

TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT AND OPERATIONS

GOL



“This is not a lonely project – we have more than 20 different partners”

PEDRO SCORZA

Director of technical operations, Gol

Brazilian low-cost carrier Gol has spent the last four years developing an alternative fuels strategy it hopes will provide for 1% of its total fuel requirement by 2016.

The carrier believes that alternative fuels are key to the sustainable growth of aviation in the future, and is investing considerable time and resources into eventually making their use more widespread. In the words of one of the judges: “Gol seems set on taking the trials a bit further than others.”

The fact that the airline’s focus on biofuels has not wavered, despite a challenging economy in its home market, illustrates a strong commitment to environ-

mental consciousness in good times as well as bad.

Gol’s alternative fuel strategy hit the headlines last year when the carrier used a blend containing Honeywell Green Jet Fuel, derived from inedible corn oil and used cooking oil, to power hundreds of commercial flights during the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The carrier plans to repeat this and incorporate biofuel into 20% of its flights during the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Gol last summer became the first airline to operate a commercial flight powered partially by farnesane – a recently-certificated fuel derived from sugarcane. On 30 July 2014 it operated the first of six Boeing 737-800 flights from Orlando, Florida to Sao Paulo, powered using a 10% blend of farnesane and conventional kerosene. The fuel was developed by Total and industrial bioscience company Amyris at a production facility in Brotas, near Sao Paulo.

The carrier plans to operate regular flights using farnesane in the near future. “Gol and Amyris are structuring solutions to offset the premium value of the SIP [synthesised iso-paraffinic] fuel, [to begin a] regular large-scale ‘green flights’ operation in Brazil, as Gol demonstrated was possible during the soccer World Cup 2014 with more than 360 take-offs with renewable fuels,” says the airline’s director of technical operations, Pedro Scorza.

Gol is looking at the full spectrum of alternative fuel sources as part of its strategy, with Scorza making the point that “if you pro-

duce it, we will buy it”, as long as the feedstock is sustainable and affordable. The carrier is working alongside Boeing to identify promising feedstocks and refining technologies for new fuels.

A number of different feedstocks can be grown in Brazil, and Gol is taking full advantage of this through various regional partnerships across the country, as Scorza explains: “Gol is looking for regional, highly-integrated and optimised solutions, respecting each area’s value chain vocation. For example, sugarcane in Sao Paulo, macauba oil in Minas Gerais, macauba and sugarcane in the northeast region, seed oil pas soya] in the south.

“We are also supporting technologies that allow small to medium-sized modular refining facilities that could optimise the benefits of local biomass production and local airport consumption. In the next 10 to 15 years, we do not need large solutions – we need solutions that are optimised for each local market and size of operation. This is not a lonely project – we have more than 20 different partners, working directly or indirectly, in our projects.”

KERRY REALS



Committed: Gol's Pedro Scorza

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*In the years 2009-13 the Environment category was separate from Technology, and winners are shown in brackets