

Saras

Second Quarter and First Half 2020 Results

Welcome

Operator

Good afternoon. This is the Chorus Call conference operator. Welcome and thank you for joining the Saras second quarter and first half 2020 results conference call. As a reminder, all participants are in listen only mode. After the presentation, there will be an opportunity to ask questions. Should anyone need assistance during the conference call, they may signal an operator by pressing star and zero on their telephone. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Ms Ilaria Candotti, Head of Investor Relations of Saras. Please go ahead, madam.

Ilaria Candotti Head of Investor Relations, Saras

Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you for joining us today for this conference call on Saras' first half and second quarter 2020 results. All the documents as usual, including the press release, the analyst presentation and the half-year financial report are available on our website, directly on the homepage in the section dedicated to the investors financial result.

Our agenda today starts with Mr Dario Scaffardi, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of the Saras Group, who will cover the highlights of the period, followed by a detailed review of the results of each business segment. Mr Scaffardi will then provide the outlook for the year with a brief comment to the more recent outlook of the International Energy Agency on the oil demand. Afterwards, Mr Scaffardi will introduce an overview of Saras' roadmap to the energy transition, with a description of the main target projects under study by the Group. At this time, I would like to hand over to Dario.



Dario Scaffardi CEO & General Manager, Saras

Highlights

Ilaria, thank you very much. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for joining us today. What can I say? The second quarter has been, of course, an extraordinary market from every point of view and everything that could have gone wrong actually did go wrong. This notwithstanding, in this very difficult situation, the Group reported a positive comparable EBITDA, both in Q2 and in H1, equal, respectively, to 15 million euros in Q2, which, as I said, was 55 in Q2 of 19 and 71 million euros in the first half of the year, compared to 108 in the first half of 2019. This has been achieved notwithstanding the dire refining market, thanks to a strong commercial performance in the refining and marketing segments.

In particular, there was a premium of 3.5 dollars over the average margin of 3.8 of the premium on the EMC benchmark, which, in certain moments, was negative and it still is negative, unfortunately, in the first half of the year.

Instead, if we look at Q2, the premium was over 4.5 dollars per barrel, with the EMC benchmark negative by 0.7. I think a remarkable achievement to keep the financial position at minus 337 million euros with a deterioration of slightly more than 100 million compared to the 31st of March of 2020.

During this quarter, the market did some very, very extraordinary things. In the previous call, we did mention the huge gap between quality differentials on crude, the spreads on products, the discrepancies between the futures market and the physical market. All these effects seem to be slowly correcting themselves. So, if we look at the absolute price of oil it would seem that in the last weeks, more or less, Brent is hovering around the 40/44-dollar range with a relative stability. The discount compared to ICE Brent – so the futures contract – is only 86 cents, which I would say is more or less within the historical range of variability of Brent dated compared to ICE Brent.

In March, it went to minus nine – an extraordinary level. At the same time, in the second quarter, we had some extraordinary market conditions, a very strong contango, meaning that the future market was much stronger than the prop market. This entitled huge amount of storage. This has since disappeared. The forward curve is basically flattish. The overhang of stocks, which has so negatively affected the market, has slowly been absorbed. So, all in all, it would seem like an encouraging picture.

Another big factor was crude premiums, which went from being very negative in March/the beginning of April, to very positive. Now they seem to have reached what we can say, more normal, whatever normal means, level. So sweet crudes are back in the historical range in which they move. The negative impact is from sour crudes that are still extremely strong compared to their historical levels. In particular, we had Urals that reached 2/3 dollars premium. Now it would seem to be back to a small premium, but normality would be a more significant discount.



It would seem that, at the moment, that the market is slowly heading back into that direction, thanks also to the fact that China is not buying the big amounts it was buying in May/June and so there would seem to be a normalisation of the market. Also, the alarm on freight rates for vessels has succeeded, since there is no more demand for vessels for contango play, so there is slightly less traffic. Freight rates have gone down to historically low levels.

So, the EMC benchmark has been extremely positive in the quarter. We have largely beaten our guidance, which was 2.5 to 3 dollars. We did 4.5 dollars, considering also the low runs in the quarter.

Segment Reviews

1. Refining

If we look at the segments — if we read the segments on refining - refining has been for us extremely challenging in this period. We had planned our largest maintenance ever starting in March, exactly when the pandemic hit. The refinery was able to keep on operating, so we've had no shutdowns due to the coronavirus and all the work that was planned in the refinery has been carried out, albeit at a slower rate, of course, because we had to enact new protocols for social distancing and working with many people, or we had to actually reduce the number of people actually coming into the refinery to perform the work that was planned.

So the maintenance lasted longer than expected. At the same time, due to the very negative environment in May and in June, we did not have a big incentive to restart the units. Our FCC unit was supposed to have completed all the maintenance at the beginning of May. Actually, the maintenance was completed in June and then we decided to restart it at the beginning of July. We mothballed it for the month of June, because being a big producer of gasoline, the market for gasoline was particularly negative in June. Later on, we will give a little bit of detail on where the market is heading.

In the refining sector, we also concentrate all the activities regarding the supply and trading because we run an integrated book between refining and supply and trading. In this period, we responded very well to extraordinary circumstances. We tried to take advantage, where possible, of the contango opportunity, so we loaded a lot of vessels and sold them forward and we are unwinding these positions. We had good opportunities on crudes in the beginning of the quarter when it was possible to buy very cheap certain crudes and we tried to take full advantage of that. And we also enacted some hedging, particularly on diesel cracks in order to try to maintain the margin. And all this has delivered very well.



The refinery has been able to operate without a single case of Covid and without any major security incidents. So an extraordinary performance in these circumstances.

At the same time, we tried to concentrate, in this period, overlapping also a bit into July, all the maintenance or the majority of the maintenance that was planned for the second part of the year and also for 2021, we have anticipated it to June/July. So certain works that were planned for 2021 have already been performed, enabling us to reduce the amount of maintenance next year.

In the second part of this year, there was maintenance planned on one of our hydrocrackers. And again, we anticipated that to July, taking into consideration that there is still a low margin environment which is expected to improve going forward.

If we look at the crude oil slate, I think this is a very good indication, first of all, of the runs that have been diminished in the first half of the year due to the maintenance, but also due to adverse market conditions. And we had also a very significant change in our diet of crudes. The change was mainly due to the turnaround and not to particular market conditions, having a large maintenance on one of the topping units and the FCC, which is a unit that is designed to run sweet and extra sweet crudes. And, of course, it's normal that this percentage of crudes should diminish. And at the same time, automatically, since we try to meet our commitments in terms of power production in Sardinia, the quota of medium and heavy sour crudes has increased likewise. But there was no structural change. This is a strategic move, of course, a tactical move, to take advantage of the market conditions and the maintenance that we had.

Conversely, we tried to minimise gasoline production, of course, as you can see from the output of our products, at the same time maintaining high TAR yields in order to keep in mind the production of TAR for power and very low sulphur fuel oil for the bunker market.

In terms of fixed and variable costs, there is no significant change; more or less in line with the same semester of last year.

2. Marketing

If we look at marketing. Marketing has performed extremely well, notwithstanding the fact that there's been a very sharp reduction in oil consumption in the quarter. In Italy, this oil consumption has decreased by about 34 per cent, with 43 per cent on gasoline and 32 per cent on diesel. The Spanish market was a little bit less negative than the Italian one, with a drop of about 25 per cent. Our sales fell more or less in



line with the market and maybe a little bit better. In Italy, we decreased by about 27 per cent, but the margin has increased significantly.

We have been able to maximise our channels and also we've tried to help our customers who are facing very challenging conditions by providing credit lines and providing security to them. So we gained a lot of new clients and also the margins have been higher, helped also by the fact that when there's a drop in price, the same drop in price is generally not passed on to the market with the same speed. So there were good opportunities here that were captured.

3. Power Generation

Power generation unfortunately suffered by the fact that there are a variety of negative effects. First of all, we have decided to anticipate the maintenance on one of our turbines. We had one of the turbines that was expected to reach its end of life in the second part of the year and we anticipate the turnaround taking effect the challenge that we're seeing in finding a convenient price, heavy crude. So, we cut back on power production and also, of course, the absolute price of power in Italy has halved from the beginning of the year. And, furthermore, there have been effects on the linearization and other effects on the way we establish this figure. So, basically, we have a situation here of lower absolute power, lower CIP6 tariff and also less power production, which we plan to regain in the second part of the year, where we had outages already planned for the turbine.

In terms of fixed and variable cost. The fixed costs have been lower. Variable costs here, as in the refining segment, have been significantly lower due to the fact that a large part of the variable costs are energy-related costs.

4. Wind Power

On wind, it is very much similar to what we just mentioned on power generation, notwithstanding the fact that we have added 30MW to our wind farm. Volumes increased only by 3% due to very unfavourable wind conditions, in the sense that we had a very, very mild end of winter and spring. And, of course, there was a decline in power tariff by 56%, which is the main effect.

Outlook

In our outlook, we have added a little bit more pages than usual, we like to try to give a little bit of flavour on what we expect in the next months.



First of all, the picture for global oil demand in the very last International Energy Agency oil market outlook is less bearish than the previous edition. Of course, we all see the very sharp decline in April, May and June, but, by the end of the year, it is expected to stabilise at -4 million barrels of annual demand, basically all concentrated on jet kero, which, of course, affects the diesel pool.

Crude oil product demand is projected and due to reach its more or less normal range of the last four years by the fourth quarter. So, there is a more positive outlook, although, of course, there is widespread worry that the pandemic might return in the autumn.

We see the same sort of indications that, when we look at the global mobility indexes, in Europe and in China and in the US they are almost back to normal or back to normal. The negative spot here is Africa and Latin America, particularly Latin America, which is an important consumer and an importer of oil products, is affecting negatively the diesel crack since their consumption is significantly down. While in Europe, as you can see from the next graph, the mobility and seasonality is back to normal in Germany and maybe 20% lower in Italy and in France, but improving.

What we can expect – the most important thing to look at is the diesel crack at the moment, which is still under significant pressure. And I would say that a lot of this pressure is due to the fact that the large stocks that have been accumulated in the last months, these stocks have started to dry up. Not being a contango structure in the market no longer unwinds this. The unwinding has taken place at a slightly faster pace than expected. And as you can see from this graph, it would seem that we're heading towards the four-year average.

In the outlook we have provided in this presentation, for the first time, our roadmap for energy transition. About this time last year, we decided to establish a specific unit which answers directly to me, headed by Giovanni Moratti, which is in charge of defining the roadmap for energy transition. And here we try to outline, first of all, the opportunities that there are.

First of all, there is the Green Deal in Europe, which wants to extend the emission trading system to other sectors, which today are not covered, like industry, transport, buildings. There is a strong impetus to increase renewable energy, to implement energy efficiency programmes and also to support innovative energy technology. So, basically, within this new deal and which has been incorporated in the Italian integrated plan, which is called PNIEC, there is a carbon phase-out for energy production by 2025. So, coal will not be used in Italy by 2025. There is the target to increase renewable energy production to 32% of all energy consumption by 2030, to increase the quota of biofuels and also, at the same time, which was something that we think is very important, safeguard the role of the Italian refining industry in order to reduce dependency on the imports of fuel.

So, within this framework, we have developed a roadmap which confirms our projects on renewable energy. So, we aim to develop a further 400MW of basically greenfield projects, mainly concentrated in



Sardinia, where we have our company and where we can leverage our technical and operational skills. So we have a pipeline of projects, some of which have already the relevant technical authorisations, others are in the process of obtaining the various authorisations. The landscape, in terms of authorisation process, is sort of changing. So, the government is supposed to simplify the process and speed up this process. So we are hopeful that we will be able to - in the next couple of years - add a significant portfolio of renewables both in wind and photovoltaic. There is a slight mistake here where we called it "Exec" instead of "Wind' – excuse me.

Another important push which we have already developed in our refineries is the use of biofuels. We already use today vegetable oils which we co-process with normal oil in hydrogenating units in the hydrocrackers, basically. So we were able to produce HVO which gains certificates and gives certain bonuses.

We have a target, by the end of the year, to be able to process about 100,000 tonnes of vegetable oil by the end of the year, which can be expanded to a further 150 without any significant capex and probably to 250/300 with some small capex, mainly on logistics, in order to be able to handle in a segregated manner the vegetable oils both in and out.

Another exciting opportunity we have is to use a plant which has been mothballed. We have a plant which is called TAME. This plant used to use methanol together with FCC gasoline in order to create, through a verification process, a better-quality gasoline. The plant has been mothballed because this plant adds oxygen to the gasoline and many markets today do not want gasoline which has oxygen components; it becomes difficult to market. So, we have decided to mothball the plant. But this plant can be easily converted, instead of using methanol, to use bio-ethanol and produce an ether which would be able to use about 50,000 tonnes of bioethanol a year. So producing a component that can be either blended into gasolines or sold as is with all the advantages.

A further exciting opportunity is the use of waste plastics to create oils that can be converted in our units. Just to give an order of magnitude, that the amount of bio-oils that we would be able to process is comparable to the size of certain bio refineries in the Mediterranean. So it's a very, very sizeable amount.

Another area which we have invested technical resources and engineering process is the study of CCS carbon capture and storage. We believe that, if the regulatory framework for this technology is delivered by the European Union and by the Italian government, it could be a breakthrough technology in order to continue operating our plant and, at the same time, cutting emissions of CO₂ by 50 per cent. Of course, this project is an expensive project and requires full support by the authorities.

Another area of development which we are looking at closely is LNG. The island of Sardinia does not have natural gas and for many years now there has been a strong political push to be able to have LNG. We have studied extensively the possibility in our industrial sites to build a small-scale LNG terminal



and storage. And this could also be used partially in our refinery. And again, for this, we are waiting for the regulatory framework that can make this project viable.

Last but not least, hydrogen. Hydrogen is a topic which has become extremely interesting. We are ideally placed to use hydrogen. First of all, we already produce very large amounts, more than 120,000 cubic metres an hour of grey hydrogen – hydrogen which is produced from our gasifier and from our reforming units. We have two reforming units. So, we have, basically, three units which are hydrogen producers. If there was availability of green or blue – well, blue hydrogen would be hydrogen produced, for instance, by the plant if the carbon is sequestered underground, so that would automatically transform the hydrogen into blue hydrogen. Green hydrogen would need to be used either by bio plants or by using renewable electricity, which is abundant in Sardinia, to store hydrogen which could be used in the refinery. So, we are ideally placed, the easiest place to use hydrogen is in an existing industrial plant.

So, I forgot to mention on the short-term outlook. So the short-term outlook for the rest of the year is a scenario which clearly is still extremely uncertain. We have completed our maintenance plan for the year and part of next year in the first half of the year. So, the second part of the year will be able to take advantage of any expected recovery in the oil refining market. We maintain our guidance for 2.5 to 3 \$/bl, premium over the EMC benchmark, net of maintenance, although we have delivered a much better number in the first part of the year. So, no major maintenance plan includes Q3 and Q4, apart from what is already been planned now in July due to the low margin environment.

On financials: We prefer to answer any specific questions which you might have; Franco's here with me. So, thank you for listening and we are available to answer any of your questions.

Questions and Answers

Operator

Excuse me, this is the Chorus Call conference operator. We will now begin the question and answer session. Anyone who wishes to ask a question may press star and one on their touchtone telephone. To remove yourself from the question queue, please press star and two. Please pick up the receiver when asking questions. Anyone who has a question may press star and one at this time.

The first question is from Joshua Stone with Barclays. Please go ahead.

Joshua Stone - Barclays

Hi, good afternoon, thanks for the presentation. I've got two questions, please. Firstly, I noticed in the press release you talked about the need to renegotiate some lines of credit and a review on some financial



ratios associated with those credit lines. I was wondering if you could provide a bit more detail on this and what ratios are we talking about and how much room Saras currently has left? Or maybe, more generally, how you perceive liquidity risk at the moment?

And then secondly, you're focussing on the second part of your presentation on the green initiatives. You've talked about wanting a better regulatory environment to get some of these projects going. Could you maybe touch on what sort of incentives you're looking at or would like to see? And maybe related to that, would you be willing to take on a bit more debt to finance some of these projects? Thank you.

Dario Scaffardi

Well, Joshua, just going on the green initiatives and then I think Franco can give you a little bit of detail on our credit lines.

On the renewables, we are going ahead within the current regulatory environment. I would say there are two areas here that need some backing on the others. One is CCS is an important investment and an investment of a magnitude of 300/400 million euros, probably a little bit being conservative. So, an investment like that can only be undertaken if there is an environment in which tariffs are fixed in a way in which one can make this investment counting on being able to be paid up over a long number of years. So, clearly, it's a type of investment that needs either direct financing or a regulatory environment which provides tariffs which cover fully the cost.

On a CCS project, there is not just the upfront cost of the unit itself and which is already big. There is an issue with where to store it. So you have to create caverns and what else. And then there is a large consumption of power, of course, because almost 25 per cent of the power produced is used to compress the gas and reduce the CO₂. So, it has large running costs.

So we are waiting for some clarity on this and we think that probably it is going to be a process that is going to take one or two years, although there are already been projects which have been financed by the European Union. So, on the one side, we are going ahead with the engineering and being a little bit more specific on the details. And, at the same time, we are looking for clarity.

For the LNG in Sardinia, it's a little bit more difficult to give a straightforward answer. Sardinia is an island that does not have gas, but it is sparsely populated. The whole of Sardinia has about 1.5 million inhabitants and, as is well known, it enjoys fantastic weather conditions. So the consumption of gas is relatively modest also because there are very limited heavy industries. Although, there are some talks of the reopening of the aluminium smelter. So there might be an increase in demand for base energy.

So this, again, we will need clarity on what sort of tariffs, feed-in tariffs, one would have for a gas project and we would be able to participate in the different forms for a project like this. If there was a regulatory environment in which there was fixed feed-in tariffs, we could build a plant, buy the gas and feed into



the grid. Or we would just be able to cooperate with one of the many operators, one of the large energy companies in Italy or the gas producers around the world. I mean, we would be extremely flexible.

Franco Balsamo

In terms of your question related to the line of credit, as we have already disclosed at the beginning of the month of February, we have subscribed two credit facilities for four years of duration for an amount of about 350 million euro. So the credit facilities we have in place are good enough to support our current net financial position. In addition, we have a significant amount of other short-term credit facilities. But, in any case, what we are trying to negotiate now – and we have already negotiated, because it is in the final phase of the process – is to have additional credit facilities with the scope to enhance our liquidity position in case of future deteriorations of market conditions. As we have seen, we are in this position of a the working capital that might generate a negative cash flow. We received the final approval from the banks and the contract will be signed within the end of the month of August. These are additional credit facilities for enhancing our liquidity positions.

In this framework, of course, due to the worsening of the reported EBITDA, we have also taken the opportunity to update some financial covenant in order to keep them in line with the current economic performance of the company. So the negotiation is already executed. We have relation with the banks that are providing the liquidity. So it's a process already executed and will be finalised within the end of the month of August.

Joshua Stone - Barclays

That's great. Thank you.

Operator

The next question is from Henri Patricot with UBS. Please go ahead

Henri Patricot - UBS

Hello, everyone, thank you for the presentation. Three questions please, also on the financial side. The first one, I was thinking you can give us an updated guidance for capex for 2020. And, secondly, in terms of the moving parts for the second half of the year. You mentioned the contango trade. Should we expect more of that to unwind in the third quarter? And then, finally, you also mentioned that projects are more credit line, et cetera. So I wanted to check what we should expect in terms of working capital movements in the second half?



Franco Balsamo

So, the CAPEX programme is in line with the budget that we're expecting to be about 227 million euro. Most of the investments were concentrated in the first part of the year, so, what we are trying to manage is to keep this amount within the budget limits. So, in the second part of the year, the investment would be 40 million euro and in order to keep the budget at 227.

In order of explaining the working capital expectation in the second part of the year, as we have already discussed last time for the first Quarter, we were negatively impacted by the worsening of the commodity prices in combination with the decline in the volume of sales. Now, the market has reverted: sales volumes are increased and also commodity prices are at a reasonable level. So, due to these positive effects, we have recreated a positive working capital and, in our operations, this situation should be positive also for the second part of the year. And given an evolution of the market in line with the current one, we do not expect any worsening in our working capital position. So, the net financial position expected at the end of the year should be in line with the one at the end of June, with some potential upside in case there is an increase in terms of commodities price level.

Henri Patricot - UBS

Okay, thank you. And should we expect a more positive impact from contango trade in the third quarter? And, more broadly, do you think the supply in trading performance which helped in the second quarter, can that be replicated in the second half?

Dario Scaffardi

No, in the sense that there is no contango to play right now. I think we might have some residual positions that are being unwinded in this period. So, it's possible that they may show up in Q3 results, but it will be the end of the contango play, let's say.

Henri Patricot - UBS

Okay, thank you.

Operator

The next question is from Massimo Bonisoli with Equita. Please go ahead.

Massimo Bonisoli – Equita

Good afternoon. Two questions, one for Franco and one for Dario. The first one, net financial position outlook, so back on the question on the working capital. If you can elaborate more on the outlook in the sense that you're forecasting more or less a stable net financial position versus the end of first half and



the net working capital should not be any more a drag in the second half, as well as the operating rates for the refining plant would be favourable in the second half. So, at the end of the day, it looks to me that there is some conservatism in your net financial position outlook for the end of the year. So I see some potential improvement from the level of that first half.

And the second question is back on the CCS project. You mentioned about 300 to 400 million capex for this project. I'm curious about if this project may only decarbonise the refinery, or is also accessory to the eventual production of additional hydrogen in the sense that the European hydrogen strategy includes some budget for the retrofitting of grey hydrogens. So I'm curious if you're trying also to increase the production of hydrogen from the grey to blue and include it into the new funded scheme from the European Union.

Dario Scaffardi

Well, yes, the CAPEX at the moment is a rough estimate based on preliminary engineering. It is a project which uses about 3 million tonnes. I mean, our whole site produces roughly 6 million tonnes of CO₂ and this CCS is designed for about half of that. There's also constraints on the storage of the CO₂, so, of course, you have to be careful. First of all, having the authorisations, which I don't think is going to be easy, and then finding the appropriate geological structures which are able to contain the hydrogen. So, at the moment, this project is for 3 million tonnes. I do not rule out the possibility it might become bigger or something like that. I don't know. But, at the moment, this is the project.

Of course, since our IGCC plant is also a big producer of hydrogen, automatically, if we are able to sequester the carbon from the IGCC plant, which is basically the carbon which will go into this unit, automatically, the hydrogen would become blue hydrogen with all that entails that, of course.

Franco Balsamo

In terms of your question related to our forecast for the net financial position at year end, of course, it is a complicated matter, but, in line with principle, in our model we foresee stability in line with the position at the end of June.

Probably this is such a cautious position, but, on one side, in this part of the year we are taking benefit from an opportunity to postpone part of the excise to the second part of the year. On the other side, there is the real benefit that the net financial position is strictly correlated to the evolution of the profitability of the company, and that we are to complete the investment process. So the working capital forecast is positive because the combinations of those effects are counterbalanced. So, I say that the net financial position should be in line with the current one at the end of June.



Massimo Bonisoli – Equita

Okay, thank you.

Operator

As a reminder, if you wish to register for a question, please press star and one on your telephone. Once again, if you wish to ask a question, you may press star and one on your telephone. The next question is from Monika Rajoria with Société Générale. Please go ahead.

Monika Rajoria – Société Générale

Thank you for taking my question. I just have one question on the biofuels that you spoke about. Any colour that you can give us on what kind of feedstocks you would like to use there and how quickly can you scale up to 250? Thank you.

Dario Scaffardi

Thank you for the question. Well, with biofuels on, let's say, on the ethanol side, presumably would be bioethanol, which generally is made from sugarcane, it comes from South America or France and produced by the distillation of various crops. So a traditional bioethanol.

On the diesel side, there is a variety of feedstocks that we can use. Today, the feedstock that we're using is sustainable palm oil, or rapeseed oil, or soy oil, whatever is more convenient. Of course, we would have a possibility of using cooking oils, animal waste, but there is a limited supply in the Mediterranean market and it's already been soaked up by other operators. So, I don't think that – this will probably be a complement, but not a major part. But, of course, it's something which is changing and you know we'll keep our eyes open to opportunities. Using, for instance, animal fats poses some logistic constraints which are not trivial at all to manage.

In terms of scaling up, I would hope that, by sometime in the next year, we would be able to be in that space.

Monica Rajoria – Société Générale

Great, sounds good. Thank you.

Operator

For any further questions, please press star and one on your telephone.

Gentlemen, there are no more questions registered at this time.



Dario Scaffardi

Thank you very much.

Ilaria Candotti

Thank you very much. We are available for any other questions you may have. So thank you for being with us this afternoon.