



## THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR IN GERMANY



Thilo Bode  
foodwatch

Founded in 2002, Germany  
[www.foodwatch.de](http://www.foodwatch.de)

Foodwatch is an independent non-profit organization fighting to strengthen consumers' rights in Germany.

Focus: Communications/Media, Consumer Awareness, Health

Geographic Area of Impact: Germany

Model: Hybrid Non-Profit

### Background

The food market in Germany is often one-sided, with a focus on the interests of the producers not consumers, and frequently marked by price competition rather than quality competition. The objectives of European food law – protecting consumers' health and preventing deceptive and misleading advertising – are often not fulfilled in practice. Poor enforcement is also a problem. This is demonstrated not only by the food scandals that often arise, but also by statistics of the official food controls. Politicians have addressed this topic only marginally, and due to a lack of chartered rights of information and action, it is virtually impossible for individual consumers to improve the situation.

### Innovation and Activities

Foodwatch works to strengthen consumers' rights in the food market through the various activities and services. Through independent research and analysis, foodwatch informs the public which food products contain toxins and name the parties responsible. It also mobilizes consumers through petitions, protests and lobbying efforts to encourage political decision-makers to take action. It takes offenders to court on behalf of consumers. The organization also proposes changes in the law in areas where no one else seems to care, and exerts pressure to change policies.

In 2007, foodwatch campaigned to stop the illegal trade of meat and bone meal, and called for applying the principles of EU waste legislation to animal by-products. In 2008, foodwatch commissioned the Institute for Ecological Economy Research to examine the respective contribution of conventional and organic agriculture in Germany to the greenhouse effect. The results show that considerable amounts of greenhouse gases can be avoided in the agricultural sector. Consequently, foodwatch is calling on the agriculture sector to become part of climate change policy in Germany and at EU level.

To guarantee absolute independence, foodwatch declines government funding and is financed solely by means of contributions and donations. Funding from corporations is also not accepted to avoid any conflict of interest that may arise or to prevent its work from being influenced.

Each year foodwatch awards the Golden Windbag prize for the most audacious advertising lie in the food industry. The winner is chosen by visitors to the foodwatch website.

### The Entrepreneur

Thilo Bode studied sociology and economics, and wrote his PhD dissertation on direct investments in developing countries. He subsequently supervised water and energy supply projects in a number of developing countries, worked for the reconstruction credit institute KfW, and advised companies on their involvement in developing countries. In the mid-1980s, Bode switched from development aid to business. He was a management assistant in a medium-sized metals group, where he was responsible for strategy and control as well as the supervision of subsidiaries. Bode is mostly known for his work for Greenpeace and their campaigns in the 1990s. From 1989 to 1995, he was head of Greenpeace Germany, and then Greenpeace International from 1995 to 2001.