

Newsletter 4



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THE HIGFLY PROJECT

As the HIGFLY project concludes on December 31, 2024, we proudly reflect on its transformative contributions to the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) technologies. Over the past four years, a consortium of nine partners, led by Eindhoven University of Technology, has worked to design cost-effective methods for converting second-generation biomass into SAF by designing state-of-the-art technologies, materials and chemo-catalytic processes.

HIGFLY focused on two primary pathways to maximise carbon efficiency and reduce environmental impacts:

1. C5 Sugar Conversion to Furfural

This pathway transformed lignocellulosic biomass into furfural through aldol condensation with acetone, producing SAF precursors. Subsequent hydrogenation and hydrodeoxygenation processes yielded hydrocarbons fit for aviation fuel, achieving an **88% carbon yield**—a significant step toward sustainable aviation solutions.

2. Cyclopentanone Pathway

Cyclopentanone, derived from furfural, underwent gas-phase condensation and hydrotreating to produce cyclic hydrocarbons. Operating at high temperatures with tailored catalysts, this pathway achieved near-complete hydrodeoxygenation, resulting in a hydrocarbon-rich product with minimal waste.

Central to these efforts was the **HiGee reactor**, an innovative technology developed to enhance furfural production. By employing high-gravity operations and advanced catalyst designs, the reactor has the potential to **increase furfural yield up to 90%** whilst reducing energy consumption and reactor size significantly compared to conventional methods.

Fuel samples from both pathways are rigorously being tested by Sky-NRG to ensure compliance with aviation standards, including critical properties like freezing point and flash point. These tests aim to validate HIGFLY's SAF as a viable alternative to fossil kerosene.

Beyond fuel production, the project explored advanced purification techniques using **deep eutectic solvents** and **supported liquid membranes**, enhancing extraction efficiency and overall sustainability. A comprehensive Life Cycle Assessment demonstrated considerable greenhouse gas emission reductions, whilst the project's socio-economic analysis highlighted benefits such as rural job creation and economic growth.

HIGFLY's groundbreaking work advances the EU's climate goals and supports the aviation industry's transition toward a **net-zero future**. By unlocking the potential of renewable chemicals like furfural, HIGFLY has set the stage for sustainable innovations across aviation and related industries. Keep reading to learn more about HIGFLY's potential impact on the future of sustainable aviation.



PROJECT PROGRESS

Optimising Aqueous Phase Reforming for Sustainable Hydrogen Production from Aqueous Side Streams

The report, "Valorisation of Light Oxygenates Present in Aqueous Side Streams via Aqueous Phase Reforming", details Johnson Matthey's research on converting oxygenates in aqueous side streams to hydrogen (H2) through aqueous phase reforming (APR). This work involves testing various model aqueous feeds and catalysts...

Pioneering Biofuel Production: Transforming Biomass into Sustainable Aviation Fuel

In an effort to advance sustainable aviation, researchers from TNO and Fraunhofer UMSICHT have developed innovative methods to produce biofuel from biomass feedstocks, focusing on converting five-carbon saccharide fractions from lignocellulosic biomass into jet fuel. The aim is to demonstrate these technologies...

Sustainability Assessment of the HIGFLY Process: Advancing Sustainable Aviation Fuel Production

The HIGFLY project aims to develop advanced technologies for producing sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) using hemicellulose C5 sugar streams from lignocellulosic biorefineries. Researchers from ifeu have evaluated the sustainability performance of the HI-GFLY process through environmental...



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SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Catalytic Condensation of Biobased Molecules for Jet Fuel Synthesis

This work evaluates a process for the production of renewable jet fuel hydrocarbons using biobased precursors derived from 2nd generation biomass hemicellulose. A set of promising basic solid formed catalysts was benchmarked in lab-scale continuous fixed bed reactors to evaluate their catalytic performance in the cross-condensation of furfural and acetone and the self-condensation of cyclopentanone at two different temperature regimes.

For the low temperature liquid process (80-120 °C), a hydrotalcite and a metal-organic-framework catalyst were most active and stable up to 53 h on stream, with high conversions (> 85 %) and favouring the formation of C13 over C8 products. For the high temperature gas-phase process (280-360 °C), a metal doped alumina catalyst was most active, with stable conversion (40-45 %) and a product distribution favouring C10 over C15 molecules.

The two process regimes (low and high temperature) can provide flexibility in the production of biobased hydrocarbons for use in the aviation sector. Catalyst deactivation was observed due to strong carbon adsorption; however, most active materials could be regenerated via calcination.

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Intensifying cyclopentanone synthesis from furfural using supported copper catalysts

This work addresses catalytic strategies to intensify the synthesis of cyclopentanone, a bio-based platform chemical and a potential SAF precursor, via Cu-catalyzed furfural hydrogenation in aqueous media. When performed in a single step, using either uniform or staged catalytic bed configuration, high temperature and hydrogen pressures (180°C and 38 bar) are necessary for maximum CPO yields (37 and 49%, respectively). Parallel furanic ring hydrogenation of furfural and polymerisation of intermediates, namely furfuryl alcohol (FFA), limit CPO yields.

Employing a two-step configuration with optimal catalyst bed can curb this limitation. First, the furanic ring hydrogenation can be suppressed by using milder conditions (i.e., 150°C and 7 bar H2, and 14 seconds of residence time). Second, FFA hydrogenation using tandem catalysis, i.e., a mix of β -zeolite and Cu/ZrO2, at 180°C, 38 bar H2 and 0.6 gFFA g-1 cat hr-1, allows sufficient time for CPO formation and minimises polymerisation of FFA, thereby resulting in 60% CPO yield. Therefore, this work recommends a split strategy to produce CPO from furfural. Such modularity may aid in addressing flexible market needs.

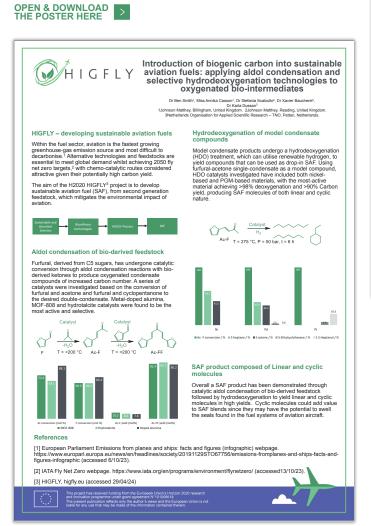
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TECHNICAL POSTERS



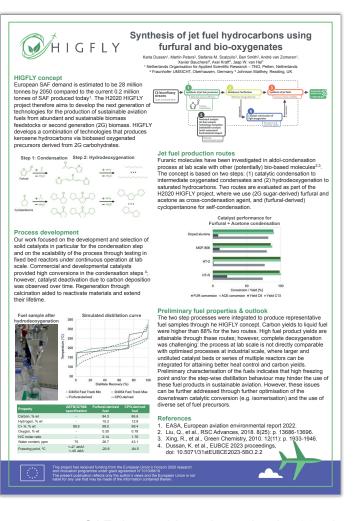
Introduction of biogenic carbon into sustainable aviation fuels: applying aldol condensation and selective hydrodeoxygenation technologies to oxygenated bio-intermediates

Within the fuel sector, aviation is the fastest growing greenhouse gas emission source and the most difficult to decarbonise. Alternative technologies and feedstocks are essential to meet global demand whilst achieving 2050 net zero targets, with chemo-catalytic routes considered attractive given their potentially high carbon yield.



Synthesis of jet fuel hydrocarbons using furfural and bio-oxygenates

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European SAF demand is estimated to be 28 million tonnes by 2050 compared to the current 0.2 million tonnes of SAF produced today1. The H2020 HIGFLY project therefore aims to develop the next generation of technologies for the production of sustainable aviation fuels from abundant and sustainable biomass feedstocks or second generation (2G) biomass. HIGFLY develops a combination of technologies that produces kerosene hydrocarbons via biobased oxygenated precursors derived from 2G carbohydrates.

Converting bio-based cyclopentanone into jet fuel hydrocarbons

OPEN & DOWNLOAD THE POSTER HERE Converting bio-based cyclopentanone into jet fuel hydrocarbons HIGFLY Stefania M. Scalzullo³, Ben Smith³, And cherel³, Axel Kraft¹, Jaap W. van Hal² ausen, Germany ² Netherlands Organi Petten, Netherlands ² Johnson Matthe 🜌 Fraunhofer UMSICHT The HIGFLY approach In 2021 the International Air Transportation Agency (JATA) members agreed in a net zero CO₂ emission in capacities of 300 million litres SAF in 2022 must be increased drastically. A potential production of 30 billion litres is a scenario for 2030. In this context the H2020 project HIGFLY develops novel technologies and processes to contribute to the increasing dramad on SAF. The starting point for the HIGFLY approach are sustainable feedstocks and second generation biomasses which are processed to bio-based oxygenates like cyclopentanone. These precursors were condensed to larger molecules and subsequently hydrocdeoxygenated to pure jet fuel hydrocarbons. Condensation and Hydrodeoxygenation reactions ào ajajo DCPOr BCP Continuous hydrodeoxygenation The bicyclic C10 and tricyclic C15 jet fiel Intermediates were hydrodeoxygenation a becchosing bick for the solution of side products i.e. from cracking. The intermediates were hydrodeoxygenated three times at identical conditions which are 270 °C reaction temperature, a WHSV of 10 h1. The intermediates were hydrodeoxygene excess compared to the stoichiometric demand was 4. The conversion of the intermediates increases to 100 % after the thrid HDO, while an overall BCP yield of 95,8 % was reached. Liquid products from CPO self-condensation Spent catalysts from condensation Conversions and Yield of bicyclic molecules during HDO runs sion DCPO Conversion DCPOe S Yield BCP 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 Yield [mol-%] Gas phase condensation Fraunhofer UMSICHT investigated a high-temperatu gas phase condensation for the synthesis of jet fuel precursors. Typical reaction parameters are 320 to 560 °C and a WHSV of 6 mmolg. ¹ h⁻¹ Different commercial and scientific catalyst have been tested igated a high-temperature Conversion 1st HDO 2nd HDO Number of Hydroden ted for their performance and stability. Finally, a novel basic catalyst developed by Johnson Matthey was chosen for Discussion & outlook The condensation of cyclopentanone and the subsequent hydrodexygenation of the jet fuel intermediates are a pathway to cyclic jet fuel components. Especially cyclic non-aromatic compounds are seen as key components for the biobased fuels. For example, the freezing point of BCP a-38° C and therefore significantly lower than the freezing point of BCP a-38° C and hydrocarbons.² For the synthesis of bi and tricyclic hydrocarbons from cyclopentanone a two-step process has been developed in lab scale. The hydrodexogenation was operated stable but the condensation reaction shows a fast catalysis deactivation. The deactivation was addressed by linetimendiate regenation. Nevertheless, more research is needed for a large-scale process design. the process development. As expected, the catalyst showed a significant higher CPO conversion at 360 °C compared to the results at 280 °C. Additionally, at 360 °C tricyclic molecules were formed. Each experiment shows a decreasing catalytic activity between 50 and 80 h time on stream. rsion and Yields of cyclopentanone condensation © Conversion CPO III Yield DCPOe Yield DCPO III Yield TCPO/TCPOe Yield [mol-%] 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 conversion, Keterences 1. IATA, Annual Review 2023: p. 27-29 2. Muldoon, J.A; Harvey B.G., ChemSusChem, 2020. 13122): p. 5777-5807 3,0 6,0 2,6 0,0

n 2021 the International Air Transportation Agency (IATA) members agreed to a net zero CO2 emissions target by 2050. To reach this goal the global production capacities of 300 million litres SAF in 2022 must be increased drastically. A potential production of 30 billion litres is a scenario for 2030.In this context the H2020 project HIGFLY develops novel technologies and processes to contribute to the increasing demand on SAF. The starting point for the HIGFLY approach are sustainable feedstocks and second-generation biomasses which are processed to bio-based oxygenates like cyclopentanone. These precursors were condensed to larger molecules and subsequently hydro-deoxygenated to pure jet fuel hydrocarbons.

Assessment of Bio-Advanced Synthetic Aviation Fuel Hydrocarbons Production from Biorefinery Streams using Furfural and Ketones: A Techno-Economic Analysis

Biomass plays a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the aviation industry. The European Commission, through the REfuelEU aviation initiative as part of the Fit for 55 package, acknowledges this and encourages investments in cleaner technologies for sustainable aviation fuels. In this context, the HIGFLY project aims to develop advanced bio-jet fuels by converting underutilised hemicellulose (C5) fractions into hydrocarbons suitable for blending with jet fuel. Supporting experimental work, the current work presents process design for

OPEN & DOWNLOAD THE POSTER HERE Assessment of Bio-Advanced Synthetic Aviation Fuel Hydrocarbons Production from Biorefinery Streams HIGFLY using Furfural and Ketones: A Techno-Economic Analysis Stefania Luzzi¹, Jan Wilco Dijkstra¹, Karla Dussan¹, Andre van Zomeren¹ 1 The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research TNO, Petten, the Net Introduction Biomass plays a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the aviation industry. The European Commission, through the REfuelEU aviation initiative as part of the Fit for 55 package, acknowledges this and encourages investments in cleaner technologies for sustainable aviation fuels. In this context, the HIGELY project aims to develop advanced biojet fuels by converting underutilized hemicellulose (C5) fractions into hydrocarbons suitable for blending with jet fuel. Supporting experimental work, the current work presents into a subscience of different technological pathways and Organisation for Applies Sector III. Research III. Research III. Starting points - Conversions based on current status of technology development based on experimental results - C5 sugars: biorefinery by-product (202 EUR/tonne) - Import green hydrogen (2500 EUR/tonne) - Revenues for side products (alkanes <</p> Key results and outlook Scenario A (Furfural-derived): • Relies on import precursor, a • High carbon efficiency (67%) acetone suitable for blending with jet fuel. Supporting experimental work, the current work presents process design for different technological pathways and evaluating the technical and economic aspects for long-term sustainability and commercialization of these sustainable aviation fuels. High carbon entitletity (67%) Lowest heat demand cenario B (Furfural-Cyclopentanone (CPO) derived); More complex process (involving an additional step) Lower carbon efficiency (49%) due to low CPO yields Sub-optimal heat demand: water-based process with low Sub-optimal neat demand: water-based process with low concentration (C(yclopentanone (CPO)-derived): Highest complexity process Lowest carbon efficiency (38%) due to poor CPO yields Highest heat demand: water-based process with low concentrations and full conversion of furfural to CPO Method 8000 cess alternatives Within the HIGFLY project, three main alternatives were investigated to obtain bioba 4000 ed SAF 2000 onents derived from C5 sugars through nediates furfural (A), furfural-cyclopentanone components (B), and cyclopentanone (C). -4000 Cyclopentanone - derived fuel sensitivity analysis н. 100 Outlook Outlook Currenty, Scenario A appears to be the most economically attractive option, requiring acetone import. Scenarios B and C may hold promise for the future if improved carbon efficiency and higher furfural concentrations in the feed can be achieved through further technology development.



RELATED PROJECTS



The TAKE-OFF project, funded under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, is focused on developing advanced technologies to produce next-generation **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)**. This project employs an innovative process that captures **CO**₂ from industrial flue gases or directly from the air, combines it with **renewable hydrogen**, and converts it into light olefins—chemical intermediates that are subsequently upgraded into SAF. This method offers significant advantages in terms of energy efficiency and cost compared to existing powerto-liquid alternatives.

TAKE-OFF aims to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of aviation by replacing conventional fossil-based jet fuels with synthetic SAF. The project is expected to achieve a **25% improvement in carbon and hydrogen efficiency**, a **36% reduction in production costs**, and a **20% reduction in total** emissions compared to current alternatives. Additionally, it eliminates sulphur emissions entirely, aligning closely with European Green Deal targets and the Renewable Energy Directive II objectives.

The project also focuses on demonstrating the economic and environmental viability of its technology through pilot-scale implementation and comprehensive life-cycle assessments. By advancing the production technologies from Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 3 to 5, TAKE-OFF supports the broader adoption of SAF within the aviation industry. To learn more, visit their website >

https://takeoff-project.eu/



UPCOMING EVENTS

Fuels of the Future 2025

Berlin, Germany 20th – 21st January 2025

Over the past 20 years, the "Fuels of the Future" international conference has become established as the top event for the European biofuels industry and likewise an important forum for discussions on developing renewable mobility in Germany, Europe and internationally.



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Bio360 Expo

Nantes, France 5th – 6th February 2025

Bio360 is the reference meeting point for international professionals from multi-disciplinary backgrounds who embody the conviction and an unswerving resolve to find and develop through collaboration and vision, the urgently needed sustainable solutions to the biggest problems of our time, of our history. To transition us away from our fossil dependence to a world where atmospheric CO2 is reduced to safe levels and carbon circulates freely and renewably within the biosphere and where our energy and material needs are met.

LIGNOFUELS 2025

Helsinki, Finland 12th – 13th February 2025

Building on the success of Lignofuels 2024 which brought 150+ senior level industry professionals to Helsinki in February 2024, we are delighted to be returning to Finland for the 5th consecutive year for the 2025 edition of the conference, taking place on 12th & 13th February 2025 in Helsinki, Finland.

The conference will once again bring together key lignofuels and advanced biofuels and materials stakeholders to join our forum discussions and networking, representing the entire value chain of the industry.

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The Netherlands' Catalysis and Chemistry Conference

Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands 10th – 12th March 2025

NCCC attracts about 500 participants, including around 100 scientists from industry. The meeting comprises plenary and keynote lectures by invited speakers and selected oral papers and posters. Scientists, and especially PhD-students, are encouraged to submit abstracts so they can present their work, discuss it with leading scientists and representatives from industry. NCCC offers a unique, international forum to exchange innovative ideas between academic and industrial scientists in a broad area of catalysis and chemistry research and technology.





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PROJECT FINAL VIDEO

Advancing Sustainable Aviation Fuel & Biobased Chemicals: Results from the HIGFLY Project

Discover the groundbreaking advancements of the HIGFLY project, a collaboration of nine partners coordinated by Eindhoven University of Technology, dedicated to transforming second-generation biomass into sustainable aviation fuel. Over four years, HIGFLY developed two innovative production pathways designed to maximize carbon efficiency, minimize waste, and produce high-quality advanced biofuels. At the heart of this effort is the HiGee reactor, a revolutionary technology helped by novel catalyst design improving furfural production—a versatile platform chemical with vast industrial applications. Learn how these breakthroughs align with EU climate goals, fostering greener aviation and a more resilient bio-based economy.



WATCH THE VIDEO D

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

A lthough the HIGFLY project officially concludes on December 31st, 2024, there are still a number of scientific papers that will be published on our communication channels and further development and testing of the HiGee reactor to be reported.

You can stay up to date with these developments by visiting the HIGFLY Community on the Zenodo online repository.

Also, we will notify you through our website and social media channels whenever there are any research updates. See you there!

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Don't forget you can stay up to date by visiting our website:

www.higfly.eu/

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