2)	Vineland Station	
Apr. 02	Grape Growers of Ontario Annual Meeting	Vineland Station	(905) 688-0990

This information is provided strictly for our readers' convenience. Please note that organizations may restrict attendance to some or all of their agenda items. Please contact each organization for more information on programs, agenda items open to non-members, and location. While the Commission endeavours to ensure this information is correct, readers are responsible for confirming its accuracy with individual organizations before making any plans to attend.

Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission

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