

Garuda to use biofuel in 2016 to reduce emissions

National flag carrier PT Garuda Indonesia is planning to mix avtur (aviation turbine fuel) with biofuel starting in 2016, to help reduce its carbon emissions.

Garuda Indonesia operational director Capt. Novianto Herupratomo said on Tuesday the airline had taken several measures to protect the environment, including by preparing to switch from fossil fuel to clean energy.

However, the state-owned carrier's commitment to supporting the use of clean energy will be highly dependent on the availability of the crude palm oil (CPO)-based biofuel that is currently being tested at state-owned oil and gas company PT Pertamina's laboratory.

"We hope that the biofuel can be produced on a large scale so the price will be relatively the same as avtur. Hopefully [biofuel can be] cheaper than avtur," Novianto told reporters.

All aircraft operated by Garuda were already equipped with the ability to use biofuel, and the carrier would soon prepare aircraft for a trial, he added.

Garuda needs about 1.8 billion liters of avtur per year to operate a variety of aircraft that it owns. In 2016, Garuda's jet fuel consumption is expected to reach 2 billion liters per year.

In December last year, Transportation Minister EE Mangindaan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Jero Wacik on renewable energy in the aviation sector.

Under the MoU, the government targeted reducing the use of fossil fuel in the aviation sector by mixing avtur with 2 percent biofuel in 2016 and planned to increase the amount to 3 percent in 2020.

Following the MoU, a working team that consists of 14 institutions — including the government, the aviation industry, fuel producers and researchers — was formed to begin biofuel production, and the Agriculture Ministry was tasked with providing the plantations to supply the CPO.

As evidence of the government's commitment to realize the 2 percent biofuel target, the government held a workshop attended by all stakeholders on Tuesday to realize the initiative, said Transportation Ministry director general for air transportation Santoso Eddy Wibowo.

"The program to mitigate emissions in the country's air transportation sector is in line with global plans to increase energy efficiency, both through technology improvements and operational efficiency," Eddy said.

The number of aircraft operating in the country grew from 962 aircraft in 2008 to 1,319 aircraft by the end of 2012, while passenger numbers rose from 41.5 million in 2008 to 77.2 million last year, ministry data shows.

The ministry had also encouraged shipping lines to start converting to liquefied natural gas (LNG) from oil, according to Bobby Mamahit, director general for sea transportation.