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Sustainability in the Life-cycle of Renewable Primary Products- Case report: Governing the Maritime Transport of Liquids

Coast and birds blackened by mineral oil are an icon for the risks involved in the transport of mineral oils for which rules have been developed since the end of the 19th century. Regulation of the maritime transport of other bulk liquids, such as chemicals, has been developed in the 1970s. Today, more than a third of the so called chemical tanker fleet capacity is already used for vegetable oils and figures are rising. Marine environmental protection became an issue when floating vegetable oils coated birds and European coastline in the early 1990s.

This contribution presents a case study on a revision of an international instrument to cope with the risks involved in the transport of renewable primary products and to introduce chapter 19 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development into transport regulations. The presentation will demonstrate how comparatively strong rules for environmental protection could be introduced for a fully globalised business under the involvement of several United Nations bodies. A story will be told: It starts with principles decided by the 1992 Earth Summit and NGOs' critique on the scientific principles of hazard evaluation. It will end up with the final approval of a new regulatory system. The actors and stakeholders, the instruments and successful strategies involved will be identified. The case study will show the complexity of policy instruments and the social effects in developing countries even when amending one specific piece of international law. The case report also identifies how international environmental policy requiring a joint effort of particular interests and disciplines could be hampered by highly specialized authorities and budget restrictions at the national level.