

# Global 0.5% sulphur cap will enter into force in 2020

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IMO

IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) has agreed on a 2020 implementation date for the global 0.5% sulphur cap. From this year on, sulphur emissions from marine fuels will be restricted under MARPOL Annex VI.

The decision has been awaited by the industry as it needs to prepare ships for compliance, which could mean installing scrubbers to clean exhaust gas or fit ships to run on alternative fuels like LNG or methanol.

Environmental groups Transport & Environment and Seas At Risk welcomed the 2020 sulphur cap: "This will reduce SO<sub>2</sub> emissions - which cause premature deaths from diseases such as lung cancer and heart disease - from shipping by 85% compared with today's levels," they said in a joint statement.

Praise for the decision also came from MAN Diesel which tweeted that a cap on sulphur is "great" and shipping company Maersk, tweeting "CO<sub>2</sub> targets are win-win. They support trade, boost economic growth and benefit everyone".

As previously reported by [The Marine Professional](#), the implementation date was made dependent on the results of an official IMO study that found sufficient fuel below 0.5% sulphur content would be available by 2020.

However, shipping association BIMCO is contesting the official study, saying that it has failed to fully address the IMO's terms of reference - points that its own independent study has addressed.

Additionally, BIMCO claimed that potentially available oil is unsafe to store and use onboard ships. Furthermore, the association stated that there is lack of evidence on how an assessed shortage of sulphur removal capacity in refineries will be resolved so that enough low sulphur fuel would be in place by 2020. It also warned that the study fails to model the disruption that an overnight introduction of the global cap (from 31 December 2019) would cause.

As a result, the association funded an independent supplementary study (carried out by EnSys and Navigistics) to assess the availability of marine fuel, which addresses all the above issues. This study concluded that it is unlikely that there will be sufficient low sulphur fuel available in 2020, while maintaining uninterrupted supply of fuel to all other sectors of the global economy.

Lars Robert Pedersen, deputy secretary general at BIMCO, said: "There is clearly a need for additional analysis to ensure the supply chain for global trade is not seriously disrupted and developing nations are not hit hard by a lack of affordable energy".

The final decision on the implementation date was reached after a debate at the committee's 70th meeting on Thursday, 27 October 2016. The IMO will release a full statement on Friday, 28 October 2016, once the implementing resolution has been adopted.