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LNG bunkering: Much ado about nothing?

With just over a year until the IMO puts into place a 0.5% sulphur content cap on marine emissions, down from a current 3.5%, many players in both the LNG and shipping industries seem left cold by talk of LNG as the marine “fuel of the future”. Instead, the past year has seen a sharp rise in shipowners ordering scrubbers for their ships, which will allow them to continue using 3.5% sulphur content heavy fuel oil (HFO) after the cap. For their part, major bunker fuel suppliers, including Shell and ExxonMobil, insist that enough IMO-compliant fuels will be available to meet demand by 1 January 2020.

Where does this leave LNG bunkering? New orders for LNG-fuelled ships continue to be made, and ports around the world keep announcing plans to offer LNG bunkering services. But the segment’s critics, and even some of its supporters, say its growth rate is glacial and doubt that LNG as marine fuel will ever shake off its ‘niche’ label and become mainstream.

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