

COOPERATION ON CLIMATE ACTION

Port authorities are waking up to the need to collaborate on sustainability. **Chloé Farand** reports on a new programme with big ambitions



Photo credit: Shell

■ Dual-fuel Aframax tanker Gagarin Prospect bunkers in the port of Rotterdam

At the Global Climate Action Summit, held last September in San Francisco, seven of the world's biggest ports, including the European ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona and Hamburg, launched the World Ports Climate Action Programme (WPCAP).

The programme is a joint pledge to facilitate emissions reductions from the ports' supply chains and their larger geographical area.

With emissions from shipping omitted from the Paris Agreement and with the International Maritime Organization's agreement to halve emissions by 2050 falling short of the science, further steps to ramp up ambitious climate action in the maritime sector is much needed.

Under the WPCAP, ports have set up five working groups targeting specific action to accelerate the reduction of CO₂ emissions. These include: low-carbon maritime fuels, decarbonising cargo handling facilities, power-to-ship solutions, increasing efficiency of supply chains using digital tools, and advancing common and ambitious policy approaches to reduce emissions within larger geographical areas.

INCENTIVES FOR EMISSION REDUCTION

At the end of January, the Port of Rotterdam opened a €5m incentive scheme for shipping companies, fuel manufacturers, engine manufacturers and service providers to promote projects that make use of low- or zero-carbon fuels. The scheme only applies to projects that reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 50% and will run until the end of 2022.

Ports are also pushing for further liquefied natural gas (LNG) uptake as an alternative to heavy fuel oil. Recent figures from the Port of Rotterdam show the sale of heavy fuel oil decreased by 400,000 m³ in 2018 while LNG sales increased more than sixfold.

In Barcelona, the port authority has also partnered with a range of stakeholders to measure the efficiency of LNG as an alternative fuel on land and at sea with the intention to become

a top destination for the next generation of LNG-powered ships and ferries.

Isabelle Ryckbost, Secretary General of the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), praised the involvement of European ports in the WPCAP and encouraged others to follow their lead.

"I don't know of any other proactive programme that links different European and global ports towards decarbonisation," she said. Ms Ryckbost added that the programme's very public launch last September will see ports come under heavy public scrutiny to ensure their pledge is followed by concrete action. "If you announce something you have to do it," she said, adding that the programme will create a positive environment for ports to "learn from each other's experiences".

Sjaak Poppe, spokesperson for the Port of Rotterdam, which initiated the programme, said collaboration between ports is "the most effective" way to reduce emissions from the maritime sector in line with the Paris Agreement. "Committing to collaborative projects with other leading ports sends out a clear signal to the shipping industry, other ports as well as governments and regulators", he said.

Laura Domingo, spokesperson for the Port of Barcelona, agreed that "cooperation amongst international ports is instrumental to tackle the big climate and clean air challenges that the maritime industry is facing globally".

Although European ports are all operating under different national climate frameworks, port authorities have an opportunity to drive and facilitate the decarbonisation of the maritime sector by connecting stakeholders and ensuring economic growth goes hand in hand with reducing emissions.

The conversation that follows from programmes like the WPCAP is necessary for ports and stakeholders to share sustainable solutions that deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement. Only by putting words into action and encouraging such collaboration will ports become frontrunners in green shipping.