

IATA forecasts tripling of SAF by 2024

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Montreal, Canada: The International Air Transport Association said Sunday (June 2) the production in 2024 of sustainable aviation fuel will be triple that of last year as airlines look to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

"Projections for a tripling of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) production in 2024 to 1.9 billion litres (1.5 million tonnes) are on track," the world aviation body said in a statement.

However, despite the projected increase, the amount of SAF used by airlines "would account for 0.53 percent of aviation's fuel need in 2024", it added in the statement at its 80th annual general meeting at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

SAF production is still in its early stages, but is rising quickly: in 2019 it was only 25 million litres, said IATA, which brings together 320 companies claiming 83 percent of global air traffic.

The sector currently contributes around 3 percent of carbon dioxide emissions globally, but is aiming for net zero emissions by 2050.

"SAF will provide about 65 percent of the mitigation needed for airlines to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050," IATA chief Willie Walsh said.

The balance would come from through new technology, optimising airline operations both on the ground and in the air, and through carbon offsets.

SAFs are seen as the main tool for decarbonising the aviation sector, but apart from the expense, the technology is also still in its infancy.

To make large quantities of renewable fuel available will require a massive increase in production capacity.

According to IATA calculations, aviation would consume 450 billion litres of SAF a year by the middle of the century.

"The interest in SAF is growing and there is plenty of potential," Walsh said.

But governments "now need to implement policies to ensure that airlines can actually purchase SAF in the required quantities".

Europe has adopted the need to incorporate SAF in airline operations, and in the United States, its production is heavily subsidised by President Joe Biden's 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

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