



## **Air New Zealand to use jatropha jet fuel**

By Kris Bevill

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As U.S. airlines struggle to find ways to cope with ever-increasing jet fuel prices, one international airline carrier is taking steps to ensure a future that includes cheaper, sustainable fuels. Air New Zealand has announced it plans to test renewable diesel made from jatropha oil in one of its Boeing 747-400 aircraft later this year. The airline hopes to be using sustainable fuels for 10 percent of its annual needs, approximately one million barrels of fuel, by 2013.

The test flight will take place in the fourth quarter of 2008, following regulatory approvals and fuel testing by the engine manufacturer. The airline said it will be the world's first test flight using jatropha oil in a large passenger aircraft.

The jatropha oil used for the test will be acquired from plantations in southeastern Africa and India. Air New Zealand required the product to be derived from land that has not been forest or virgin grassland within the past 20 years, and the plantations must be environmentally sustainable.

According to Air New Zealand Chief Executive Officer Rob Fyfe, the airline has three non-negotiable criteria that any sustainable fuel must meet for its program. "Firstly, it must be environmentally sustainable and not compete with existing food stocks. Secondly, the fuel must be at least as good as the product we use today. Finally, it should be significantly cheaper than existing fuel supplies and be readily available," he said. "Jatropha satisfies all our criteria and furthermore it is likely to be available in the necessary commercial quantities to meet our needs within five years." Fyfe added that the airline has already had multiple offers from companies in Asia and Africa who claim they can guarantee adequate supply to meet Air New Zealand's 2013 goal and the cost for jatropha is 20 to 30 percent less than jet fuel.

Jatropha will most likely not be the only fuel tested by Air New Zealand. The airline has also expressed interest in jet fuel from algae. Aquaflo Bionomic Corp., a New Zealand company, has been working for some time to produce jet fuel from algae and has been collaborating with Boeing Co. on research in that area.

Air New Zealand is an international and domestic airline group that offers both passenger and cargo transport. The airline's international services include destinations in Australia, Asia, the South West Pacific, the United Kingdom and North America. The airline currently owns and leases a total of 98 aircraft.