

Can shipping hit IMO decarbonisation checkpoints?



Support for the IMO's decarbonisation checkpoints and ambitions at 2030, 2040, and 2050 was unanimous at CMA Shipping 2024, but attendees were divided on whether the shipping industry could hit its marks.

Gary Howard | Mar 13, 2024

The subject was first raised by [V.Group](#) CFO Petter Traaholt who said that from its own analysis, V.Group does not expect the industry to hit its 2050 target, that it definitely would not hit the 2040 target, and may hit the 2030 target.

Under the IMO's revised GHG strategy agreed at the Marine Environment Protection Committee - MEPC 80 in 2023, the industry had targets set at a 20% reduction in total GHG emissions by 2030, striving for 30%; a 70% reduction by 2040, striving for 80%, and net zero emissions at or around 2050.

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Traaholt called for IMO member states to focus on total solutions to the industry's problems at a global level to reverse the trend of increasing complexity faced by ship operators, brought about by factors like carbon pricing in Europe and sanctions regimes.

[Intertanko](#) Managing Director Katharina Stanzel said that 2040 was an unachievable target using current technology and efficiency measures alone, and so relied on the wide availability of zero carbon fuels.

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Stanzel compared the predicament tanker owners face to the 'range anxiety' experienced by drivers of black cabs in London who moved to electric vehicles and found themselves unable to rely on the availability of recharging facilities on certain journeys. For those operating tankers with no clear expectation of where the next voyage will take them, uncertainty about fuel availability is a significant operational hurdle.

"I think for tankers looking forward to 2040, that is one big argument. That's something that no crystal ball can answer because we're not the ones producing the fuels, we're not driving that technology development choice, that infrastructure development choice," said Stanzel.

[Bimco](#) President Nikolaus Schües said he was confident in the industry's ability to hit its 2030 target primarily through increases in efficiency, noting the current pace of improvement and the many industry initiatives to support this effort, including Bimco's own work.

"2040 is really the testing moment," said Schües. Bimco is fuel agnostic in its work, and the outcome for 2040 will emerge as the various fuels' strengths and weaknesses play out in diverse shipping markets.

In a later session, Bimco CEO and Secretary General David Loosley said he believes 2040 will be a tough checkpoint for the industry to achieve, but that 2050 is doable. Loosley contextualised the 16-year countdown to 2040 by listing events of 2008, including the collapse of Lehmann Brothers, the end of Fidel Castro's leadership, and the start of Barrack Obama's presidency in the US.

"Sixteen years can feel like an eternity, like just yesterday, or just around the corner," said Loosley.

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