



Pushing for more aviation fuel from oil palm biomass

SINGAPORE: Malaysia hopes that oil palm biomass will be accepted as a feedstock for the production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) given the rising demand for the use of the jet fuel alternative worldwide.

Its Transport Minister Datuk Wee Ka Siong said Malaysia had been involved in the effort to include the oil palm biomass as part of the CORSIA Eligible Fuel Criteria in 2021.

"We need to push for that because we are the main producers of palm oil in the world... We can have the volume (for feedstock) and we need experts like NESTE to process it," he told media after his official visit to NESTE refinery in Singapore on Sept 20.

(NESTE is a Finnish company who is the world's top producer of renewable aviation fuel.)

(Malaysia is estimated to generate about 80 million tonnes of oil palm biomass per year with about 30 MT from Sabah. A national biomass strategy started in 2011 seeking to develop the billion-ringgit potentials in biomass utilisation.)

According to a Singapore Straits Times report, the visit is also in line with local low-fare airline Firefly's first international passenger flight using the Neste MY SAF on the ATR 72-500 aircraft from Seletar Airport Singapore to Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah airport in Subang, in Selangor state, Malaysia.

NESTE director of Singapore Expansion Project Petri Jokinen said the company's current SAF

production capacity in its facility in Finland stood at 100,000 tonnes.

He added that with the completion of the extension of its facility in Singapore and the modification in Rotterdam, NESTE's SAF production capacity was expected to reach 1.5 million tonnes by end-2023, of which one million tonnes would be produced in Singapore.

Wee said the increasing SAF production capacity by next year gave an opportunity for Malaysia to develop the production of oil palm biomass that could be used as one of the feedstock of SAF.

"We believe that SAF will be a key lever to achieving long-term net zero ambitions. However, it requires an all-in holistic approach with further R&D and huge investments to enhance the technology, as well as a shift in the regulatory environment to ensure wider and deeper adoption of SAF in the industry," he added.

SAF is produced 100 per cent from sustainably sourced, renewable waste and residual raw materials.

The usage of SAF in Malaysia is pioneered by Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG).

Three of its airlines have flown using blended SAF starting with Malaysia Airlines Cargo in December 2019 as well as Malaysia Airlines and FireFly this year.

MAG group chief sustainability officer and FireFly chief executive officer, Philip See said the SAF

flights were part of initiatives under the MAG Sustainability Blueprint launched in 2021 to promote socio-economic development and reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"Delivering socially responsible and environmentally focused service is one of our key priorities in sustaining the aviation industry and accelerating the global call for climate action," he added.



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Photo: New Straits Times