

Australia's Qantas makes first commercial biofuel flight

April 13 2012



A Qantas A330 moves to a departure gate to pick up invited passengers at Sydney Airport ahead of Australia's first flight powered by sustainable aviation fuel on April 13, 2012.

Australia's Qantas Friday launched the nation's first commercial flight using a mixture of refined cooking oil, saying it would not survive if it relied solely on traditional jet fuel.

The Airbus A330 left Sydney for Adelaide using a 50-50 blend derived from recycled cooking oil and regular [jet fuel](#) in what the airline hopes

will be the first step towards a sustainable [aviation fuel](#) industry in Australia.

"We need to get ready for a future that is not based on traditional jet fuel or frankly we don't have a future," Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce said.

"And it's not just the price of oil that's the issue -- it's also the price of carbon.

"From July, Qantas will be the only airline in the world to face liabilities in three jurisdictions, so our sense of urgency is justified."



Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce poses during a press conference at Sydney Airport ahead of Australia's first flight powered by sustainable aviation fuel on April 13, 2012.

Europe already imposes a controversial [carbon tax](#) on airlines, while New Zealand has a carbon tax that applies to flights within that country by Qantas' budget carrier Jetstar.

Australia's tax on [carbon emissions](#) comes into force on July 1.

Qantas said the biofuel, which has been certified for use in [commercial aviation](#), has a "life cycle" [carbon footprint](#) about 60 percent smaller than that of conventional jet fuel.

Jet fuel is the largest operational expense for the Australian carrier, which in February announced it would slash at least 500 jobs and cut costs after an 83 percent slump in first-half net profits.

In March it hiked its fuel surcharge for the second time in two months, saying its fuel costs were expected to rise by Aus\$300 million (US\$312 million) in the six months to June 30 to Aus\$2.25 billion.

The Australian government said it would help Qantas fund a study into the sustainable production and commercialisation of aviation biofuels.

Under the Aus\$500,000 Emerging Renewables Program grant, Qantas will partner with Shell Australia to undertake a feasibility study into the long-term viability of biofuel feedstock and the production of low carbon aviation fuels.

"Today's flight, together with the feasibility study, represents an important step towards an Australian aviation industry powered by our own biofuels," Resources and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson said.

"This could be the beginning of Qantas becoming 'Flying Bio-Roo'."

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