

CMA CGM Joins Ranks of Methanol Pioneers Putting First Vessel in Service



CMA CGM placed its first methanol-fueled containership in service this week (CMA CGM)

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The French shipping group CMA CGM recently took delivery of its first dual-fuel methanol containership. While the group continues significant investments in LNG-fueled newbuilds it also recognized the need for diversified sources during this period of transition in the maritime industry.

The new vessel *CMA CGM Iron* departed Singapore on March 4 bound for the Khalifa port in the UAE on its first voyage. The vessel is joining the route between Ais and the Middle East Gulf region.

CMA CGM ordered 12 methanol-capable vessels from HD Hyundai Samho Heavy Industries in South Korea in 2023. The order was valued at \$2 billion with the series due for delivery in 2025 and 2026. Registered in Malta, CMA CGM is saying the container ship is “a new milestone on its group’s path toward net zero carbon by 2050.”

The naming ceremony for the new ship took place on February 17 in South Korea shortly before her delivery. *CMA CGM Iron* is 146,000 dwt with a capacity of approximately 13,000 TEU. The vessel measures 1,099 feet (335 meters). The sister ships, which will include *CMA CGM Cobalt*, *Argon*, *Platinum*, *Mercury*, *Helium*, *Krypton*, *Thorium*, *Osmium*, *Silver*, *Copper*, and *Gold* will be progressively deployed in 2025 and 2026.



CMA CGM Iron is the first of a new class of a dozen methanol-fueled containerships (CMA CGM)

This new class is the latest step in CMA CGM's effort with the company reporting it has invested nearly \$20 billion to order LNG and methanol-powered ships. In 2024, the Group took delivery of 12 new LNG-fueled vessels and was linked yesterday to a new \$2 billion order placed in China for another dozen LNG-fueled vessels. The group says that by 2029 it will have 153 ships capable of using low-carbon energies (biogas, biomethanol, and synthetic fuels) in its fleet. CMA CGM reports a total fleet currently of over 650 vessels with orders of nearly 100 new ships.

"In the future, the diversity of technologies and the availability of greener fuels, such as biomethane or biomethanol, will remain a major challenge for the CMA CGM Group and the industry," the company said last week in its annual financial results report.

Methanol continues to emerge as a fuel while concerns continue about the supply and the cost of the fuel. One key challenge is that it has a lower energy density than other alternatives. In part, this might account for a slower pace for additional orders for methanol-fueled ships. There are also reports within the industry that shipowners have revised building contracts with Alphaliner saying this week that Wan-Hai has approached shipbuilders in South Korea about possibly switching its order for eight 16,000 TEU ships to LNG engines.

While there were 166 new orders in 2024 according to DNV, no methanol-fueled orders have so far been placed in 2025. This compares with 44 orders in the first two months of this year for LNG-fueled vessels.

Overall, the methanol orderbook grew quickly in the past two years with containerships leading the sector. DNV calculates that there are 25 containerships currently in service able to use methanol which has caught up to the product tanker segment. However, the orderbook shows over 300 methanol ships scheduled by 2030, two-thirds are containerships.