

Making the case for biofuels

On 22-23 October, over 200 representatives from the biofuels and bioenergy industry gathered at the Hotel Le Plaza in Brussels, Belgium to discuss the latest trends at the Biofuels International Conference & Expo. The annual conference, which was co-located with Bioenergy Insight's Biogas Congress & Expo and Biomass Congress & Expo, brought together leading producers, suppliers, regulators and other key industry players over a two-day period to discuss and debate the most pressing issues in the biofuels industry.

Day one of the conference kicked off with an update on the Renewable Energy Directive from Giulio Volpi, directorate general for energy at the European Commission. The European directive, which was revised in December 2018, establishes a binding renewable energy target for 2030 of at least 32%, with the aim of helping the European Union (EU) to meet its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement. Biofuels are undoubtedly instrumental in helping EU countries to meet their renewables targets in transport, with the directive setting out sustainability criteria for all biofuels produced or consumed in the EU. Volpi's overview of the achievements by EU Member States to date, as well as targets for 2030, was insightful, and set the scene for one of the conference's themes on the critical role of biofuels in reducing transport-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Continuing with this theme, presentations from Concawe's Marta Yugo and UPM's Marko Janhunun explored the role of low-carbon fuels in decarbonising the European transport sector. Yugo highlighted the limitations of batteries in powering larger and heavier vehicles, such as airplanes and containerships, making the case for low-carbon biofuels to fuel these transport modes in the future. Her key takeaways, however, were warnings to the industry: "The availability of large amounts of both renewable electricity and low-carbon feedstocks, including biomass, will be required," while "technology development and scale-up must be accelerated" to reach the European commitment to be a leader in global climate action.

After a successful first day, conference chair Ausilio Bauen, director of E4 Tech, welcomed back attendees into the grand



theatre of the Hotel Le Plaza – which, interestingly, was a former cinema built in the 1930s – to kick off proceedings on day two. Delving into more detail, the day's presentations focused on two key emerging areas for biofuels: aviation and marine applications. Karlijn Arts, policy and sustainability manager at SkyNRG, offered a brief but insightful history into the sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) market and developments achieved to date. Leading the way for SAF, SkyNRG is developing the first dedicated production plant for the sustainable fuel in Europe: the DSL-01 plant in Delfzijl, the Netherlands. The facility, which is on schedule for commissioning in 2022 and recently received support from Shell Aviation, will produce 100,000 tonnes of SAF annually, corresponding to a reduction in lifecycle carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent emissions of around 270,000 tonnes. This commitment to advance the case of sustainable aviation fuel was applauded by conference attendees, and is an excellent example of the commitment needed to decarbonise the aviation sector.

Stratas Advisors' Cornelius Claeys (who has also contributed an article to this issue of *Biofuels International* (which you can read on page 16) highlighted CORSIA's impact on the global aviation biofuel market. The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation will cap net CO₂ emissions from international aviation at 2020 levels to achieve carbon-neutral growth. The resolution, according to Claeys, urges airlines to implement currently

available fuel efficiency measures and to participate in a long-term switchover to using sustainable aviation fuels. In terms of adoption, "Scandinavian countries are taking the lead through blending mandates", Claeys said, with both Norway and Sweden committing to 30% biofuel blends in aviation fuel by 2030.

For a sector that is relatively new to the world of biofuels, the marine industry was thrown into the spotlight by GoodFuels' Rianne de Vries, who opened her presentation with a rather startling statistic: "Global shipping has annual carbon dioxide emissions comparable to the entire country of Germany; without action, shipping will account for 17% of global CO₂ emissions in 2050." Shipping currently uses the dirtiest fuel in the world, de Vries warned the audience, and legislation is only partially addressing this problem with the upcoming sulphur cap, due to come into force from 1 January 2020. The adoption of biofuels, however, is one of the best solutions available for marine applications, many of which can currently be used as a drop-in alternative solution to fossil fuel-based marine fuels. GoodFuels is well-placed to offer advice to shipowners and operators on the benefits of biofuels; the company, in partnership with biomass technology group BTG, recently announced plans for a major investment in a biorefinery to support shipping's low-carbon fuel demands. This development is definitely one to watch.

Each and every presentation over the two-day Biofuels International Conference & Expo drove home the same key message: biofuels have an essential role to play in the world's efforts to address climate change, and the industry must strive to innovate, develop and adopt technologies and clean fuels to reach this ambition.

If you're interested in speaking at next year's biofuels conference or sponsoring the event, please get in touch today to register your interest: marketing@woodcotemedia.com. And, of course, read on for even more analysis, case studies and trends as we look back on a year of progress in the biofuels industry, in the final issue of *Biofuels International* for 2019.

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