FROM FARM TO FLIGHT: QANTAS TO OPERATE WORLD'S FIRST US-AUSTRALIA BIOFUEL FLIGHT

News / Airlines



Qantas announced it will operate the world's first bio-fuel flight between the United States and Australia.

The Los Angeles to Melbourne flight will take place early next year, in collaboration with World Fuel Services and Altair Fuels, and will see Qantas' new Dreamliner being powered by Brassica Carinata (carinata), a non-food, industrial type of mustard seed. Carinata produces high quality oil, ideal for aviation biofuel, bio-jet for aircraft and bio-diesel for airport vehicles.

The news of the flight follows Qantas' siging of a landmark partnership with Agrisoma Biosciences (Agrisoma), the Canadian based agricultural-technology – company who developed the carinata seed.

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The two organisations will work with Australian farmers to grow the country's first commercial aviation biofuel seed crop by 2020.

Qantas International CEO, Alison Webster said the historic flight and the partnership mark the first step in developing an aviation biofuel supply in Australia.

"We are constantly looking for ways to reduce carbon emissions across our operations but when it comes to using renewable jet fuel, until now, there has not been a locally grown option at the scale we need to power our fleet.

"Our work with Agrisoma will enable Australian farmers to start growing today for the country's biofuel needs of the future. The trans-Pacific biofuel flight is a demonstration of what can be achieved locally.

"The longer-term strategic goal of the partnership is to grow 400,000 hectares of carinata which would yield over 200 million litres of bio-jet fuel each year.

"This will support the development of a renewable jetfuel supply and bio-refinery in Australia to power our fleet and further reduce carbon emissions across our operations."

Carinita is a 'drop-in' crop and requires no specialised production or processing techniques. It is water efficient and The University of Queensland field trials in Gatton, Queensland, and in Bordertown, South Australia, have demonstrated it should do very well in the Australian climate.

It is sown in either fallow areas where food crops fail or in between regular crop cycles, known as "cover cropping". Rotational or break-crops improvessoil quality, reduces erosion for food crops and provides farmers with additional annual income.

Agrisoma CEO, Steve Fabijanski, said carinata-based fuel offers a significant reduction in carbon emissions.

"Our commercial operations in the USA, South American and Europe are certified as producing fuels with more than 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions in comparison to standard petroleum based fuel," said Mr Fabijanski.

"Importantly for farmers, the crushed seed also produces a high-quality, high-protein, non-GMO meal for the Australian livestock, dairy and poultry market."

University of Queensland's Dr. Anthony van Herwaarden leads the seed crop trials with Agrisoma in Australia.

"The 2017 trials in Queensland and South Australia demonstrated that carinata can be grown successfully in Australia. Expanding the trials in 2018 will begin the scale-up process to commercial production in the years ahead," said Dr van Herwaarden.

Renewable jet fuel is chemically equivalent to, and meets, the same technical, performance and safety standards as conventional jet fuel.

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