

Closing the sustainability knowledge gap in air cargo

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By Rebecca Jeffrey



Innovating to achieve net zero panel at the IATA WCS. Photo: Rebecca Jeffrey

There are huge divides in the understanding of sustainability and this is a barrier to progress in air cargo.

Speaking during day two of the IATA World Cargo Symposium (WCS), CargoAI chief commercial officer Magali Beauregard said we need to make sustainability knowledge accessible.

“This is a topic for experts by experts. We need to look what we can do to close the gap. Otherwise, the small and medium-sized market will be left behind,” she said during the Innovating to Achieve Net Zero session within the sustainability stream.

Milla Nyholm, marketing and sustainability lead at Finnair Cargo, agreed that many companies are still, for example, learning what SAF is, but said: “We need to learn in a collaborative fashion to move forward.”

However, it is important not to “greenwash”, noted Harald Sieke, head, centre for logistics and mobility, Fraunhofer IML.

He said: “SAF is one way to decarbonise, but it is not the only way, with many other parts to the air cargo supply chain than aircraft.”

Beauregard said that looking to the future is just one part of the solution: “Look at efficiencies with current aircraft and look at operational processes before approaching digitalisation.

“It’s not only about replacing technology but reducing emissions from current technology.”

She stressed that there is still the need to make decarbonisation attractive as companies usually say they are interested in green products but not everyone wants to spend the money.

Regulation is important too, according to Sieke.

“Emissions regulations aren’t applicable everywhere. Ideally, we’d have global regulations. That said, while regulation helps, adapting to a sustainable mindset is key.”

He said there are a lot of things that regulators can do. For example, working on securing an ample electricity supply to support electrification.

Nyholm said that regulators can help drive standardisation.

She said a broad spectrum of corporate stakeholders are now involved in sustainability.

“Institutional investors have begun to focus on this as well as private investors.”

To encourage further sustainability investment, it is important to get everybody to grasp the time and pace of change involved, said Beauregard.

Nyholm added that maintaining communication and knowledge with all stakeholders is important, while Sieke said that keeping information clear and transparent is vital.

The panel agreed it’s unclear quite what role SAF plays in future fuels development, whether it is a transitional fuel for the medium or long-term, or when it might be replaced.

Neste head of programmes & partnerships renewable aviation Susanne Bouma said that the company, which is the biggest producer of SAF worldwide, is set to hit SAF production capacity of 1.5m tonnes by 2023 and 2.2m tonnes by 2026.

Responding to a question from *Air Cargo News*, Bouma said it is possible SAF could become cheaper if production is ramped up, but said it would be impossible to guarantee it.

Steve Townes, chief executive of ACL Airshop and chair of the sustainability stream sessions, told delegates that on a global industry scale we have to build 7,000 SAF processing plants to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Delegates were left with the question of how, where and when this could be done.