Ramp-up in production: Safran in the starting blocks

Sneca (Safran) commercial success is generating a ramp-up in production. The Group’s was able to anticipate this industrial and human challenge by mobilizing its in-house teams, suppliers and production tools.

Totaling nearly 11,300 firm orders and commitments for CFM56 and LEAP engines, including 6,400 for the latter, CFM International’s total backlog as of March 31, 2014 represented almost six years' production, an unprecedented level. To meet this industrial challenge, Safran has undertaken extensive preparations: "We will have to successfully ramp-up production of the LEAP, going from 0 to 1,500 engines per year," explains Marc Ventre, Safran's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Operations.

The industrial challenge of the LEAP

The Group has anticipated this ramp-up, adapting its internal organization and securing its supply chain. "This is a major challenge, as we have no room for error," states Marc Ventre. "Production processes have been optimized and synergies between Group companies have been systematically sought out and implemented." In addition, major industrial investments have been made: "In cooperation with our partner Albany International, we have created two plants dedicated to manufacturing the 3D woven RTM composite parts used in this engine: one in Rochester, United States, the other in Commercy, France," elaborates Marc Ventre. The first entered into service in 2013, the second is expected to open in fall 2014. Another example: in April, Aircelle (Safran) laid the foundation stone of a new integration site in Hamburg for the assembly and delivery of the LEAP engine nacelles for the Airbus A320neo.

Anticipation and ongoing support

This boost to production also affects the workloads of the 180 LEAP program subcontractors. Thus, to assist and prepare its suppliers to cope with the surge, Safran launched the LS2R (LEAP Supplier Rate Readiness) project in 2012. This method identifies the difficulties faced by suppliers and works with them to develop operational solutions. The Group has also rolled out production management tools such as performance management and QRQC (Quick Response Quality Control), a process to improve operational performance. Another lever: contractual agreements with some of its suppliers. Safran recently signed a purchase agreement with Mecachrome for the production of titanium aluminide (TiAl) blades for the low-pressure turbine of the LEAP engine.

1 CFM International is a 50/50 joint venture between Safran and GE. Its CFM56 turbofan is the highest selling engine in the world. Its successor, the LEAP, will enter service in 2016.

2 Resin transfer molding. This method will be used to manufacture the engine’s fan blades and fan cases.

3 Source: Boeing

Learn more

The market for single-aisle aircraft, estimated at more than 24,600 units in the next twenty years, represents a huge challenge for Safran. In addition to supplying the LEAP engine to the Airbus A320neo, the Boeing 737 MAX and the COMAC C919, the Group provides these aircraft with a range of other equipment: nacelles, landing gear, avionics, electrical systems and more.