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ABOUT HC GROUP

Founded in 2003, HC Group is an established retained search, intelligence, and talent advisory firm, offering tailored solutions to organisations operating across the international energy and commodities markets globally.

Headquartered in London with representation in key hubs across Europe, North & South America, Middle East and Asia, HC Group operates as one global team, leveraging our local presence to offer our clients global access to the talent communities and insights that matter.

Overview of Talent Trends in the Biofuels Community

Recent conferences, including the AFOA in Nashville and the Argus Biofuels Conference in London, have highlighted significant challenges and transformations within the renewable fuels market. Regulatory changes, market pressures, and evolving environmental policies are reshaping the talent landscape, compelling industry players to adapt their strategies.

The renewable diesel market is currently facing a paradox: rapid production growth has resulted in an oversupply that is squeezing profitability. Large-scale producers with strong financial backing can weather this storm, while smaller players struggle to remain afloat.

Looking ahead, upcoming regulatory changes are expected to further reshape the market. In January 2025, the Clean Fuel Production Tax Credit (45Z) will replace the existing Biomass-based Diesel Blender's Tax Credit.

This transition is anticipated to reduce imports and provide some relief from the current oversupply. However, it introduces uncertainty as companies will need time to adapt to the new tax incentives. California's renewable fuel policies remain particularly noteworthy, expressing skepticism toward certain feedstocks like soy-based renewable diesel, which could add additional regulatory hurdles for U.S. producers.

The uncertainty ahead of the new year along with squeezed margin pressures have led to stalling contract negotiations, leading some plants to operate below capacity. Smaller players could face particularly tough conditions in the first quarter of 2025, especially those reliant on expensive feedstocks like soybean oil. In contrast, larger integrated producers with greater financial flexibility are better positioned, as they can utilize production for compliance purposes rather than purchasing costly carbon credits.

The sentiment at the Argus Biofuels Conference was notably more optimistic for the European biofuels trading industry. After a challenging 2023 and first half of 2024, marked by a surge of cheap advanced biodiesel imports flooding the market, recent legislative changes—such as tariffs on Chinese biofuels imports by the EU and regulations preventing ticket carry-overs into 2025 and 2026 in Germany—have revitalized trading activity. This has prompted a noticeable increase in investment fund entrants into the biodiesel industry, reflecting a renewed confidence in the market.

While short-term challenges persist, the long-term outlook for renewable diesel is promising. Global sustainability mandates and rising biofuel demand position the sector for future growth. Large producers capable of navigating the current volatility are likely to capture significant market share, even as

many operate at reduced capacities—around 50 to 65 percent—not significantly lower than the 75 percent average for 2024. Innovation and adaptability will be key, with many companies repurposing existing facilities to meet shifting market demands.

The evolving biofuels market is also reshaping talent acquisition needs in several critical ways. Professionals with robust networks in feedstock origination, particularly those skilled in tallow and efficiency-focused crop production, remain in high demand. Furthermore, talent experienced in navigating heavily regulated markets will be well-equipped to adapt to the regulatory landscape shifts expected in 2025, positioning companies for quicker and more effective starts. Additionally, engineers with the capability to modify and repurpose production facilities, ensuring operational resilience and avoiding issues like catalyst burnouts, are increasingly sought after as operational efficiency grows in importance.

Investor confidence in the sector remains strong, with new entrants such as SquarePoint Commodities and Galaxy Energy Group signaling ongoing capital investment. In Europe, stricter sustainability mandates and continued investment in renewable fuels bode well for the sector's long-term growth. In conclusion, while the renewable diesel market faces short-term difficulties, its alignment with global sustainability goals and long-term growth potential is evident. Regulatory shifts, strategic adjustments, and a focus on talent acquisition will be critical for companies looking to navigate the complexities of this evolving industry. The outlook remains positive for those able to adapt effectively.

Notable Talent Moves

Ash Creek Renewables

Len Federico has joined Ash Creek Renewables in Houston as Managing Director of Trading. He was previously Head of Supply for the Americas at Nestle.

Axpo

Pierre Chapuis has joined Axpo in Geneva as Head of Oil and Green Fuels Trading. He was previously a Senior Crude Trader at Paramount Energy and Commodities.

BB Energy

Batu Akbal has joined BB Energy in Amsterdam as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biofuels Trader for STX Group.

BP

Barrett Barr has joined BP in Chicago in a Global Business Development of Novel Feedstocks role. He was previously Head of Business Development of Seeds at Syngenta.

Jaime Goehner has joined BP in Chicago in a Global Business Development – Novel Feedstocks role. She was previously a General Manager, Specialty Oilseeds Crush at ADM.

Shelley Wheeler has joined BP in London as Global Head of Portfolio Biofuels. She was previously a Biofuels Business Opportunity Manager at Shell.

Chevron Renewable Energy Group

Emiel Geelen has joined Chevron Renewable Energy Group in Amsterdam as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biofuels Trader at Excellence New Energy BV in Rotterdam.

Energy Aspects

Monika Rajoria has joined Energy Aspects in London as a Biofuels Analyst. She was previously a Biofuels Analyst at S&P Global.

Eni

James Snouffer has joined Eni in Houston as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a biofuels trader at Freepoint.

EET Fuels

Glenn Harvey has joined EET Fuels, in London, as Head of Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biodiesel Trader for Petroineos in London.

ExxonMobil

Leon Lim has joined ExxonMobil in Singapore as a Biofuels Originator. He was previously a Biofuels Originator at Mabanaft.

Galaxy Energy Group

Grégory Vicens has joined Galaxy Energy Group in Monaco as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biodiesel Trader at Avril in Paris.

JST Global

Trent Weatherly has joined JST Global as Director of Business Development. He was previously the Director of Renewable Feedstocks at Calumet.

Mabanaft

Claire Foster has joined Mabanaft in London as a Biofuels Originator. She was previously a Lead Originator at Fidelis New Energy in Houston.

David Hodgson has joined Mabanaft in Singapore as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biofuels Trader at Olam.

Maersk Oil Trading

Felicia Ng has joined Maersk Oil Trading in Singapore as a Green Fuels Originator. She previously worked at Shell.

Montana Renewables

Matthew Upmeyer has joined Montana Renewables as Director of Feedstock Sourcing & Strategy. He was previously Head of Trading for Fats & Oils at Harvestone Group.

Olam Agri

Chase Lansford has joined Olam Agri in Houston as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a trader at Pilot Flying J.

OMV

Raymond Ong has joined OMV in Singapore as Senior Biofuels Origination Expert. He was previously a Renewable Fuels Feedstock Trader at Targray.

Kenneth Lek has joined OMV in Singapore as a Renewable Feedstocks Originator, He was previously a Senior Executive at KNC BioEnergy.

PetroChina

Regina Chok has joined PetroChina in Singapore as a Biofuels Trader. She previously worked PNX Petroleum as a Biofuels Originator.

Petroineos Trading

Alex Pechman has joined Petroineos Trading in London as Biofuels Book Lead. He was previously Trading Director at FincoEnergies.

Phillips 66

Ryan Orr has joined Philips 66 as Director of Origination in Canada, he was previously the VP of Feedstock Supply & Product Marketing at Tidewater Renewables.

Pilot Flying J

Derek Barone has joined Pilot Flying J in Houston as Head of Renewable Diesel. He was previously Director Supply & Trading of Biofuels at Valero

Saint Paul Commodities

Derek Michalsk has joined Saint Paul Commodities as International Originator, Renewable Feedstocks. He was previously Director of Trade at International Feed Corporation.

StoneX Group

James Pirolli has joined StoneX Group in Des Moines as SVP of Renewables. He was previously CCO at Summit Carbon.

Squarepoint

Lena Kollortz has joined Squarepoint Commodities in Geneva as a Biofuels Paper Trader. She was previously a Biodiesel Trader for Bunge in Geneva.

STX Group

Ruben Tins has joined STX Group in Amsterdam as a Business Development Director. He was previously Head of Business Development and Origination at Chevron.

Akman Özel has joined STX Group in Amsterdam as a Renewable Fuels Analyst. He was previously a Principal Biofuels Analyst at S&P Global in Paris.

Stuart McLean has joined STX Group in Amsterdam as a Renewable Gas Originator. He was previously a Biofuels Analyst at BP.

Targray

Erik Rietkerk has joined Targray in Geneva as the Global Head of Agricultural Commodities and Co-Head of Biofuels & Bio-Feedstocks. He was previously the CEO of Argent Energy in London.

Tüpraş Trading

Derek Ikwueke has joined Tüpraş Trading in London as a Biofuels Trader. He was previously a Biofuels Trader at STX.

ABOUT US

HC Group

Our track record and established brand enables client access to both active and passive candidates. In addition, our strong network of relationships and understanding of underlying markets allows us to provide market context to all search processes and accurate candidate referencing throughout.

Our services include the following:

- Search Services
- Compensation Data & Advisory
- Competitive Analyses
- Diversity Studies
- Talent Pipelining & Succession Planning
- Behavioral Assessment

CONFIDENTIALITY & DISCRETION

We understand the importance of discretion. Whether reviewing leadership succession, evaluating compensation structures or undertaking a business critical hire, HC Group leverages its own brand to discreetly extract the necessary market intelligence and insight without compromising client confidentiality.

GLOBAL REACH

HC Group operates as one global team. With talent markets becoming increasingly fragmented and geographically dispersed, we leverage our local presence to offer global access to the talent communities and insights that matter.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

The reality is that for many organisations in our sector, diversity is still a box to tick rather than a strategic imperative. At HC Group, we are committed to ensuring that our clients have access to shortlists that reflect candidate diversity in all its forms.

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