

Renewables going XL

Hans Henrik Groen, Logistics Director in the North-Europe and Middle East regions at Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy, takes us behind the scenes in a fast-growing industry.

Renewable energy production is always driving for “big, bigger, biggest.” When it comes to wind turbines, for example, size dictates power output and efficiency. The industry has made incredible progress in the last few decades, advancing towards more powerful and larger turbines. As an example, our first wind turbine installed 40 years ago was a 55 kW machine with a 15 meters long blade. In only one generation we have increased the nominal power by more than a thousand and the blade length by more than five. This evolution enabled us to produce more power with less units, to make projects feasible in more locations as we were able to capture more wind, and also to make wind power more competitive.

But ask any engineer and they’ll tell you the “bigger the better” maxim is only true once in situ. XL renewables present new challenges in terms of the logistics of installation and maintenance. For any wind turbine project, onshore or offshore, breakbulk for the transportation of project cargo is a vital element in overall business requirements and operating models.

There are a number of things renewables needs to get right as we grow. Both the energy infrastructure industry and breakbulk need to work together towards operational excellence throughout the process, in transport, crane and installation. We have to make sure the higher energy production is worth more than the cost increases caused by new components, supply chain development, logistics, etc. And, of course, safety will play a vital element in shaping its future. These strong collaborations across industries will help improve the competitiveness of renewable energy and support a green recovery after Covid-19.

There will always be disruptions to the day-to-day; a pandemic like COVID-19 is one of many global crises that can happen. XL in renewables needs to strive for the highest operational standards and seek out the scrutiny of its customers, its suppliers and authorities in the operating theatre, and live by my mantra of “Mission Always – Safety First” for its long-term success.