

# SCALING BIOFUELS FOR AVIATION 'NOT SO DIFFICULT'



The commercial aviation industry could go from being one of the dirtiest to being one of the cleanest in ten years, according to one of the industry's best-known figures.

Richard Branson says the world's 7,000 airlines could switch to low-carbon jet fuels much faster than other forms of transportation because airplanes have very few "filling stations."

"Unlike cars where there are millions of filling stations, there are only about 1,700 aviation stations in the world. So if you can get the right fuel, like mass-produced algae, then getting it to 1,700 outlets is not so difficult," Branson said in an interview with *The Guardian*.

Branson's Virgin Group, which owns a majority stake in Virgin Atlantic Airways, said the industry should aim for 50% sustainable fuels by 2020.

"Aviation fuel is 25-40% of the running costs of airlines so the industry is open to new fuels," said Branson, who also heads up the Carbon War Room, an effort to work with and reward businesses that lead reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Some airlines are way ahead of others in the quest to make biofuels a regular part of the commercial aviation fuel mix. Several European airlines have tested or incorporated low-carbon fuels, as required by the EU program to reduce emissions from the aviation sector. But in North America, in the absence of such laws, progress is much slower.

Last month, Alaska Air chairman and CEO Bill Ayer lauded sustainable biofuels as "key to aviation's future," at the start of Alaska Air's biofuel trial period of 75 regularly-scheduled commercial flights running on a biofuel blend.

Alaska was on course to be the first airline in the U.S. to fly a commercial flight powered by biofuel but two days before they were scheduled to do so, United edged out Alaska Air to take the honors.

Unlike Alaska Air, however, United has no immediate plans to procure a long-term supply of biofuels for use in their domestic aviation operations.

Source: <http://earthandindustry.com/2011/12/biofuels-for-aviation-not-so-difficult/>