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# Climate change agenda spearheads sales of barnacle-repellent paint

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by **Richard Clayton**

[@rjbcclayton](#) | [richard.clayton@informa.com](mailto:richard.clayton@informa.com)

Paint manufacturers claim investment into removing barnacles from ship hulls is paying off as climate change, port congestion, and fuel cost hikes heighten the need for vessel performance optimisation



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AN AGREEMENT signed two years ago between Japanese paint manufacturer Chugoku Marine Paints and I-Tech, the Swedish developer of the bio-repellent anti-fouling ingredient Selektepe, has taken on greater significance for vessel performance optimisation at a time when the climate change agenda is being talked up.

I-Tech chief executive Philip Chaabane believes a bio-solution is timely because of several critical changes to shipping trades and to the marine environment. These are: increased vessel dwell times at ports caused by congestion, resulting in heightened levels of fouling; raised water temperatures caused by climate change; increased trading between economies in tropical regions; the concern that invasive aquatic species are being carried on ships' hulls as well as in ballast water; and higher cost of low-sulphur fuels post-2020, which will encourage hull cleaning.

Work began on research into a bio-solution to barnacle removal in Sweden in 2000, Mr Chaabane told Lloyd's List during Sea Japan 2018. Funded by incubator capital, researchers studied the physiognomy of barnacles to seek a non-chemical way of removing the creatures that settle on hulls in warmer waters. Venture capitalists boosted funding in 2008 when it became clear the solution was highly efficient at extremely low concentrations. A seven-year period of risk assessment ended in 2016 with European Union approval. After a 16-year period of financial support, sales grew from SEK4.5m (\$0.5m) in 2016 to SEK18m in 2017.

Chugoku Marine Paints launched its first coating range, which included Selektepe, in two brands in 2016. The product is an organic, non-metal compound that prevents barnacle fouling by temporarily activating the swimming behaviour of barnacle cyprid larvae, lifting them from a ship's hull.

Only six paint and coatings suppliers account for 70%-80% of the market. Mr Chaabane is hoping to reach agreement with Hempel and others this year. Mr Chaabane acknowledges Selektepe has not yet been approved by US authorities.

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