



SPT Temadag: Water protection and the future of fuels

The latest edition of the SPT event brought together the Swedish and Nordic industry to discuss the challenges of biofuels, electrification and environmental protection in the petrol station market.

Sweden's fuel industry gathered in Stockholm on November 6 to discuss the state of the industry, fuels of the future and water protection areas. Authorities, oil companies, car manufacturers, suppliers and retailers from Sweden and elsewhere talked in detail about the adaptation of fuel stations to stricter environment regulations and the arrival of new fuel types. All presentations were simultaneously translated into English.

As one of the most environmentally-conscious countries, Sweden has set ambitious targets to reduce its greenhouse emissions. They plan to reduce the climate impact of the transport sector by 70% (excluding aviation) and to have a fossil-fuel-free vehicle fleet by 2030. Its heavy investment in alternative fuels such as biofuels and electric vehicles makes it an interesting case study for the future of mobility.

Water protection in Sweden

One of the key topics of the day was the protection of water areas in the Nordic country. Sweden currently has some 900,000 hectares of water protected areas (90% concerning groundwater). They range from small areas of 5 hectares to large spaces of up to 200,000 hectares. The challenges of having a fuel station in a water protection area are big, according to Susanna Hodgkin of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management.

Of the more than 3,000 gas stations currently operating in Sweden 191 are within water protected areas. A further 29 sites could soon be in a protected area as government agencies continue to expand the controlled areas.

As regulations around groundwater protection are currently being revised, the government may require the implementation of double-walled tanks in the following years. The increased presence of biofuels, far more corrosive than regular diesel and gasoline, will also be taken into account in the revision. Swedish retailers currently work with the regulations from Britain's APEA.

"We can improve the level of protection. I don't love the regulations from the APEA as they don't give

us flexibility. We know our machines better,” said Charlotte Holmstrand of Circle K.

The future of the fuel industry

Before the public’s attention turned to the future of cars and the fuelling industry, Jan-Erik Lindström, director of the SPT association, gave a detailed presentation on the development of Stage II vapour recovery in Sweden. Twenty percent of Swedish nozzles (some 4,000 units) still do not have this technology. With 90% of fumes recovered through Stage II, Jan-Erik pressed the industry to continue with the deployment.

More and more electric cars will enter the market, according to Per Hanarp of Volvo Cars. By 2025, around 20% of all cars in Sweden will be electric. Electric mobility, digitization and the shared economy will be the three elements that shape the future of the car business. “A car should be like an extension of your phone,” said Hanarp. Volvo is now working on Generation 3 engines – hybrid engines that improve drivability and reduce emissions.