

## Yara Birkeland begins further testing for autonomous operations

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Norwegian autonomous vessel **Yara Birkeland** (IMO 9865049) which is being billed as the world's first electric, autonomous container vessel, was officially christened and entered service in Norway at the weekend after nearly six months of testing and trials along with the outfitting of its systems. The vessel is now beginning a two-year trial period to become certified, during which it is anticipated that it will gradually transition into autonomous navigation and operations. The christening took place on the wharf in Brevik, Norway.

The concept for the vessel began in 2017 with the goal of building a vessel that could demonstrate carbon-free operations. The construction order was placed in 2018 with the Vard shipyard in Brattvåg, and after delays during construction, the vessel was delivered in late 2020. After outfitting of its systems, Yara Birkeland arrived in its homeport of Brevik, near Yara's Porsgrunn plant that manufactures fertilizer, in November 2021 and in December made a demonstration voyage for a preview in Oslo.

Captain Thomas Fevang, who is in command of the ship during the first phase of the trials, explained that the ship was equipped with cameras, inside and out, including a night vision camera, and with the radar, the AI systems onboard detect, identify, and reacts to the obstacles.

The containership will be traveling on a route of approximately seven nautical miles, transporting fertilizer from the Yara factory to the port of Brevik for domestic and international shipment. The ship will replace upwards of 40,000 diesel truck trips per year.

During the first year of operation, the vessel will operate with a full crew while undergoing further testing of its systems and equipment. The plan is for the ship to gradually take on more responsibility. By the end of the trial, it will be fully autonomous, both for its navigation and the loading and unloading of 120 containers of fertilizer.

Yara Birkeland measures 262 feet in length and is 3,200 dwt. It is powered by 20 batteries with a capacity of 6.8 MWh. Propulsion is provided by two Azipull 900 kW pods, along with two 700 kW side thrusters providing an operating speed of 6 to 7 knots.

2022-built, Norway-flagged, 3,221 gt Yara Birkeland is owned by Yara Norge AS care of Yara International ASA of Oslo, Norway. It is entered with Gard.