

## COMPANIES

## Shipping

# Maersk sets 2050 zero-carbon target

World's biggest container group vows to take lead in abandoning fossil fuels

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The world's largest container shipping company has pledged to cut net carbon emissions to zero by 2050, challenging an industry that is one of the biggest polluters to produce radical solutions in the next decade.

AP Moller Maersk, the Danish group that transports nearly one in five seaborne containers, said it needed its entire supply chain, from engine makers and shipbuilders to new technology providers, to come up with carbon-free ships by 2030 to meet the goal.

## Technology

## Uber extends

"We will have to abandon fossil fuels. We will have to find a different type of fuel or a different way to power our assets. This is not just another cost-cutting exercise. It's far from that. It's an existential exercise, where we as a company need to set ourselves apart," said Soren Toft, chief operating officer.

Maersk's target, although distant, is one of the most ambitious from a global industrial group promising to end carbon emissions altogether. Container ships carry about 80 per cent of global trade and use bunker fuel, a residue from crude oil that is cheaper but dirtier than petrol and diesel, which means they contribute about 3 per cent of the world's emissions.

Maersk is not pushing one technology — ideas such as biofuels, hydrogen, electricity or even wind or solar power have

been mooted — but is stressing the urgency as most vessels have a life of 20-25 years, meaning that viable solutions need to be found soon.

"To reach the target by 2050, in the next 10 years we need some big breakthroughs," Mr Toft said.

One challenge will be that container ships often need to travel thousands of kilometres at a stretch, appearing to rule out solutions open to other types of transport such as electric cars.

Maersk emits about 36m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in greenhouse gases, with container ships accounting for about 98 per cent. Mr Toft said the company had been able to keep emissions stable for a decade despite significant growth, meaning that on a per container basis, carbon emissions had fallen 46 per cent since 2007. Container ship-

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ping has long been in the sights of environmentalists due to its use of dirty fuel but the industry has often resisted radical change, arguing it could disrupt global trade or make it more expensive.

Regulations from 2020 will cut the high levels of sulphur in bunker fuel, and the International Maritime Organization, the UN regulator, has agreed emissions should be halved by 2050. But Mr Toft and others say more is needed.

"We've been able to absorb the last 10 years' growth without adding to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It's a good starting point but it's not enough . . . Not just governments and countries, but also companies and industries need to make a change," he said.

Maersk is aiming to meet its target without buying carbon offsets.

See Lex

## Transport

