

# 7. Dolfin



## A rare Bird



During its first few years, after its creation in 1989, the Dolfin chocolate factory worked more for other establishments. 15 years ago, it successfully launched its own brand of chocolates. Since 2006, when Jean-Jacques de Gruben acquired the company, the environmental question has been debated constantly in its magazines. A natural awareness followed from this, explains the head of the company: “We asked ourselves what we could do in our company to be more in phase with the world in which we live.” First decision: Dolfin entrusted the task of doing a carbon assessment to the company CO2logic, a young Belgian undertaking specialising in CO2 emissions audits. This evaluation of the carbon emissions arising from the direct activities of Dolfin, certified by ADEME led in 2008 to an objective: to reduce the chocolate factory’s emissions by 15%.

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This decision was the occasion for establishing a social and environmental charter, through which Dolfin undertakes, in addition to measures for reducing CO2 emissions, to use exclusively natural ingredients and cardboard packages from well-managed forests, to meticulously sort the waste materials and to cooperate with a sheltered workshop for the majority of its logistics work. Converted to green electricity, Dolfin has also been equipped with an automatic timing system for management of the lighting and heating. The lighting was replaced by low energy consuming bulbs. And the temperature of the premises, reduced by 1°C, caused by itself a reduction of +/-7% of the emissions. “After one year, I was stunned to see that all these very basic savings measures made possible a reduction of 20 to 25% of the electricity bills! This meant I saved money and that I like very well!,” Jean-Jacques de Gruben confides to us. “I had electricity



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bills of 5.500 euro, and now, we save 1.000 to 1.500 euro a month, that is huge!”

The reduction of costs now allows the company to dedicate a budget on the order of 15.000 euro a year to the reduction of its ecological footprint. “Led to change as a function of the increase in the turnover, this envelope makes possible in particular the production of annual carbon assessments of the company, and compensation for the remaining CO2 emissions through participation in a CO2 reduction project being carried out in Rajasthan, in India.” Validated by the United Nations and by the SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance), this project consists in reusing the agricultural wastes of the local farmers in order to produce green electricity. “This step has not been taken for marketing reasons,” Jean-Jacques de Gruben assures us. “But I think that it is important not to hide what one is doing: it is for this reason that some of our packaging carries the indication ‘CO2 neutral company’.”

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Wanting to go further, Dolfin looked into the chocolate itself. “Our chocolate was already 100% natural, but it was neither organic nor fair trade. But it would have been too expensive to change the whole structure so that Dolfin was transformed into an organic, fair trade and ‘ecological’ brand.” This is how Tohi was born, in 2009. “The brand was named after a small bird with the colours of Belgium discovered in Columbia in 2004, because we liked the idea of referring to a species that had just been discovered in a world where so many species are disappearing.” More than a brand, Tohi is a concept: its range of chocolates is guided by the GBB attitude: searching for the Good, the Beneficial and the Beautiful, in aid of food excellence associated with well-being.

Although the “beautiful” immediately strikes the consumers, thanks to lively, luminous packaging. As far as the “good” is concerned, the master chocolatiers of Tohi select ingredients of an exceptional quality, coming exclusively from organic farming and certified by Certisys. “We made a study over 1 year to choose an excellent chocolate which comes from the Dominican Republic. At the base, it was delivered to us with soy lecithin. We tried to remove this binder and put in a larger percentage of cocoa butter.” The “beneficial” is ensured by the independent Fair trade/Max Havelaar label, which guarantees that the fair trade ingredients of each product have been certified in accordance with the international standards of fair trade. In line with the same logic, the paper and cardboard in the packages come from forests managed in a sustainable and responsible way (FSC). “In addition we do not use aluminum, but a sheet of paper that is impermeable and resistant to grease to package the bars.” In terms of investments, the creation of this new brand, benefiting from Dolfin’s infrastructure, required time above all. “It is not easy to find organic, fair trade lemons, cinnamon or ginger.” Aside from this research and the design of highly polished packaging, Dolfin bought a machine to wrap the Tohi bars. Total investments: around 100.000 euro... And positive returns, starting in the second year, with tripled sales figures, in spite of the absence until now of commercial effort.

The first Belgian chocolate factory certified “carbon neutral”, Dolfin has just had the emissions of its black Tohi chocolate bar calculated... The study, carried out once again by CO2logic, takes into account all the emissions, from the planting of the ingredients to the distribution of the chocolates, including transport, stocking and transformation. Each 70 gram bar according to its calculations emits 111 grams of greenhouse gases, that is, 158.5 grams for 100 grams of chocolate. While 41% of this impact is attributed to the production of the raw materials, 31% to the production at Dolfin, and 28% to transport, Jean-Jacques de Gruben is already thinking about measures that would make it possible to reduce these





## Sustainable Success Stories

carbon emissions ... “We have a plan to build, two or three years from now, a new factory which would be as passive as possible. Even if this costs 5 to 10% of the project, I think that it will be recovered quickly.”

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The steps that Dolfin is taking reinforce a strong identity of the company, which allows it to defend itself on a market where the competition is harsh. “In this sector, if you want to continue to perform, it is necessary to innovate and differentiate yourself. The big names control the world market: we are a micro-drop in the ocean but there are small niches to be taken just the same and that is what we are trying to do.” For Jean-Jacques de Gruben, “any business model should incorporate ideas of sustainable development. This is not a block but an advantage, not only in terms of marketing, but for itself, for the people who work in the company, and for the consumers... For everyone!”

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Isabelle Masson for REcentre

Interviewee / Jean-Jacques de Gruben, Managing director

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Sector • Chocolate

Year of foundation • 1989

Number of employees • 25

Turnover (2009) •  
3.5 million EUR