

Press Release

4 July 2025

The “Blue Marlin” sets new standards for sustainable drive technologies in inland waterway shipping

Duisburg / Hamburg. This new addition to the fleet at HGK Shipping, Europe’s largest inland waterway shipping company, is setting new standards: the “Blue Marlin”, a dry goods vessel for Salzgitter AG, was officially named at a ceremony in Hamburg on 3 July, and it marks a ground-breaking achievement in several different ways. The new vessel combines a powerful diesel-electric, “future-fuel-ready” drive concept with the ability to operate in shallow waters – and has SEAFAR technology allowing remote-controlled navigation. A solar module system also generates up to 37,500 kilowatt hours of electricity per annum, which can be used to power the vessel too.

The “Blue Marlin” is the latest project to emerge from the long-standing cooperation arrangement between HGK Shipping and Salzgitter Flachstahl in the field of inland waterway shipping. The new dry goods vessel will mainly transport steel and bulk materials along the network of canals in north-west Germany – and therefore make the logistics operations at Salzgitter AG even more sustainable. After several trial journeys had been successfully completed, Julia Siemens-Pecher, the Head of Logistics Management at Peiner Träger GmbH, an independent operating subsidiary of Salzgitter AG, named the vessel yesterday during an official ceremony.

“The close partnership with Salzgitter AG is enabling us to specifically complete forward-looking projects. As we work together, we’re able to put innovative ideas into practice: ranging from emission-free solar technology to remote-controlled navigation for the vessels and even resource-saving drive systems in our fleet. The ‘Blue Marlin’ is a strong symbol of what industry and logistics can achieve when they work in tandem,” says Florian Bleikamp, the Managing Director of HGK Dry Shipping, explaining the latest development.

Fabian Gerdes, the Head of Customer Logistics at Salzgitter Flachstahl, cannot conceal his delight. “We’re using this innovative vessel to continue our efforts to cut CO₂ emissions and improve the efficiency and resilience of our supply chains. To achieve this, we’re increasingly relying on inland waterway shipping, which is particularly environmentally-friendly when compared to other means of transport. In this sense, the ‘Blue Marlin’ plays a key role in enabling climate-friendly transport operations for our steel products and bulk materials. It’s helping us to achieve a significant improvement in our carbon footprint in logistics, and it therefore perfectly matches the course that we’ve adopted to achieve greater sustainability.”

Thanks to having dimensions that are optimised for canals – 86 metres long, 9.50 metres wide and requiring a navigable draught of just 1.10 metres – the ‘Blue Marlin’ is ideally suited to shallow-water situations on central European waterways. The efficient drive concept with two Veth rudder propellers and an additional bow thruster also makes it possible to couple the vessel to a push barge and therefore transport loads weighing up to 3,110 tonnes in the best possible way.

Following the successful completion of the trial journeys with the SEAFAR technology, the German General Directorate for Waterways and Shipping (GDWS) has issued a permit for remote-controlled navigation on the canal section between Salzgitter and Friedrichsfeld. The Wattlab solar technology also supports the supply of energy on board: the power that is generated enables temporary emission-free operations for the vessel using the drive system with its rudder propellers, and this cuts the CO₂ emissions by up to 36,000 kilograms every year. It is also possible to feed the solar power that is generated directly to the power train for the first time. The “Blue Marlin” has already been given the “Gold” Green Award in recognition of its sustainable design.

The design and development of the vessel were completed in close cooperation between HGK Shipping and Salzgitter AG. The Orsova shipyard in Romania manufactured the hull, and De Gerlien van Tiem B.V. at Druten in the Netherlands handled the final interior fitting work on board the vessel with its normal high-quality workmanship.

Notes on the attached photos:

1. United for Green Logistics: From left to right, Andreas Lemme and Florian Bleikamp, Managing Directors of HGK Dry Shipping; Fabian Gerdes, Head of Customer Logistics at Salzgitter Flachstahl; Eike Brünger, Managing Director of Sales and Logistics at SZFG; Julia-Kristin Siemens-Pecher, Head of Logistics Coordination at Peiner Träger GmbH; Dr. Jürgen Harland, Head of Logistics and SCM at Salzgitter Flachstahl; Steffen Bauer, CEO of HGK Shipping; and Deacon Mark Möller at the naming ceremony of the “Blue Marlin” in Hamburg.
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2. HGK Shipping’s latest fleet addition, the “Blue Marlin”, reduces CO₂ emissions by up to 36 tonnes annually thanks to solar power and hybrid propulsion – setting new standards to make inland shipping even more sustainable.
© HGK Shipping
3. Tradition meets innovation: The moment the champagne bottle shattered – the “Blue Marlin” is officially named.
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4. Hamburg as the stage for a special occasion: The “Blue Marlin”, festively decorated for its official commissioning – a milestone for HGK Shipping and Salzgitter AG.
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About the HGK Group:

Häfen und Güterverkehr Köln AG (HGK) is the logistics company within the City of Cologne's public utilities group. Formerly just a port operator, HGK has developed into a group that provides integrated transport and logistics services with operations across Europe. Structured in five divisions, Logistics & Intermodal, Shipping, Rail Operations, Infrastructure & Maintenance and Real Estate, the HGK Group operates the largest inland waterway port network in Germany, one of the largest private railway companies for transporting cargo, specialist logistics firms and terminals as well as its own railway network and workshops for railway goods traffic through its subsidiaries and holding companies. HGK Shipping GmbH is the largest inland waterway shipping company in Europe.

About the HGK Shipping division:

HGK Shipping is part of Häfen und Güterverkehr Köln AG. Its fleet comprises about 350 vessels, including owner-operated ships. The spectrum of goods transported ranges from liquid chemical products and liquefied gases to dry goods and even break-bulk cargo.

About Salzgitter AG:

Salzgitter AG ranks as one of Germany's leading steel and technology groups.

As a pioneer in the circular economy, we focus on sustainable innovation and on transforming products and processes in the business units of Steel Production, Steel Processing, Trading and Technology.

Under our "Salzgitter AG 2030" strategy and anchored in the principle of "Pioneering for Circular Solutions", we are setting new benchmarks in the industry. Our aspirations are realized through strong initiatives and programs such as SALCOS® - Salzgitter Low CO₂ Steelmaking. Through partnerships and in networks, we are actively driving the process of development towards a circular economy. With around 25,000 employees worldwide at more than 130 national and international subsidiaries and associate companies, we live up to our global aims for growth, profitability and our pioneering position. In the financial year 2024, we generated external sales of around € 10 billion, with a crude steel capacity of 6.4 million tons.

More information is available at: [People, Steel and Technology | Salzgitter AG \(salzgitter-ag.com\)](https://www.salzgitter-ag.com)

Contact:Contact persons Salzgitter AG

Thorsten Moellmann
Head of Communication & Brand
Phone: + 49 5341 21 2300
Email: moellmann.t@salzgitter-ag.de

Olaf Reinecke
Press Spokesperson
Phone: +49 5341 21-5350
Email: reinecke.o@salzgitter-ag.de

Contact person HGK Group

Christian Lorenz
HGK Spokesperson
Phone: +49 221 390 1190
Email: christian.lorenz@hgkgroup.de