

MindsinMotion.net jubilee: the glooming view of SEKAB's Per Carstedt

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To celebrate the first *MindsinMotion.net* jubilee we go back in time with various speakers at our founding conference.

Per Carstedt is CEO of SEKAB, one of Europe's leading ethanol producers which is a member of the Swedish [BioAlcohol Fuel Foundation](#) (BAFF).

Escape the dilemma

Five years ago Carstedt tackled a well-known problem in the field of biofuels, giving a presentation in the session 'Kickstarting markets: breaking the chicken-and-egg dilemma'. Today, he says, at least in Sweden that dilemma has been solved, for both the cars and the infrastructure are there.

"There are 35 different vehicle models and 45 per cent of the filling stations provide biofuels," Carstedt says.

Crucial to this, according to the SEKAB website, was an agreement between BAFF, several Swedish municipalities and Swedish largest gasoline vendor OKQ8. Under the Bioethanol for Sustainable Transport (BEST) programme Biofuel Region municipalities started purchasing ethanol-operated cars and E85 (ethanol fuel) pumps were installed. Then carmakers also began to show interest in the development of new ethanol-operated models.

"In 2004 we had a hundred bioethanol filling stations, now we have fifteen hundred," says Carstedt.

[F080 Image 1](#)

Dominant

But that is only the case in Sweden. Carstedt is not the least bit optimistic about the rest of Europe and the world as a whole. Although he says the Netherlands are "a country and a people that are progressing," oil companies still have the upper hand.

“Of course, Government are defining policies,” says Carstedt, but Shell hasn't helped the cause of bioethanol. “Although the production of sugar cane can be competitive to oil in terms of prices and an 85 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions can be realised with bioethanol, gasoline is still the dominant fuel.

“The political system is driven by elections and industry is driven by commercial interest, it is as simple as that,” Carstedt states. “They are not interested in changing the system.”

And what about the general public, do car buyers and drivers have a role in this?

“They should put pressure on the politicians,” says Carstedt.

Too little, too late

Even though the chicken-and-egg dilemma has vanished, Carstedt is even more pessimistic about the future than he was five years ago.

“Things should move faster,” he says. “The climate change was already an issue five years ago, and because the change towards renewable fuels doesn't go fast enough we'll end up with serious problems,” he predicts.

“It is just a matter of deciding, not only to use renewable fuels, but also to embrace hybrids, electric vehicles and so forth.” Carstedt stresses that we need all options in order to thwart climate change. But as it is now, “it is too little, too late.”

Chain

Nevertheless, he will keep up the good work.

“We'll continue to try to get both the production system and the use of biofuels sustainable,” he says.

BAFF presents the biofuels system as a six-link [chain](#): feedstock, production, vehicles, distribution, external effects (environmental economy) and rules (taxes and laws). There is much to be done to make the entire chain sustainable.

Carstedt: "If we want to do it, we can do it." But he has little confidence that we want to.