



## CONTINENTAL TECHNIKFORUM

# New SUV tyres completed offer

**Continental presented even two tyre innovations at this year's TechnikForum in Seville: the new summer tyre PremiumContact 6, which will be available in trade as of next spring, and the new CrossContact ATR, which is suitable for the road and off-road terrain (70/30). Apart from knowledgeable talks on current tyre technologies and development priorities of the respective tyres, there were several extended driving events on offer for the numerous international press representatives and guests.**

The invited guests were to 'experience' the ContiSportContact 5, the ContiPremiumContact 5 and the newcomer PremiumContact 6 in a direct comparison at mild 19 degrees at the Circuito Monteblanco. For the first time, Continental offered a so-called comfort rating of the tyre newcomer to the guests. The race track, which consists of several nearby roads with tar patches, manhole covers, gravel tracks and motorway surface, provided excellent test conditions. The tyre manufacturer intends to bridge the gap between comfortable tyres for limousines and tyres for sports cars.

## New CrossContact ATR

Although the new CrossContact ATR covered only a small part of the talks at the TechnikForum, it will, however, play a substantial role in the product portfolio. From now on, it will complete the Continental SUV tyre offer. First, CrossContact ATR will be available in 21 sizes between 15 and 20 inches, in widths between 205 and 275 millimetres and diameters between 40 and 80 per cent. As of next spring, further sizes will be launched. "The tyre offers perfect control on any surface. The ATR with a 70/30

ratio is predominately suitable for the road, but provides grip in off-road terrain too", explained Marco Gellings, Director Tire Line Development. Since November 2016, passenger car tyres are no longer allowed to indicate three classes of the sound wave symbol on the EU tyre label. "This was a challenge for the ATR as it has a rougher tread pattern than 'normal' passenger car tyres", Gellings continued. Small bars between the blocks in the tyre shoulders are meant to function as noise barrier and to reduce the tyre/road noise emissions from the side of the tyre. Moreover, they are to provide comfortable driving characteristics. "The ATR is special because we made use of a complete silica compound, which you normally do not find in this segment", said Gellings. As a consequence, the tyre is supposed to also offer good grip on wet roads.

"When developing the tyre, we paid additional attention to its look, as SUV drivers like showing that they would as well be able to drive off-road", Gellings added. Thus, the Continental 'tyre bakers' produced a tyre with a strikingly aggressive look. A SUV tyre does not only have to pay attention to outward appearance, as its opti-

cal features often have a technical function too. The CrossContact ATR disposes of so-called 'grip teeth' between the grooves and an open tread design with several sipes guarantees good grip in off-road terrain. "A rim protection rib is a further specialty of the ATR. It helps to treat the edge of the rim and the tyre with care when getting into contact with the curb or obstacles in off-road terrain, explained Gellings.

Based on its on/off-road ratio of 70/30 per cent, the ContiCrossContact ATR positions itself between the ContiCrossContact AT (50/50) and more on-road products like the ContiCrossContact LX 2 (80/20) and the PremiumContact 6 (100/0). The ATR could even slightly be considered as competitor of the new General Tire product Grabber AT3, which was officially presented by the manufacturer in September 2016. Nevertheless, Karsten Wiebking, Marketing & Sales Development Nordics & UHP Tyres, stressed that tyres of both brands were only competitors in certain segments and that the price positioning was a further distinction between them.

## OEM approvals

Original equipment approvals play a cru-



Several driving stations were built up at the Circuito Monteblanco.

Karsten Wiebking, Marketing & Sales Development Nordics & UHP Tyres, concerning the new PremiumContact 6 and its predecessor models, the SportContact 5 and the PremiumContact 5.



cial role at Continental. The number of approvals has continuously been growing as well as the requirements of the automotive industry. According to company information, every third new car from European production rolls on Continental tyres. Continental produces tailor-made tyres for automotive manufacturers like among others BMW, Fiat, Mercedes, Porsche, Renault and Volkswagen. The first SportContact received about 100 approvals, after it had been launched in 1994. "At the moment, the number of predecessors of the new PremiumContact 6 has already reached about 400", reported Wiebking. The new PremiumContact 6 has got a lot of approval too: About 70 versions have already been in approval procedures of the car manufacturers before the official market launch.

According to experts at Continental, above all individual tyre virtues like sportiness, comfort or mileage were stressed in the eighties, whereas in the meantime characteristics like emergency running, low rolling resistance, low interior vehicle noise and other requirements have been added as total package.

There are several reasons for the increase in the number of approvals. Currently, the individual vehicle models have a significantly higher number of diversity concerning equipment and motorization, which is also represented by the tyre and rim sizes. Moreover, customer preferences vary to a large extent depending on the region. Thus, consumers in Europe expect short braking distances, perfect handling and low rolling resistance, whereas the wetness factor is more important in Asia and comfort and mileage are in the US. According to experts at Continental, the number of original equipment specifications will continue to rise. Furthermore, vehicles with combustion engines and with electric drive will have extremely different requirements concerning tyres.

(akl)



Catarina Silva, Head of Product Management Continental EMEA, is explaining a tread pattern in a workshop.



Hearing and feeling how the new PremiumContact 6 behaves compared with its predecessor model.



The Continental CrossContact ATR is suitable for the VW Tiguan.



The management of Goodyear Dunlop Tires Germany GmbH has informed the employees of the location in Philippsburg about the closure of the tyre plant.



## GOODYEAR DUNLOP

# Closure of tyre plant in Philippsburg

**The management of Goodyear Dunlop Tires Germany GmbH has informed the employees of the location in Philippsburg about the closure of the tyre plant. Last year, Goodyear Dunlop unilaterally terminated the site continuation agreement for 7,500 employees in seven locations. Until the end of 2017, 890 employees will probably lose their jobs in Philippsburg.**

The nearby tyre warehouse - finished in 2009 - is not supposed to be closed. The warehouse in Philippsburg plays a crucial role for the European logistics of the group. Concerning the closure of the tyre plant, Jürgen Titz, Chairman of the Management, announced "socially acceptable solutions for all the affected employees". When the termination of the site continuation agreement was announced in the year 2015, the responsible people promised the workforce keeping all the seven locations in Germany and avoiding any involuntary redundancies. The promise will now be null and void.

According to company information, the decision was taken in accordance with

the strategic focus of Goodyear in order to meet increasing demand for premium tyres in high-quality segments of the international tyre market and to invest less in segments of the tyre market with less growth or even a decrease. "Our strategy is aiming at increasing the presence of Goodyear in segments of highly complex and bigger tyres, which are characterized by above-average growth rates. There the company will be able to use the value of its brands and to support its customers to grow profitably", said Jean-Claude Kihn, President at Goodyear for the region Europe, Middle East and Africa. "Our customers would like more of our premium tyres with big inch sizes of 17 inches and bigger. Nowadays,

these are highly demanded by our original equipment customers and will be needed in the replacement market in the years to come".

The responsible people announced to reduce over-capacities in market segments where supply is surpassing demand and which are thus less profitable. This announcement will also cause a lot of uncertainties among the employees at other locations. Goodyear runs six production plants in Germany and employs about 7,600 people. The group management is aiming at a reorganization of the region Europe, Middle East and Africa. The main goal will be an increase in operational profit.

(kle)

## Enquired about - Jürgen Titz, Chairman of Management at Goodyear Dunlop Tires Deutschland GmbH

*When talking about the closure of the tyre plant in Philippsburg, you announced to find socially acceptable solutions for all the affected employees and to offer them further appropriate assistance? What will this mean in detail?*

We are fully aware of our social responsibility to our employees and of the enormous impact the planned closure will have on them. We all share in the common concerns of finding solutions and offering appropriate assistance together with the works council. The details will be clarified in the framework of the consultation procedure.

*Would it be possible for some plant employees to find a job in your logistics centre?*

We are certainly concerned to be able to offer alternatives in the framework of internal changes. Thus, the affected employees will be able to apply for vacancies within the company via the normal internal application process. This is of course also valid for any vacancy in our logistics centre.

*The group strategy is aiming at increasing the presence of Goodyear in segments with highly complex and bigger tyres, where above-average growth has been noticed. This was also given as reason for the closure of Philippsburg. Would it not have been possible to adapt the plant to this strategy concerning production technology?*

I would also like to make use of this opportunity to express how extremely sorry we are about the proposal to close our factory in Philippsburg. It was based on thorough analysis of our production locations with regard to our company strategy, the general economic environment and its future development perspectives. Adapting the plant to this strategy would not have been the right solution for Philippsburg as we are disposing of sufficient production capacities for tyres with bigger inch sizes in our European production network.

*Which plants will mainly be supposed to guarantee the increased production of tyres starting with inch size 17?*

First of all, we will have to finish the consultation procedure with the responsible works council. Should we take a decision in favour of a closure of the plant, a ca-



Jürgen Titz stresses the importance of Germany as production location.

reful and thorough preparation and implementation will be essential. This will include a close cooperation with our customers in order to guarantee smooth transition of part of the production to other plants.

*Will the group no longer focus on 13 to 15-inch sizes?*

The decreasing segments of the tyre market will affect above all tyres with smaller inch sizes (up to 16 inches). Here we also have to face enormous competitive pressure caused by cheap imports from third countries. In the future, we will focus more on the production of bigger inch sizes (17 inches and more), the smaller inch sizes, however, will not be forgotten.

*It was announced that over-capacities in less profitable market segments would be reduced. Furthermore, that the group management was aiming at a reorganization of the region Europe, Middle East and Africa in order to increase operational profit. Will further locations of the six in Germany be endangered?*

Germany is an important production location for Goodyear. We are constantly checking our organization in order to guarantee that we work competitively and efficiently. As we have already mentioned several times, the planned closure will only affect the plant in Philippsburg – I would like to use this opportunity to explicitly stress this once again. (kle)