SURGING E-JET SALES HAVE EMBRAER MULLING PRODUCTION INCREASE

News / Manufacturer

With E-Jet sales outpacing Embraer's current production levels, the manufacturer will have to consider production increases starting as soon as next year.

The Brazilian manufacturer has already sold 131 E-Jets this year (a mix of current generation E-Jets and E2 aircraft) and, though declining to provide a specific number, hints that E-Jet sales could top 150 aircraft this year on the heels of 149 units sold in 2014. "We have several [sales] opportunities and this number [131 units sold] can go up substantially" by the end of 2015, Embraer Commercial Aviation VP-marketing Rodrigo Silva e Souza told *ATW* on the sidelines of the Boyd Group International Aviation Forecast Summit in Las Vegas.

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Embraer will produce 95-100 E-Jets this year (it delivered 92 commercial aircraft last year), but if current sales trends continue, that likely won't be a high enough level of production in coming years. "We have the capacity to increase production if necessary," Silva e Souza said. "A small increment [of increased production] next year is possible … We have produced close to 150 aircraft a year in the past. If we plan accordingly, we can increase to those levels" in future years. The E-Jet backlog has reached a record 531 aircraft.

A big reason for the robust sales is that airlines are interested in both current generation E-Jets to meet more immediate needs and E2s to meet future demand. "The airlines need the [E-Jet] technology in the short term, so they can't wait for the new [E2] technology to explore opportunities rising now," Silva e Souza said.

Interest in current generation E-Jets is coming from US airlines looking to replace 50-seat regional jets with dual-class 76-seat E-175s and emerging economies building internal domestic markets. Many airlines in developing economies are also interested in E2s, Silva e Souza said. "China is growing its domestic [air travel] market and we see a lot of potential for our aircraft to build the regional network in China," he explained.

Embraer has completed the wing assembly for the E-190-E2, which is slated for first flight in the second half of 2016. The wing-fuselage joining will come "some months from now" and the PW1900G geared turbofan (GTF) engine should be delivered by Pratt & Whitney by the end of this year, Silva e Souza said.

"We see thorough interest in both airplanes [current generation E-Jets and E2s] and in many cases we're in discussions about both airplanes with the same customer," he said.

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