

Navigating a green future: How airlines can chart sustainable strategies to stay ahead

In the last two years, there has been a comeback in air travel. While this development trend offers the aviation industry a much-needed boost, the increased air traffic has a negative impact on the environment. Shashank Nigam, founder and CEO of SimpliFlying, assembled a panel of experts on the Global Stage at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), which took place from 1-4 May at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), to discuss the steps necessary to future-proof the airline sector and to investigate solutions that go beyond carbon offsetting.



Source: Supplied

The 30th edition of ATM explored the future of sustainable travel in line with the theme, *Working Towards Net Zero*. Having officially initiated its journey to net zero, the conference programme explored how innovative sustainable travel trends are likely to evolve, allowing delegates to identify growth strategies within key vertical sectors, while providing a platform for regional experts to explore a sustainable future ahead of COP28, which will take place in November 2023 at Expo City Dubai.

The panel included Brian Moran, vice president global sustainability policy and partnerships, Boeing; Yvonne Moynihan, chief corporate and ESG officer at Wizz Air and Dave Rowse CEO of CarbonClick, with each sharing their take on the strategies and challenges of flying net zero.

Meeting sustainability goals

The speakers agreed that the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) plays a key role, in helping the industry to meet its long-term sustainability goals. Moynihan said: "From 2025, all airlines will be required to use SAF fuel. In an effort to get ahead, Wizz Air has invested £5m (AED 22,923,120) in a UK-based SAF producer called Firefly to support the development and certification of SAF produced from sewage sludge. This agreement gives us the potential to save 1.5 million tonnes of CO₂-eq. It is essential that airlines get behind SAF production because there is such limited supply currently."



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The experts also agreed that the cost of SAF is one of the major barriers in the immediate term. Rowse commented: "Several airlines are working to tackle the prohibitive cost of SAF, including Etihad Airlines which subsidises the cost for those passengers choosing to offset their journeys with SAF. It's going to take five to 10 years before reasonable volumes are produced.

"While there is consumer demand for SAF, passengers are not prepared to pay for the full cost of it - therefore subsidies from airlines could help encourage the process and ultimately, drive production along more quickly."

To strike a balance between short and long-term capabilities, Boeing is focusing on developing today's fuel-efficient aircraft while investing in technologies that will allow the airline industry to project into the future and 'de-risk.

Last year, [Boeing announced the launch of Cascade](#), a data modelling tool which enables airlines to map out the optimal routes to achieve net zero. In addition, the corporation has teamed up with Nasa to build, test and fly a full-scale demonstrator aircraft and validate technologies aimed at lowering emissions.

Moran concluded: "There are approximately 24,000 planes in the air today and that number is going to double in the next 20 years. These will be conventional airplanes, and to decarbonise and get on the trajectory to net zero by 2050, airlines will have to fly on SAF, so our priority is to make sure that our planes are 100% SAF capable. It is vital that we invest in the here and now."

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