Airplane rivals launch joint biofuel project

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The airplane sector leaders agreed to seek opportunities "to speak in unity" to government and biofuel producers "to support, promote and accelerate the availability of sustainable new jet fuel sources," a joint statement from the companies said.

The collaboration is intended to come up with a so-called "drop in" technology that all airplane models could use, regardless of the make.

Airbus and Boeing have already launched programmes independently to develop alternatives to kerosene, a major greenhouse gas pollutant, to power its airplanes.

"We are all committed to take a leading role in the development of technology programmes that will facilitate aviation biofuels development and actual application faster than if we were doing it independently," said Paulo César Silva, Embraer chief executive.

The planemakers said they were committed to reducing the industry's substantial carbon footprint, the term commonly used for emissions of greenhouse gases.

"We've achieved a lot in the last 10 years in reducing our industry's (carbon) CO2 footprint -- a 45 percent traffic growth with only three percent more fuel consumption," Airbus chief executive Tom Enders said.

Airbus on Wednesday announced a collaboration with airline Virgin Australia to explore biofuel production from eucalyptus leaves that grow in arid regions.