

Maersk unveils world's first bio-methanol container ship

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Maersk says the Laura will help reduce its CO2 emissions by 100 tons a day, compared to the same vessel running on fuel oil.

Danish shipping giant Maersk on Thursday launched the world's first container ship running on bio-methanol, a key step in its effort to lower

its huge carbon footprint.

Maersk, which sold its oil division to TotalEnergies in 2017, has set out a target to become carbon neutral by 2040.

European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen christened the Laura at an inauguration ceremony in Copenhagen's harbor, swinging a bottle of champagne across its hull to officially launch the ship.

The Laura will help reduce its CO₂ emissions by 100 metric tons a day, compared to the same vessel running on fuel oil, Maersk said.

Built in South Korea by Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) and fitted with a dual-fuel engine, the Laura is a relatively small model that will be able to transport 2,136 20-foot (TEU) containers.

It will begin operating in the Baltic Sea in October, Maersk said.

"Green methanol is our fuel of choice ... because it is the only scalable solution that can meet the net-zero (carbon emissions) requirements," Maersk chief executive Vincent Clerc said at the inauguration ceremony.

"Neither we nor the climate can afford complacency or waiting for other solutions to emerge in the late 2020s," he added.

On a global scale, maritime transport is more polluting than air transport, according to the Higher Institute of Maritime Economics (ISEMAR).

The sector accounts for 2.89 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, according to the figures published by the International Maritime Organisation.



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Green methanol

Last year Maersk unveiled a big strategic plan to gradually abandon the use of fuel oil, in order to meet the greenhouse gas reduction targets set by the European Union as part of the Paris agreements

Green methanol, also known as "e-methanol", is composed of waste carbon dioxide (CO₂) and "green hydrogen", which is created by using renewable energy to split water molecules.

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has ordered 25 vessels that run on green methanol.

Of them, 19 are under construction and should set sail by 2025.

The company estimates this will enable it to reduce its annual carbon dioxide emissions by around 2.3 million tons.

'Reasonable integrity'

Maersk has launched a huge project in Spain to produce the fuel, with the support of the Spanish government, where it plans two production sites creating two million tons of green methanol per year by 2030.

This would be enough to decarbonize 10 percent of its fleet of ships, Maersk has said.

It plans to produce green methanol in five or six sites around the world, with plans for a project in Egypt in addition to Spain.

A study earlier this year by think tanks Carbon Market Watch and NewClimate Institute examined the climate pledges of 24 multinationals, including Maersk.

The shipping giant was given the best overall marks for its plan to erase its carbon footprint by 2040, which was deemed to have "reasonable integrity".

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