
FUEL, LUBRICANT AND GREASE

1 Introduction

In 2015 the price of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil began to rise once again (see Fig. 1) after its downward plunge in 2014 thanks to some increase in demand as China built up its national strategic stockpile of oil reserves, as well as a major reduction in the number of drilling rigs that were operating in the U.S.⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ In June of 2015, the price had recovered to \$59.8 USD per barrel. However, in July concerns over the Greek financial crisis triggered increased anxiety about the state of the European economy, and the possibility that Iran would resume exports of its crude oil to other developed nations also grew stronger, leading the price of WTI crude oil to fall again after having started to show a slight rebound. In August the price of WTI plunged as a result of the steep decline in prices on the Shanghai stock market, and by the 24th of the month the price had fallen to \$38.24 USD per barrel. This price then recovered by about \$10 USD per barrel in response to signs of a recovery in the U.S. economy. In the second half of 2015 the price of crude oil, which had started to rebound slightly, was again beset by continued easing of demand and the decision by OPEC to delay any cuts in oil production. In addition, the decrease in the amount of crude oil produced in the U.S. deviated from the original predictions, creating a lingering sense of oversupply in the market. Consequently, there were no factors suggesting a significant recovery in the crude oil market and there was nothing to stem the downward price trend.

In contrast, the average price of imported crude oil (CIF) in Japan (see Fig. 2) reached a record high as the U.S. stock market downturn in 2008 and a weak dollar drove speculative funds into the crude oil markets. This was followed by a significant drop in the CIF as a result of the global financial crisis and a general deceleration in the global economy. Since January of 2009 the CIF has risen gradually along with the global economy and once

again reached a peak in June of 2014. However, in the second half of 2014 and into 2015 the slowdowns in both the Chinese and European markets caused another sudden price drop. The price of regular gasoline in Japan moved in conjunction with these fluctuations in the CIF and has thus also showed a downward trend from the second half of 2014 through the end of 2015. In December of 2015 the average retail price of gasoline in Japan had fallen to 125 yen per liter (including the consumption and gasoline taxes).

On April 8, 2015 the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) issued its "Outlook on petroleum supply and demand" to present its predictions regarding the supply and demand for fuels used for transportation (gasoline and diesel fuels) in the coming years. According to this outlook, the total amount of fuel oil (excluding C heavy oil for generating electric power) is expected to increase in FY 2015 by 0.9% compared to the previous year to 173.31 million kL. However, this amount is predicted to decrease to 160.13 million kL in FY 2019 under the assumption that it will be reduced at an annual rate of 1.4%. If the fuels used for transportation are broken down further by type, the demand for gasoline is expected to decrease as the number of hybrid and other more environmentally friendly vehicles increases. Although the decrease in the annual rate eased somewhat from 2.0% in 2014 to 1.8% in 2015, the demand for gasoline in Japan is predicted to continue to decline in the future. Conversely, the demand for diesel fuel in FY 2015 exceeded that of the previous year. However, the demand for clean diesel vehicles, which are currently experiencing strong sales, is not expected to become a factor that would drive a large increase in the demand for diesel fuel. In fact, the popularity of these vehicles is expected to only result in a slight increase in demand for diesel fuel in the short term and the overall demand is expected to decrease gradually over time.

The Basic Energy Plan approved by the Japanese cab-

inet in April of 2014 forms the basis for much of the energy policy of the nation. In this plan, petroleum is positioned as an important source of energy that will continue to be used in the future. The plan also recognizes the need to promote and maintain a resilient petroleum industry in Japan by diversifying the sources of its oil supply and promoting greater cooperation with oil-producing nations to ensure a firm energy supply foundation in the event of a major disaster.

In January of 2015 the long-term energy supply and demand outlook subcommittee was formed in response to the previously-mentioned Basic Energy Plan and began to discuss the formulation of an energy mix policy. In July of 2015 this same subcommittee issued its long-term energy supply and demand outlook. According to this outlook, petroleum shall account for 30% of Japan's energy supply in FY 2030, which is approximately 10% lower than the current petroleum share of Japan's primary energy sources. Despite accounting for a smaller share of Japan's primary energy sources in the future, petroleum is still expected to remain a pillar of Japan's energy supply mix in 2030⁽³⁾.

2 Fuels

2.1. Fuel Trends

In August of 2009 the Act on Promotion of Use of Non-Fossil Energy Sources and Effective Use of Fossil Energy Material by Energy Supply Operators (the Energy Supply Structure Sophistication Act, hereinafter referred to as the Sophistication Act) went into effect. This law calls for the promotion of a more effective use of fossil energy materials to provide a stable and adequate supply of energy and an increase in the installation ratio of heavy oil cracking and processing facilities. It also calls for a greater use of non-fossil energy sources and other efforts that will contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions⁽⁴⁾.

The Sophistication Act stipulated that the Japanese petroleum industry increase the installation ratio of heavy oil cracking and processing facilities, making it necessary to examine the possibility of making wider use of cracked distillates, particularly gasoline and diesel oil distillates. Consequently, in an effort to identify possible solutions to future technical challenges, the petroleum and automobile industries conducted a joint research project to evaluate automobiles and fuels called JATOP II (Japan Auto-Oil Program II) for three years starting in 2012. In 2015 the JATOP III (Japan Auto-Oil Program III)

program was succeeded to JATOP II and is also planned to carry out research for three years, until 2017⁽⁵⁾.

At the same time, the Sophistication Act also stipulated that certain targets be introduced to reduce CO₂ emissions (target amount of (total) bio-ethanol usage in FY 2017 of 500,000 kL) and efforts to achieve these targets are continuing⁽¹⁾. Gasoline blended with bio-ETBE (bio-gasoline: blended gasoline that contains at least 1.0% volume of ETBE) was first introduced into the Japanese market in FY 2007. By FY 2010 the target for the introduction of biofuels requested by the Japanese government, 210,000 kL (crude oil equivalent), had been completely achieved and by FY 2013 the amount had reached 255,000 kL (Table 1)⁽⁶⁾.

2.2. Gasoline for Automobiles

In the JATOP III program described above the participants assumed that the use of the cracked gasoline distillate produced by the heavy oil cracking and processing facilities will increase. Therefore, research to examine how the use of such fuels, which have increased levels of olefin components and heavy aromatic content, will impact exhaust emissions was begun⁽⁶⁾.

Research conducted on the generation of deposits in gasoline engines has reported the following results. One, the formation behavior of air intake valve deposits (IVD) in a port fuel injection engine was analyzed when gasoline with a high polycyclic aromatic content was used. It was found that the amount of IVD tended to increase if both the fuel temperature and the temperature within the laboratory were high⁽⁷⁾. Two, the compositions of deposits that formed within the combustion chamber are different depending on the temperature at which they form. This suggests that the mechanisms of deposit hardening are also different⁽⁸⁾. Three, the aromatic carbon number and bond dissociation energy both contribute to the accumulation of gasoline EGR deposits⁽⁹⁾.

2.3. Diesel Fuel for Automobiles

In the JATOP II program the changes in the fuel properties caused by mixing in cracked diesel were evaluated to determine what influences they had on the vehicle. The results of those evaluations showed that when the cetane number was below 50 (aromatic content exceeded 30 vol%), the load on DPF (diesel particulate filter) regeneration increased, and when the cetane number was 43 (aromatic content at about 40 vol%) the DPF could not regenerate well and there was a possibility of a serious malfunction. In the JATOP III program there is a

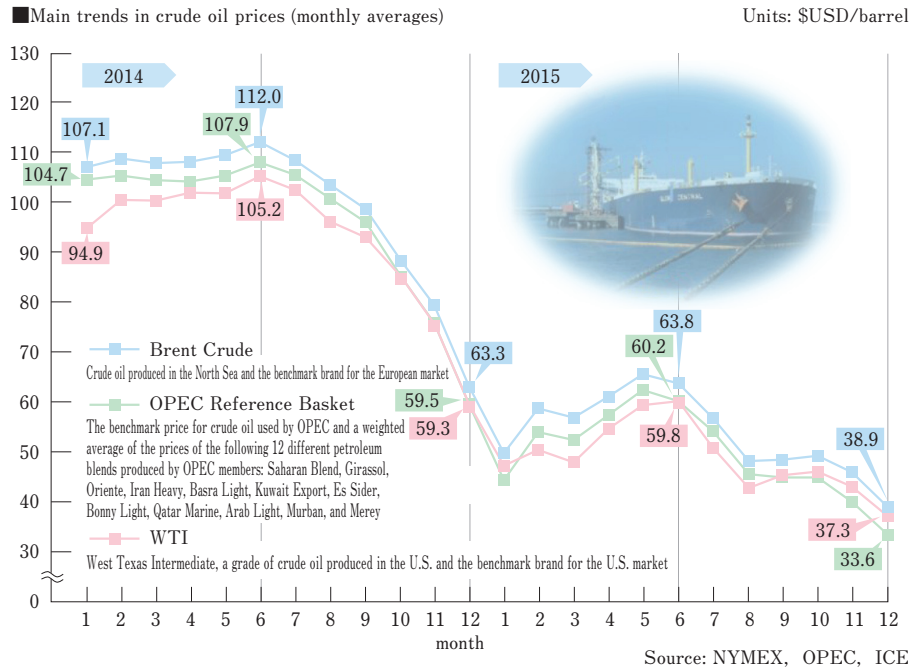


Fig. 1 Trends in Crude Oil Prices.

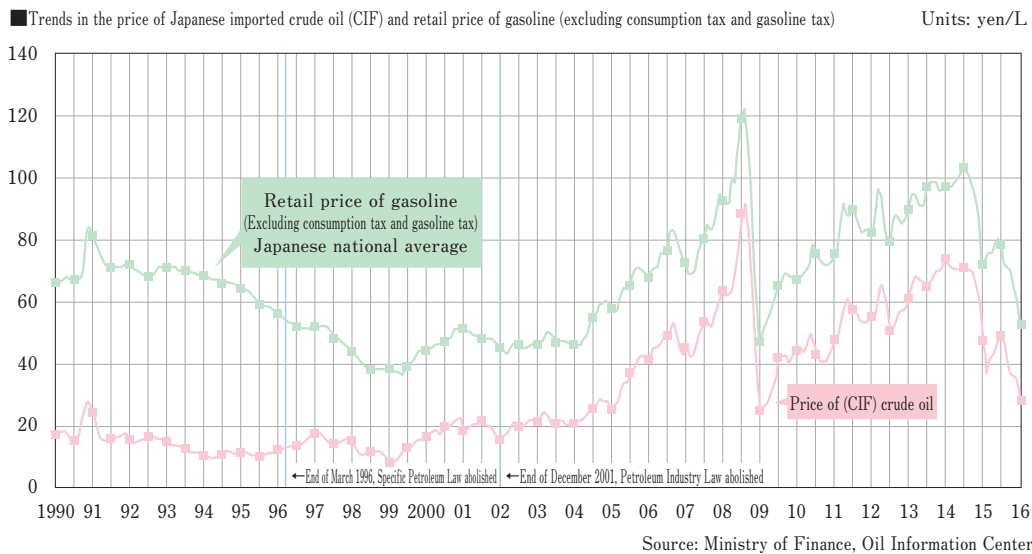


Fig. 2 Japanese Average Price of Imported Crude Oil (CIF) and Retail Price of Gasoline.

plan to try and address this technical problem by evaluating the effects of countermeasures enacted on both the fuel side and the vehicle side⁽⁵⁾.

Research being conducted on use of cracked diesel distillate in automobile fuels has reported the following results. One, the effect that a cracked diesel fuel with a low cetane number and high aromatic content had on combustion and the exhaust emissions characteristics was studied using a diesel engine for passenger vehicles. The

results showed that even when a low cetane number fuel is used, engine performance and exhaust emissions can be kept to levels equivalent to those of a conventional diesel fuel by controlling the ignition timing⁽¹⁰⁾. Two, the combustion and exhaust emissions characteristics of cracked diesel fuel when it is used in a heavy-duty vehicle diesel engine were also examined. It was found that there is a tendency to promote premixing as the cetane number of the fuel decreases, and that the changes in

Table 1 Total Bio-ethanol Usage Targets for Japanese Petroleum Refiners.

(Units: crude oil equivalent kL)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Target amount	210 000	210 000	260 000	320 000	380 000	440 000	500 000
Actual amount introduced	214 480	215 484	255 320	—	—	—	—

The value for 2013 falls short of the target amount, but this target was not missed due to production and storage of bio-ethanol during previous years.

Source: "Energy Diversification Report" from the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy

the combustion characteristics are dependent on the temperature within the engine cylinders⁽¹¹⁾. Three, the effect of pilot injection on the ignition characteristics of cracked diesel fuel was investigated, and it was found that the ignition delay grew longer and no advantage was gained from the pilot injection⁽¹²⁾.

New research into biodiesel fuels has focused on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), hydrogenated vegetable oil that has been called the next generation of biodiesel fuel. Consequently, various testing has been carried out to determine the effects of these fuels on exhaust emissions. The results reported to date indicate that the HVO biodiesel fuel significantly reduces the amounts of THC, CO, smoke, and NOx contained in the exhaust emissions compared to conventional diesel fuel⁽¹³⁾. Other research looked at the oxidation stability (the effects of the physical and chemical properties of the fuel on degradation and accelerated oxidation during long-term storage) of fuels that were a blend of regular diesel fuel with biodiesel based on rapeseed oil, soy bean oil, and palm oil. The results reported by this research indicated that the speed of the oxidation deterioration of the fuel depended on the amount of unsaturated components contained in the base oils⁽¹⁴⁾.

In the field of alcohol biodiesel fuels, 2-butanol was used to esterify palm oil into palm oil 2-butyl ester. This fuel was then compared to palm oil methyl ester, which is palm oil that was esterified using methanol, and it was reported that the palm oil 2-butyl ester biofuel had superior low-temperature fluidity and ignitability. It was also reported that this biodiesel fuel was able to reduce the amounts of HC, CO, and smoke in the exhaust emissions in comparison to conventional diesel fuel⁽¹⁵⁾.

In addition, there is also research underway that is examining the feasibility of producing diesel fuel derived from algae. So far there are fatty acid methyl ester and hydrocarbon fuels. It has been reported that the hydrocarbon fuel has different properties, such as a higher cetane number, than conventional diesel fuel, so it will be

necessary to adjust the fuel injection timing and the injection pressure on the engine side⁽¹⁶⁾.

3 Lubricants

3.1 Trends in automotive lubricant oil standards

3.1.1 Gasoline engine oil

The J300 engine oil viscosity classifications stipulated by the SAE are used widely both inside and outside of Japan. The lowest viscosity under the old SAE viscosity grades was SAE 16, but at the request of automobile manufacturers endeavoring to improve the fuel efficiency of their vehicles, the SAE 12 and SAE 8 viscosity grades were newly established within the SAE J300 in January of 2015. Furthermore, the EOVC task force, which considers and discusses the viscosity grades included in the SAE J300, is continuing to examine the possibility of including an even lower grade, SAE 4, in the future⁽¹⁷⁾.

The next generation of the gasoline engine oil standard will be ILSAC GF-6, but the introduction of this standard has been postponed due to a delay in the development of the new test methods, so April of 2018 is now being examined as the earliest time that it would be introduced. Despite the delay, there have been no major changes to the current direction of GF-6⁽¹⁸⁾⁽¹⁹⁾.

The main goals of the new GF-6 standard compared to the existing GF-5 standard are to improve vehicle fuel efficiency throughout the time period between oil changes, improve robustness with respect to the engine, minimize the frequency of low-speed engine pre-ignition, and improve wear resistance, including that of the timing chain.

Within GF-6, two standards have been established for the different SAE viscosity grades: GF-6A and GF-6B. The following viscosity grades have been designated as GF-6A: 0W-20, 5W-20, 0W-30, 5W-30, and 10W-30. In contrast, 0W-16 has been designated as a viscosity grade under GF-6B and it was announced that any other oils with a viscosity less than 0W-16 will need to be reviewed by AOAP and receive approval.

Sequence VIE is planned for adoption as the fuel effi-

ciency evaluation in GF-6A, but for GF-6B, the adoption of Sequence VIF is being considered since it lowers the oil temperature in some testing stages of Sequence VIE from 115°C to 100°C. In all other cases, the use of same tests is planned for both GF-6A and GF-6B. Other discussions are also being held on how to differentiate the symbols that will label GF-6A and GF-6B oils to avoid the wrong oil mistakenly being put into a vehicle after they become available commercially.

Some tests are also being considered for possible removal from the GF-6 standard. Specifically, the TEOST MHT will be removed if the Chrysler test is adopted into Sequence IIIH, and the possible elimination of the lower limit value for the phosphorus concentration of new oil is also being discussed if the timing chain wear test is introduced. In addition, changing the NOACK evaporation characteristics from 15% to 15.0% has been proposed⁽²⁰⁾.

3.1.2. Diesel engine oil

In Japan, the JASO diesel engine oil standard revision task force was set up in April of 2012 and has since continued to work on revising the automotive diesel engine oil standard (JASO M355). In 2014, the engine detergency test method (JASO M336) was revised, and in 2015 the valve train wear prevention test method (JASO M354) was also revised. The latest version of JASO M355 was published in June of 2015 to reflect the changes in those two tests⁽²¹⁾. Furthermore, the engine used, the test conditions, and the length of the test were all made the same in the two tests listed above, making it possible to carry out both evaluations simultaneously. The task force is currently holding discussions on the development of the world's first fuel efficiency test method for diesel engine oils and establishing a relevant standard as one of their new initiatives. They are considering the use of a common diesel engine for both this new test and the other two tests listed above, as well as incorporating the fuel-saving effect of used oil, and not only new oil⁽²²⁾⁽²³⁾.

In the U.S. the PC-11 standard is being examined as the next-generation standard to replace the current API CJ-4 standard.

The plan is to divide the PC-11 standard into two categories according to the HTHS viscosity at 150°C : PC-11A (3.5 MPa/s or higher), which is the same viscosity setting as in the CJ-4 standard, and PC-11B (2.9 to 3.2 MPa/s), which is the low viscosity grade.

At the present time, the plan is to use PC-11A as the CK-4 standard and use PC-11B as the FA-4 standard.

The required items on the engine tests are being modified in accordance with the latest engine mechanisms and the plan is to change the oxidation stability test to the Mack T-13 test, and to change the oil aeration test to the Caterpillar C-13 aeration test.

There are no changes to the bench test methods from those already listed in the CJ-4 standard, but changes to some of its values, such as shear stability and volatility, are being considered.

In addition, oils that conform to this standard are scheduled to be introduced to the market starting in December of 2016⁽²³⁾⁽²⁴⁾.

In Europe, examinations and discussions are underway with an eye toward revising the ACEA standard in 2016. The E category is the standard for heavy-duty diesel engine oil and the CEC L-109 test, which is a bench test for evaluating oxidation stability, and the CEC L-104 test, which is an engine test for evaluating piston detergency, are planned to be newly added to the E category as new tests that can be applied to biodiesel fuels⁽²⁵⁾.

3.1.3. Gear oils

There were no revisions to the main standards that concern gear oil, namely ASTM D7450 and SAE J306. Although an extension of the test time used in CEC L-45-A-99, the shear stability test method, is being examined, it was not revised in 2015.

3.1.4. Automatic and continuously variable transmission fluids (ATF and CVTF)

There were no revisions to the automatic transmission fluid (ATF) standards in regard to the widely recognized DEXRON® and MERCON® fluids. In Japan, an ATF standard, JASO M315, was revised in March of 2015 so that additional test times could be added to the shear stability test. A 5-hour and a 10-hour test method have also been stipulated in addition to the previous 1-hour test method, and evaluations can now be conducted at the appropriate levels of severity.

3.2. Automotive lubricant technology trends

3.2.1. Gasoline engine oil

There are increasing demands for engine oil to help improve the fuel efficiency performance of vehicles, and this can also be seen in the ILSAC GF-6 standard and the fact that it has specified a GF-6B standard just for low viscosity grade oils. The development of such oils has clearly become a critical issue for the automotive industry. It is widely known that the viscosity characteristics of engine oils contributed significantly to their fuel

efficiency performance⁽²⁶⁾. Consequently, the selection of a viscosity index improver is extremely important because of the large affect that it has on the viscosity characteristics of the oil. The most commonly used viscosity index improvers can be roughly divided into two different types: OCP and PMA. In addition, new types are also being developed. For example, polymers formed via graft polymerization of OCP and PMA, and hydrogenated radial polyisoprene polymers with a star-shaped structure have been developed. In recent years comb polymers, which have a comb-shaped structure and possess a particularly good viscosity index improvement function, have also been commercialized, and their application to fuel efficient engine oils has been promoted⁽²⁷⁾.

3.2.2. Diesel engine oil

Maintaining the performance of the aftertreatment devices in diesel vehicles has become an important issue in recent years as exhaust emissions regulations have only gotten more stringent. Consequently, an effective countermeasure that has been identified is to reduce the amounts of sulfur, phosphorous, and ash contained in the metallic anti-wear additives and metallic detergents since these reduce the performance of the aftertreatment devices. There have been some recent reports about engine oils that maintain the practical performance of these devices without containing any such additives⁽²⁸⁾. Many countries have begun to introduce fuel efficiency regulations for heavy-duty diesel engine vehicles, creating a growing demand for engine oils that contribute to better fuel efficiency. Recent improvements in the combustion stroke of diesel engines have reduced the amount of soot that becomes mixed into the air-fuel mixture. Consequently, there have been some reported examples of the Mo-DTC metallic friction modifier being applied to heavy-duty diesel engine oils. The significant reduction in friction provided by this modifier is expected to improve the fuel efficiency performance of these diesel engine oils⁽²⁹⁾⁽³⁰⁾.

3.2.3 Gear oils

Some examples of the use of differential oils with lower viscosities have been reported in light of evidence that a reduction in the stirring resistance increases the fuel efficiency performance of the oil⁽³¹⁾.

3.2.4 ATF and CVTF

Further improvements in the fuel efficiency performance of transmission units are being pursued to improve to overall fuel efficiency of the vehicle. For auto-

matic transmissions (ATs) there has been a movement toward multi-stage gears, while for continuously variable transmissions (CVTs) the tendency has been to expand the ratio coverage. There is also an increasing use of dual-clutch transmissions (DCT) in vehicles in Japan. Transmission oils are now also being examined to see if lowering the viscosity and improving the viscosity index contributes to better fuel efficiency performance. One reported example involved the use of a lower viscosity CVTF for chain-belt type transmissions⁽³²⁾. For the CVTF in push belt type CVTs, other studies have examined improving the friction coefficient between metals to increase the efficiency of the whole transmission unit by increasing the transmission torque capacity. Consequently, it was reported that an improved friction coefficient between metals was achieved by using the optimal combination of an extreme pressure agent, an anti-wear agent, and a detergent dispersant⁽³³⁾.

4 Grease

As fuel efficiency regulations for automobiles continue to become stricter, vehicle electrification represented by, for example, electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrids (HEVs), is expected to become more common in the future. The motor bearings used in EVs and HEVs require both oil and grease lubrication. Grease lubrication has also been adopted for large motors with relatively low speeds⁽³⁴⁾. As a semi-solid, grease does not require the sealing and circulation mechanisms that liquids such as oil lubricants do, giving it an advantage in terms of reducing the size and weight of a vehicle. As a result, manufacturers are looking to expand the applicable scope of grease lubricants, and are developing greases that can be used with high speed motors⁽³⁵⁾, as well as low-torque technologies⁽³⁶⁾⁽³⁷⁾.

The electrification of other components around the transmission, such as the use of electric power steering to reduce weight and improve efficiency, is also progressing, leading to the adoption of resin worm gears that use grease lubrication⁽³⁸⁾⁽⁴⁰⁾. This growing trend of electrification of various components has also created a demand for alternators with greater power generating capacity. This in turn has led to the development of greases better able to withstand high temperatures as the lubrication conditions of various locations within the automobile have become more severe over time⁽⁴¹⁾.

In some emerging markets exhibiting significant

growth, there is growing demand for axle bearings with strong water resistance due to poor road conditions and regions with high temperatures and lots of rainfall. This has led to calls for the development of greases with excellent water resistance for use on hub unit bearings⁽⁴²⁾ as well as on the clutch release bearings located near to the engine⁽⁴³⁾.

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