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## DAKAR FUTURE: ENERGY TRANSFORMATION HITS THE ROAD

### KEY POINTS

- **The Dakar Future programme aims to ensure that only low-emission alternative energies are used by 2030. More and more players in the sport are working towards this goal. Technologies have emerged and are being tested on the Dakar: biofuels, electric motors, hydrogen, hybrids (etc.). The race is a laboratory and a test bench for such technologies.**
- **Everybody is working together to reduce emissions. The Organisers and FIA are adapting to energy transition to allow participation of new methods for powering the vehicles. The bivouac favours the use of alternative energies for its vehicles and equipment. The event is changing how it operates globally to reduce its carbon footprint.**
- **Biofuels are used by several major teams – Astara, ProDrive or X-raid. The number of hybrid vehicles is growing and their performances are competitive, as shown by Audi’s victories in the car category and Riwald in the truck race. Hydrogen-based solutions are being developed and brands are investing in the Dakar to show that it is viable. Some are even carrying out research to find new energy sources.**

In 2020, for its first edition in Saudi Arabia, the Dakar laid the foundations for a major project aimed at ensuring that all cars and trucks entered in the event only use low-emission alternative energies by 2030.

This action is based around two phases: firstly, encouraging the elite to adopt these alternative modes and, secondly, extending these solutions to all competitors, professionals and amateurs alike, so that from 2030 onwards low-emission vehicles will be used exclusively in the car and truck categories.

Since the launch of this operation, several projects, some of which were already under consideration, have emerged and the constructors have immediately expressed their support and started to implement solutions. As a result, all current technologies are today under testing on the Dakar: electric, hybrid, hydrogen and biofuel powered engines...

This gradual transition is now taking place within the framework of the FIA’s W2RC (World Rally-raid Championship) competition, facilitating development by integrating the specific parameters of these new engines into its technical regulations. Consequently, the T1-Ultimate (T1-U) category, bringing together alternatively powered vehicles, came into being on the Dakar in 2022, which was the opening leg of the W2RC.

Many projects have already been launched. Some are on the drawing board, some are being tested and some are already in competition:

### In competition:

**Audi:** the concept of the race as a laboratory is especially present for Audi Team Principal Sven Quandt, who has again entered three hybrid powered cars like last year, as shown by his declaration: *“Audi has often opened new paths in motorsport, but I think that this car is one of the most complex that I have ever seen”*.

**ProDrive:** as regards biofuel, last year ProDrive Hunter already proposed a solution with ProDrive EcoPower fuel and has enrolled 3 BRX on the Dakar 2023. David Richards, Chairman of ProDrive, was foretelling as he said, *“Motorsport will be obliged to act in a responsible manner”*. The constructor is committing to the future and intends to demonstrate that biofuel and performance are perfectly compatible.

**Astara Team:** Laia Sanz is renowned worldwide as being a major ambassador for women’s sport. The Spaniard is now promoting another cause through her commitment to the Astara Team, notably energy transition in motorsport. *“This year, we will be using a synthetic fuel, which is a good way of starting to be environmentally friendly,”* she commented as she prepared to start her second Dakar behind the wheel of a car.

**X-raid Mini:** regarding X-raid Mini, they have enrolled two JCW Rally Plus cars for the 2023 edition which use HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) fuel. *“Without sustainability, there will be no more motorsport,”* is the opinion of X-raid Managing director, Sven Quandt, for whom HVO is a first step on the way to reducing emissions. *“The Dakar is an excellent platform for testing this fuel and raising awareness”*.

**KH7 Epsilon Team:** the hydrogen-powered truck is one of the first vehicles to inaugurate the New Energy Challenge category (not included in the FIA rankings). The truck, which is partially powered by hydrogen, will save 40 to 50% of fuel on the 2023 edition of the Dakar, according to the team, for which the rally-raid discipline represents a means of development in order to create innovations that will contribute to looking after the planet's future.

**Riwald:** Dutchman Gert Huzink, already present with his hybrid truck last year, claims to have made further progress with his vehicle. *"We've improved the hybrid motor. It helps us to use less diesel fuel and therefore have better range and staying power. The dimensions of the chassis have also been modified to allow the truck to negotiate the dunes better"*. These changes have paid off, as shown by the victory of Gert Huzink and the Riwald Dakar Team on stage 3 this year.

**Hino:** Team Sugawara has taken all the lessons learned from last year's participation to improve its hybrid truck. *"For this year, we've especially made progress with the cooling system,"* they explained, and they have plenty of projects for the future: *"We will continue to improve the hybrid system. And to be carbon neutral, we are thinking of using a new energy in the future"*.

#### **On the drawing board:**

**Groupe GCK:** The French company has been working for several years on the development of a hydrogen-powered buggy. The gas will be converted into electricity using an innovative fuel cell and immersion battery combination. The car is already on the move and engineers are working on the final details before it goes public.

**Kees Koolen / "Projet 2030":** Present on the Dakar this year, the Dutchman will take part in the race next year using an entirely electrically-powered truck. The 2023 edition will allow him to prepare for the future. *"This year we are not taking part with an electric truck, but we are using the race to test different things and collect data that will be used to prepare the future truck,"* he explains. The players involved in the project are looking even further ahead: *"The aim is to have a zero-emission vehicle by 2030"*.

**South Racing Can-Am:** a pioneer in the lightweight vehicle category, South Racing will continue to invest and innovate with the Vision Concept. *"Our goal was to create a vehicle that combined performance with our belief in a sustainable future,"* informed CEO Scott Abraham on its presentation. *"It's still early days but you'll see a lot of new developments"*. The aim is to use sustainable materials and energy while remaining fast, thanks in particular to in-depth work on design and aerodynamics.

The Dakar's commitment to energy transition does not only affect the race. The vehicles accompanying the event, including those used by the organisers, will also be equipped with these new forms of engine. Furthermore, solutions are being put in place to reduce the carbon footprint of the bivouac which accommodates 3,000 people daily. In a progressive approach that consists of "avoid, reduce and offset", biofuels have made their appearance in some of the generators and this solution will quickly become widespread. Additionally, solar panels supply part of the lighting, plus the quads and scooters needed to transport equipment inside the bivouac are gradually being replaced by electric vehicles. Eventually, as with the Dakar participants, the bivouac will be entirely independent of carbon-based energy.

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