Boeing Joins Aviation, Energy and Academic Leaders to Accelerate Development and Availability of Sustainable Biofuels

Environmental groups applaud effort to develop sustainable fuel alternatives

SEATTLE, Sept. 24 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Boeing (NYSE: BA) has, with leading air carriers and Honeywell's UOP, a refining technology developer, established a group to accelerate the development and commercialization of sustainable new aviation fuels. With support and advice from the world's leading environmental organizations, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Users Group makes commercial aviation the first global transportation sector to voluntarily drive sustainability practices into its fuel supply chain.

The group's charter is to enable the commercial use of renewable fuel sources that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while lessening commercial aviation's exposure to oil price volatility and dependence on fossil fuels. Airlines supporting the sustainable fuels initiative include Air France, Air New Zealand, ANA (All Nippon Airways), Cargolux, Gulf Air, Japan Airlines, KLM, SAS and Virgin Atlantic Airways. Collectively, they account for approximately 15 percent of commercial jet fuel use.

"We welcome the aviation sector's will to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and appreciate their efforts to ensure the sustainability of their biofuels sourcing," said Jean-Philippe Denruyter, WWF global bioenergy coordinator and Steering Board member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels. "By teaming up with the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, the aviation sector can build on an existing solid multi-stakeholder process that will reinforce this initiative."

All group members subscribe to a sustainability pledge stipulating that any sustainable biofuel must perform as well as, or better than, kerosene-based fuel, but with a smaller carbon lifecycle. The user's group pledged to consider only renewable fuel sources that minimize biodiversity impacts: fuels that require minimal land, water and energy to produce, and that don't compete with food or fresh water resources. In addition, cultivation and harvest of plant stocks must provide socioeconomic value to the local communities.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for leading airlines, supported by well-respected energy and environmental organizations, to help commercial aviation take control of its future fuel supply in terms of origin, sustainability and environmental impacts," said Billy Glover, managing director, Environmental Strategy for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "The number one priority going forward is to complete thorough assessments of sustainable plant sources, harvesting and economic impacts, and processing technologies that can help achieve that goal."

The group has announced two initial sustainability research projects. Assistant Professor Rob Bailis of Yale University's School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, through funding provided by Boeing, will conduct the first peer-reviewed, comprehensive sustainability assessment of jatropha curcas to include lifecycle CO2 emissions and the socio-economic impacts to farmers in developing nations. Similarly, NRDC will conduct a comprehensive assessment of algae to ensure it meets the group's stringent sustainability criteria.

Both species may potentially become part of a portfolio of biomass-based renewable fuel solutions that, through advanced fuel processing methodologies developed by energy sector leaders such as UOP, can help aviation diversify its fuel supply.

"This taskforce comes at just the right time to help airlines cut costs and decrease their greenhouse gas emissions," said Liz Barratt-Brown, NRDC senior attorney. "If done right, sustainable biofuels could lower the airlines' carbon footprint at a time when all industries need to be moving away from fuels with high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, especially high carbon tar sands and liquid coal."

SOURCE: Boeing Commercial Airplanes

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