

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002738/26
to the Commission
Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)
(1 July 2026)**

Subject: Engine damage caused by biofuel in inland shipping

In a few countries, inland navigation fuel is now blended with biological components, under the Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) and the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III).

The switch should not, in theory, cause problems for engines. However, concerns persist among some in the sector.

The Algemeene Schippers Vereeniging ASV, a Dutch inland shipping association, advised its members in May to bunker only unblended diesel. The organisation warned ‘that widely used biofuels, in particular FAME (Fatty Acid Methyl Ester), are causing technical problems’ ⁽¹⁾.

A boatmaster told me that he suspects that fuel containing animal fats damages engines, in particular the fuel pump and injectors.

Others, however, consider these concerns to be unjustified.

1. Does the Commission have any information indicating that fuel which fully complies with EN 590 and EN 14214 causes structural damage to engines under normal conditions of use?
2. Is the Commission prepared to standardise fuel and blending (HVO/FAME) for inland shipping in the same way as for road transport?

Submitted: 1.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(19 October 2026)**

The Commission is not aware of structural engine damage in inland waterway vessels resulting from the use of fuels compliant with the standards for diesel engines EN 590 and EN 14214.

It should, however, be noted, first, that the fuels and fuel blends permitted for use are determined by the engine manufacturer within the type-approval.

This information is normally available to vessel owners for safe operation. Second, a study by the Nederlandse *Organisatie voor toegepast-natuurwetenschappelijk onderzoek* dated on 17 April 2026 found that engines can be operated reliably with fuel blends containing of up to 30% biodiesel (i.e. B30 diesel), provided that appropriate safeguards are in place ⁽¹⁾.

The fuel to be used in inland navigation is subject to requirements by Directive 98/70/EC ⁽²⁾. In accordance with Article 4(2) of that directive, gas oils intended for use by non-road mobile machinery, including inland waterway vessels, must comply with the maximum permissible sulphur content of 10 mg/kg. At the moment, the Commission has no plans to amend these provisions.

¹ <https://scheepvaart.headliner.nl/item/asv-adviseert-fossiele-brandstof-te-blijven-gebruiken-schutveaer-13055>.

⁽¹⁾ See Dutch House of Representatives of the State General — Update on various research projects in the inland and maritime sector and follow-up to outstanding commitments: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2026Z15937&did=2026D35920 and <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2026D35925>.

⁽²⁾ Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 1998 relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Council Directive 93/12/EEC (OJ L 350, 28.12.1998, S. 58-68; ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1998/70/2023-11-20>).