

ROLLS-ROYCE SETS SIGHTS ON PROVIDING FUEL-EFFICIENT ENGINE FOR AIRBUS A380

News / Manufacturer



Rolls-Royce sees an opportunity to provide a more **fuel-efficient engine** for the **Airbus A380**, the world's largest airplane, once its manufacturer and its biggest operator, Emirates, move forward on the aircraft's future.

The British engine maker in April won a US\$9.2 billion (Dh33.8bn) contract with Emirates to build engines for 50 A380s. The delivery of the first aircraft is scheduled for late next year.

Emirates presently operates a fleet of 65 superjumbos, with more than 70 more on order. But Tim Clark, the airline's president, is pushing for an even more fuel-efficient model of the A380. He had signalled that he was ready to buy a further 200 planes if a more fuel-efficient model is introduced.

Fuel is the largest component of an airline's cost and makes up 28 per cent of Emirates's operating cost, according to its latest financial statement.

Talks regarding a more fuel-efficient version of the Airbus A380 come as Airbus is facing a lack of new customers for its flagship aircraft. Last year, it signalled the possibility of discontinuing the

A380 programme beyond 2020 without fresh orders.

“If Emirates and Airbus come to a decision regarding the Neo [the more fuel-efficient version], we have a number of engine options that could be available,” said John Gay, Rolls-Royce’s regional director for the Middle East, at the Dubai Airshow. “We invest billion pounds a year on research and development. This is all about staying ahead of competition and having products available for the air framers and the airlines to stay competitive,” he said.

Fabrice Bregier, the chief executive of Airbus, said this week that he was in talks with Emirates regarding a Neo version of the A380, but the manufacturer first had to find more customers for the aircraft. Mr Bregier also said there was “no urgency” about introducing the Neo for the double-decker plane because fuel prices are currently low.

Mr Gay said there was another opportunity for Rolls-Royce following Emirates’s decision to either order the Airbus A350-900 or the Boeing 787-10 aircraft. Emirates had said it was looking to place an order for about 100 long-range planes but it was still deciding between the Airbus and Boeing models.

“If it is the Airbus A350, we are exclusive on the A350 engine, if it is the Boeing 787, we will offer the Trent 1000 engine,” said Mr Gay.

According to Rolls-Royce, it has a 52 per cent share of the new engines for all wide-body aircraft on order from the Middle East.

Yesterday, the company said its earnings next year would be hit by a £650 million (Dh3.6bn) “headwind” as demand weakens for business-jet engines and maintenance services for older wide-body models.

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