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RADAR TYRES JOINS FORCES WITH THE PROTEAS

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scrutiny after
Dakar 2026

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The Tyre Sector
Well Underway

Turning 12H Tax Act
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Editor's Corner

Welcome back to our first edition for 2026!

For motor racing enthusiasts, the beginning of a new year is synonymous with the world's most prestigious racing event – the Dakar Rally. This year, the race took place in Saudi Arabia, with competitors facing challenging terrains, both on sand and on rock, citing a disturbing rise in tyre punctures and failures. We share some of their concerns in our feature story on page 2.

Struggling to find and retain quality staff for your business? Take our interactive poll to have your say.

A positive development on this score, however is TEPA's concerted drive to step up skills training for the tyre sector, which is steadily gaining momentum. This story on page 10.

In other news, we focus on the announcement that Singapore-based Radar Tyres, has signed a strategic multi-year partnership with Cricket South Africa, becoming the Global Partner for the Proteas and Junior Proteas across all major formats. Our story on page 6 provides more detail on this unique partnership and what it will entail.

Enjoy our mix of stories.

Yours in tyres



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BFGOODRICH UNDER SCRUTINY AFTER HIGH VOLUME OF TYRE PUNCTURES AT 2026 DAKAR RALLY



The 2026 Dakar Rally, which drew to a close in January in the coastal town of Yanbu in Saudi Arabia, proved to be one of the most demanding in recent memory, according to crews who described the rocky terrain and deep dune systems as challenging. To add to that, this year saw a higher volume of tyre punctures along the way, causing concern for the competitors.

All three South African Toyota Hilux crews finished. Saood Variawa and Francois Cazalet led the team's overall performance, finishing 10th overall and making Variawa the top-placed South African driver at Dakar 2026. This, according to Toyota Gazoo Racing and www.motorsport.co.za.

Saood Variawa: "It was a very long and tough race, but I am encouraged by the progress made. It's my third Dakar and my third finish."

He went on to say that were it not for a combination of punctures, a damaged driveshaft and time lost in navigation-heavy sections, the pairing showed pace capable of challenging well inside the overall top five.

HOW BFGOODRICH PERFORMED

Once again BFGoodrich dominated the 2026 Rally, with the BFGoodrich KDR2+ used by top competitors to navigate, varied, extreme terrain.



PHOTO: Charly Lopez

Nasser Al-Attiyah and Fabian Lurquin secured victory on the specialized 35-inch KDR2+ tyres, - regarded as the pinnacle of BFGoodrich's racing, off road and performance line up - thereby reinforcing the brand's reputation for extreme durability in the world's toughest race.

It was a very long and tough race, but I am encouraged by the progress made. It's my third Dakar and my third finish.

— Saood Variawa



“The tyres provided high-level endurance, managing rapid changes from loose sand to sharp, technical and rocky patches,” they said. But faith in the tyre brand was not shared by all.

During the first week of the 2026 Dakar Rally there were numerous tyre failures, affecting almost every team and vehicle in the top class, with some drivers experiencing multiple punctures in a single day. This led to pit stops for

tyre changes being introduced on some stages, as some teams were even struggling to complete the distance.

This led to some drivers describing the race as a ‘lottery’, with sharp criticism being levelled at the tyre manufacturer.

“We are not happy with BFGoodrich at all,” claimed Joan Navarro, head engineer at M-Sport Ford, in an interview with Motorsport.com. “The tyre is a new one, not the same as last year.

“They developed it further over the course of the year. We used this tyre for the first time in October at the Rallye du Maroc. That was very last-minute. We couldn't react, couldn't do anything.

“We said from the start that this tyre wasn't validated, because to start at Dakar, a tyre must be validated. Normally, we validate every component over more than 5 000km, and this tyre simply wasn't validated.”

For the new tyre, BFGoodrich changed the internal structure. The goal was to reduce damage to the tread surface, which had been a recurring issue in past years.

“These are situations that are very hard

to manage from a driver's perspective. But one thing is certain. BFGoodrich really tried to tackle and fix old problem. Unfortunately, that seems to have created a new one.”

Conversely, Toyota team manager Jan Verhaegen believes the cause of the high volume of punctures was due to the type of stones found along the route, rather than in the design.

“What I'm hearing from the guys – and I've been on the ground myself – is that you come across some razor-sharp stones out there,” he explained. “Those black, flat stones – I'd almost call them ceramic-like are the culprit. When you

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Those black, flat stones – I'd almost call them ceramic-like – are the culprit. Most punctures occur on the sidewall. It's a learning process for next year.

– Jan Verhaegen,
Toyota team manager

”

drive over them, the front tyre flicks them up and the rear one catches them. So, in short, I would clearly attribute this to the terrain, not BFG. We have observed that most – if not all – of the punctures occur on the sidewall. Perhaps the sidewall is the area that still needs strengthening. It's a learning process for next year.

“Primarily, it's up to rally director David Castera to decide where the route takes competitors via the roadbook.



PHOTO: J.Delfosse

Left to right: GS Sareen, President & CEO, Omni United; Aiden Markram - T20I Captain, South Africa National Cricket Team; Mtunzi Jonas, CCO, Cricket South Africa (CSA).



RADAR TYRES **JOINS FORCES WITH** **THE PROTEAS**

Singapore-based Radar Tyres, the flagship brand of Omni United, has signed a multi-year partnership with Cricket South Africa, becoming the Global Partner of the Proteas and Junior Proteas across all formats. The deal includes headline sponsorship of the T20I teams, associate partnership for ODIs and Tests, and official headline partnership of the Under-19 teams, giving Radar high-profile on-field and off-field visibility while connecting with cricket fans locally and globally.

Radar Tyres – the flagship brand of Singapore-headquartered Omni United - is proud to announce that it has signed a strategic multi-year partnership with Cricket South Africa (CSA), becoming the Global Partner for the Proteas and Junior Proteas across all major formats.

As part of the agreement, Radar Tyres will hold headline sponsorship rights for the Proteas Men's and Women's T20 International teams, while serving as an Associate Partner for the Proteas Men's and Women's ODI and Test teams. The partnership also extends to the future of South African cricket, with Radar Tyres named Official Headline Partner of the Proteas Under-19 Men's and Women's teams.

The partnership delivers extensive on-field and off-field brand visibility, including exclusive logo placement on match and training kits worn by the Proteas Men's, Proteas Women's, and Under-19 teams. The Proteas Men revealed the newly branded T20I kit during the KFCT20I series, on 27 January in Paarl, South Africa.

For Radar Tyres, the partnership represents a strategic brand building investment in a

sport that has a wide audience across the world. With a growing presence across global markets, Radar continues to leverage high-impact platforms to strengthen brand equity while remaining focused on delivering premium-performance tyres at an accessible price point.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. G.S. Sareen, Founder, President and CEO of Omni United, said:

"Becoming the Global Partner of the

“

Partnering with the Proteas is a milestone for Radar Tyres and a chance to connect with cricket fans worldwide.

– G.S. Sareen, CEO of Omni United

”

**RADAR
TYRES**



Photo Credit – SuperSport TV.

100 foot Jersey reveal at Boland Park Cricket Stadium in Paarl, South Africa.

Proteas marks a significant milestone in Radar Tyres' global brand journey and reflects our belief in sport as a powerful platform to build brand equity, strengthen dealer support, enhance trust and credibility, and connect with households worldwide. We are thankful to Cricket South Africa for their partnership and are proud to support the sport of cricket, which plays an important role in uniting communities and inspiring excellence across generations.

Through this partnership, we are able to engage with cricket fans both locally and globally, while reinforcing Radar Tyres' position as a reliable, performance-driven brand committed to delivering premium-performance tyres at an accessible price point."

CSA Chief Executive Officer, Pholetsi Moseki, commented:

"CSA is extremely proud to partner with Radar Tyres, an organisation that shares our values and commitment to excellence. This partnership is a significant milestone, securing support not only for our senior teams but for our junior teams as well. This partnership reflects our deliberate approach to working with like-minded organisations, guided by a long-term vision of developing the game, supporting our players, and delivering memorable experiences for fans. Radar Tyres' support also reinforces CSA's commitment to excellence and inclusion, strengthening our ability to drive high performance across all levels."

“

This partnership supports our long-term vision to develop the game and deliver memorable experiences for fans.

– Pholetsi Moseki, CEO of CSA

”

Have YOUR SAY...

Are you being affected by the skills shortage in the industry?

[CLICK HERE TO VOTE](#)



YES



NO



Results will be published in our next edition. *NB - Your identity will remain confidential.



SKILLS TRAINING FOR THE TYRE SECTOR WELL UNDERWAY

According to the TEPA Training Committee, substantial progress in being made in implementing the Skills Development Programme that underpins the training objectives set out in TEPA's 2025-2030 Corporate Strategy. These include critical skills training for the tyre sector.

Since project inception on 1 June 2024, TEPA has met all key Year 1 milestones, laying a solid foundation for a structured, industry-aligned training pipeline for fitment centres nationally. These objectives include establishing the TEPA Training Committee, adopting a strategic plan for continuous learning, developing skills programmes tailored to fitment centres, and instituting a framework to monitor and report on progress.

By June 2024, the TEPA Training Committee was formally constituted and commenced its mandate to drive skills development across the tyre and fitment sector, with the Committee presenting its strategic plan to TEPA members on 17 October 2024, outlining a roadmap for continuous learning that aligns with industry needs and national occupational standards.

Starting in early 2025, TEPA engaged closely with the merSETA to ensure that the planned skills programmes meet current and future industry requirements.

A meeting with merSETA clarified programme requirements and led to the formation of a dedicated merSETA Task Team in February 2025 to support the development of qualifications and skills programmes, including scope, curriculum, and assessment tools.

Between March and September 2025, the first full scoping and profiling process was completed for a suite of priority programmes: Wheel and Tyre Service person, Tyre Retreader and Repairer. Building on this, TEPA has submitted completed skills programmes for QCTO approval for Hot Vulcaniser, Tyre Retreader, Wheel Aligner, and Wheel & Tyre Fitter, with finalisation targeted for July 2026. A

further scoping and profiling process for the review of the Wheel and Tyre Service person qualification is underway and remains in progress.

A further scoping and profiling process for the review of the Wheel and Tyre Service person qualification is underway and remains in progress.

The overall project remains on track with the timelines outlined for Year 2 of the 2025–2030 Corporate Strategy, with completion of this phase targeted for July 2026.

Remaining programmes to be scoped and developed by this date include Suspension Specialist (brakes & shocks), Battery Fitter, Basic Service Worker, and Sales Person (counterhand/parts sales).

TEPA is closely managing submission dates to align with QCTO approval windows to avoid any delays in programme accreditation.

The effective management of the project timeline to date has ensured that initial delays in early phases were contained, and all Year 1 milestones have been successfully achieved.

With strong governance from the TEPA Training Committee and ongoing collaboration with merSETA and industry stakeholders, the skills development project is firmly on course to deliver a comprehensive, accredited training framework for the sector in line with TEPA's 2025–2030 Corporate Strategy.



Turning Section 12H into a Tyre Industry Superpower

In the tyre and fitment game, we live and die by thin margins and thick compliance files. Yet every now and then, the system gives us something that genuinely works in our favour. Section 12H of the Income Tax Act – the learnership allowance – is one of those rare tools that is both practical and optimistic. It rewards employers who build people, not just profit. And the best part? Once you understand it, it's far easier to use than most of us expect.

Written By: Dylan Petzer (TEPA National Vice-Chairman)

What Section 12H really does for your shop

Section 12H gives an additional tax deduction for each qualifying learnership you register and run in your business. In plain language: if you invest in accredited learnerships – for example, tyre fitment, service adviser or related automotive programmes – SARS allows you an extra deduction on top of your normal salary cost.

There are two parts to it:

- An annual allowance for each year of the learnership.
- A completion allowance when the learner successfully finishes.

For a small or medium tyre business, this can take a serious bite out of your tax bill while you grow the skills you desperately need on the floor. It's not a loophole or a trick; it's

policy designed to help you turn learners into productive, employable people.

There is a built-in 'sunset clause': at present, Section 12H applies to qualifying learnership agreements entered into up to 31 March 2027. Agreements started before that date can still generate annual and completion allowances for their full duration, as long as all the normal requirements are met.

"Once you map it, it's easy": Royal Tyres' experience

Royal Tyres in KwaZulu Natal is a family run business that has made skills a strategic priority, not an afterthought. Under the leadership of Jasmeena Shiba, TEPA KZN Chairwoman and Head of Administration & Compliance at Royal Tyres, Section 12H has become part of how they plan their workforce, not just their tax.

"We went into Section 12H expecting

a mountain of admin," says Shiba. "What we actually found was that once your paperwork and data are in order, the process is surprisingly straightforward. The key is discipline, not complexity."

Royal Tyres focused on three simple building blocks:

- Every learner sits on a properly registered, SETA accredited learnership that is clearly relevant to the tyre and motor trade.
- Contracts, SETA registration letters and learner records are standardised and filed systematically.
- Completion certificates from the SETA are treated as critical documents, because they unlock the completion allowance.

"Once we mapped our learners, qualifications and dates carefully," she

explains, "capturing the SARS information became a summary exercise. We stopped fearing the process and started using it as part of our annual planning."

The process, step by step (without the jargon)

If you strip away the jargon, the Section 12H process rests on four pillars:

- 1. Right learnerships:** Use SETA accredited learnerships that match your actual business activities – tyre fitment, alignment, minor services, sales or related roles. Make sure there is a signed learnership agreement between you, the learner and the training provider, and that it's formally registered with the applicable SETA.
- 2. Compliance foundation:** Keep your Skills Development Levy and tax affairs up to date. Section 12H is a reward for compliant employers; if your basics are messy, you won't feel the full benefit.
- 3. Clean data and documents:** Maintain a simple file (digital or physical) for each learner: ID, contract, SETA registration proof, learnership code and level, start and end dates, and – at the end – proof of completion. When SARS asks questions, this is the file that answers them.
- 4. Claiming at year end:** At income tax return time, you (or your accountant) capture the learnership information in the SARS required format and claim the annual and, when due, the completion allowance. For businesses with multiple learners, that usually means a consolidated schedule, not 50 separate forms.

As Shiba puts it: "The real work is training people properly. The tax claim is just the last five percent."

Why this matters for TEPA members

For TEPA members across the country, Section 12H is more than a tax incentive; it is a lever to professionalise the tyre and fitment workforce. Our sector has long been criticised for low entry requirements and informal training pathways.

Learnerships give us a way to:

- Move 'assistant' roles into structured, accredited learning.
- Build a pipeline from general worker to competent fitter, alignment technician, supervisor and beyond.
- Attract young talent with a credible, documented development route – not just a job, but a career.

In tough trading conditions, it is easy to cut training first. Section 12H gives us a counter argument. When the numbers are done properly, the additional deduction helps offset the cash cost of learnerships, making it far easier to defend skills spend in the boardroom or at the kitchen table budget meeting of a family business.

Shiba captures the leadership challenge clearly: "The paperwork is actually the easy part. The hard part is deciding that a learner from your community is worth the investment of time, patience and money. Section 12H doesn't make that decision for you – but it does help you afford to say yes."

TEPA has repeatedly heard the same message from members: we need skilled people, we need formal pathways, and we need help making the numbers work. Section 12H won't solve every problem, but it is a concrete, usable mechanism that exists right now for every compliant employer in our sector.

The leadership opportunity is simple:

- Audit where you already have informal on-the-job learning and convert that into a structured Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

process linked to accredited qualifications.

- Work with reputable training providers and your SETA structures to select the right programmes.
- Treat Section 12H as part of your annual planning cycle, not a once off experiment.

In an industry built on pressure – in tyres, in margins, in workloads – Section 12H is a reminder that the system can still reward doing the right thing. When we use it well, we are not just reducing tax; we are building the next generation of tyre professionals, one learner at a time.

That is not just good compliance. That is good leadership.

Keep an eye out for our new TEPA Educates series.

Our first six talks will focus on SARS – covering eFiling, ETI, small business tax and more – with SARS officials joining us so that attendees can ask questions and engage directly. Follow our social media channels for dates, topics and registration details.



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SKILLS CRISIS AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION CONFRONTED AT AUTOMECHANIKA JOHANNESBURG CEO BREAKFAST

Automechanika Johannesburg convened experts from South Africa's automotive industry at its first CEO breakfast of 2026 at the South African German Chamber of Commerce, where speakers warned that the sector's ability to compete and grow will hinge on tackling a deepening skills crisis, while responding decisively to rapid technological disruption.

In his first official address as CEO of AHK Southern Africa, Maximilian Butek highlighted the strategic strength of the local automotive industry, stating: "South Africa's established supplier network and deeply integrated supply chain are real competitive advantages in an increasingly crowded global market," he said. "We must actively promote and protect this ecosystem as a differentiator."

Skills Crisis

Ipeleng Mabusela, CEO of the Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI), delivered a warning on the scale of the skills challenge and its implications for economic mobility, safety and transformation.

Drawing on industry data, he noted a 31% decline in artisans over a 10-year period, despite growing numbers of apprentices entering the system. "Mobility cannot be realised without addressing skills," he implored.

Mabusela positioned the sector as a national mobility backbone, highlighting that the auto retail and aftermarket accounts for the largest share of jobs in the automotive value chain (about 70%), with aftermarket employment growing at 1.2% CAGR from 2020 to 2024.

Mabusela said scaling existing training and enterprise pipelines will require "collaboration with intent," including partnerships spanning industry, government and training institutions.

Structural Shifts

Paul-Roux de Kock, Chief Analytics Officer of Lightstone, unpacked South Africa's post-COVID recovery in new vehicle sales and the structural shifts reshaping the



light vehicle market, including changing demand patterns, pricing dynamics and a rapid expansion in consumer choice as more brands enter the market.

"The market is getting more crowded and more complex," he said. "Businesses need to track shifts in pricing, brand share and supply origins in order to compete effectively".

Reshaped Industry

Greg Cress, Principal Director: Automotive & eMobility at Accenture South Africa, outlined five forces accelerating change across the global automotive industry, with direct implications for South African OEMs, suppliers and the broader mobility ecosystem.

"The global EV trend is a call-to-action for South African OEMs, who must secure NEV product lines," he stated. Cress also pointed to the rise of advanced driver assistance systems and autonomy as a near-term localisation opportunity.

He referenced Level 4 autonomous capability (vehicles that can drive themselves without human intervention within defined operating conditions) already operating in global pilot environments.

He further noted that connectivity and software are rapidly becoming core competitive battlegrounds.

"Over-the-air (OTA) capability is becoming standard," he pointed out, referring to vehicles that can receive remote software updates—similar to a smartphone—

enabling new features, improvements and fixes without a workshop visit, adding that 75%+ of new models will have OTA update capability.

Tailored Support

Tagatso Sello, Senior Manager of Manufacturing at Nedbank, signalled the financial sector's commitment to supporting industry-specific needs through customised financing and advisory services, emphasising that the sector's transition requires practical, tailored solutions.

"The transformation underway in automotive demands flexible, sector-appropriate support, not one-size-fits-all approaches," he suggested.

Deeper Collaboration

"The challenges we face today demand unprecedented collaboration," surmised Michael Dehn, Managing Director of Messe Frankfurt South Africa. "Our 2026 engagement strategy, comprising quarterly CEO breakfasts and six regional roadshows across Southern and East Africa, creates the platforms for industry leaders to forge partnerships, share intelligence, and build resilience through greater connection," he concluded.

Automechanika Johannesburg 2026 takes place from 27 to 29 October at the Gallagher Convention Centre.

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SAGMJ COTY TURNS 40, REVEALS 2026 FINALISTS

The South African Guild of Mobility Journalists (SAGMJ) has announced the 18 finalists for the 2026 South African Car of the Year (COTY) competition, marking 40 years of recognising the very best new cars on South Africa's roads. Since 1986, experienced jurors have recognised vehicles that offer true distinction through innovation, specifications, value for money and customer relevance.

Selected from more than 55 new and qualifying vehicles launched in 2025, the 18 finalists represent the best in their respective segments of the 2026 SA COTY awards. Shortlisted after extensive consideration by SA COTY's expert jury, each vehicle was assessed for quality, safety, performance and suitability for South African conditions, and will now advance to a rigorous three-day evaluation at Zwartkops Raceway in Tshwane.

"Reaching our 40th anniversary is an extremely proud milestone for the SAGMJ's Car of the Year competition, sponsored by Old Mutual Insure for the third consecutive year," says SA COTY Chairman Thami Masemola. "It reflects decades of independent testing, informed debate and a shared commitment to recognising vehicles that meet South African motorists' needs. These 18 finalists represent the very best new cars of 2025, to be rigorously tested and selected by South Africa's most trusted motoring jurors."

Presodhini Naicker, Executive of Marketing and Communication at Old Mutual Insure, congratulates COTY on this milestone: "We sincerely congratulate all the finalists of the 2026 COTY competition on reaching the final round. As a long-standing supporter, we value SA COTY's credibility, consistency and relevance."

Naicker adds, "for four decades, the competition has empowered consumers to make informed vehicle choices, and it continues to provide a credible platform through which we can meaningfully advance our road-safety

message. This alignment speaks directly to our commitment to protecting what matters most, not only vehicles, but the people who use them".

The 2026 SA COTY finalists represent a diverse mix of vehicles, from affordable compact hatchbacks to family-focused lifestyle SUVs and performance SUVs, ensuring buyers across multiple price points can choose class-leading cars that suit their needs.

This year, one-third of the finalists are Chinese brands, reflecting their growing influence and the increasing presence of new-energy vehicles competing for category wins and the overall title. Traditional brands continue to dominate the performance and luxury segments, setting the stage for another intense rivalry that reinforces their strong position in the local market.

The 2025 SA Car of the Year Finalists, in alphabetical order, are:

- Alfa Romeo Junior
- Audi A5
- Audi RS Q8
- BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe
- BYD Dolphin Surf
- BYD Shark
- Chery Tiggo 7 PHEV
- GWM Haval H7
- Hyundai Santa Fe
- Jetour T2
- Land Rover Defender OCTA
- Leapmotor C10 REEV
- Lexus GX
- Omoda C7
- Opel Grandland
- Volkswagen Golf 1.4TSI
- Volkswagen Tayron
- Volvo EX90

In early March 2026, the competition moves to the actual testing phase at Zwartkops Raceway and surrounding routes in Tshwane. Over three days, the jury will physically assess finalists under real-world road conditions, on the racetrack, and – where applicable – on dedicated off-road courses for vehicles with off-road capability.

The South African COTY competition is among the few globally to retain hands-on testing, adding a distinctive and authentic dimension to the judging process.

Following the test days, the jurors' scores will be compiled and submitted to the final scoring round. At this stage, Lightstone Auto data will be used to calculate segment share based on sales volumes and to assess specification-adjusted pricing against direct competitors within each segment.

The Motor Enthusiast's Choice public vote returns for a third consecutive year, giving the public the opportunity to participate in Old Mutual Insure's SA COTY initiative. Watch out for upcoming social media posts highlighting road safety, innovation and lifestyle as part of the company's ongoing road safety campaign.

"For 40 years, the SAGMJ-organised SA Car of the Year competition has celebrated the cars South Africans love. The 2026 COTY will continue this tradition, creating excitement as jurors search for the very best vehicles on local roads," concludes Masemola.

The 2026 SA COTY winners will be revealed at a glittering gala event in Johannesburg during the first week of May.

The official hashtags for this year's COTY competition are #SACOTY2026 and #OMICOTY.

CONTINENTAL TYRE SOUTH AFRICA CERTIFIED AS A TOP EMPLOYER FOR 2026



Continental Tyre South Africa (CTSA) has once again been certified as a Top Employer for 2026 by the internationally respected Top Employers Institute, reaffirming the company's ongoing commitment to people excellence and sustainable workplace practices.

The Top Employers Institute recognises organisations worldwide that demonstrate outstanding performance across key human resources areas, including talent development, leadership capability, employee wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, as well as the continuous improvement of people processes. CTSA's recertification reflects its consistent focus on creating a work environment where employees are supported, engaged and empowered to perform at their best.

"This recognition speaks to the strength of our people practices and the commitment of every team across CTSA," says Richenda Koeberg, TMOD Manager at Continental

Tyre South Africa. "A workplace where people feel valued and supported naturally unlocks high performance. Being certified as a Top Employer once again shows that our dedication to meaningful growth opportunities, capable leadership and an inclusive, supportive culture is genuinely making a difference for our people."

Through the implementation of best-practice programmes, targeted learning and development initiatives, and strong business partnerships, Continental Tyre South Africa continues to invest in its workforce to support long-term organisational success.

By actively listening to employees and learning from their insights, the company continues to shape people practices that strengthen its talent pipeline, enhance leadership capability and drive sustainable performance across the organisation. The 2026 Top Employer certification further strengthens Continental Tyre South Africa's position as an employer of choice within the manufacturing and automotive sector.

DUNLOP TYRES AND ISUZU MOTORS SOUTH AFRICA PARTNER TO DRIVE LOCAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN GQEBERHA

Dunlop Tyres South Africa has partnered with its Original Equipment partner, Isuzu Motors South Africa (IMSAf), to launch a local supplier development initiative that brings world-class tyre expertise directly onto the production line at IMSAf's Struandale plant in Gqeberha.

The collaboration is designed to drive social enterprise development, strengthen localisation, and create opportunities for local businesses. The partnership is with Eastern Cape Tyres, owned by long-standing Dunlop franchisee Matthew Nondwayi.

"This partnership shows the power of multinationals working together with a shared commitment to progress," said Lubin Ozoux, CEO of Dunlop Tyres SA. "We are proud to be part of an initiative that not only empowers local entrepreneurs but also ensures Isuzu Motors South Africa receives the highest quality service and technical expertise."

Nondwayi, who has operated Dunlop fitment centres for more than 25 years, has now expanded his business to manage IMSAf's in-house tyre assembly operations – officially launched in April 2025.

A passionate tyre dealer, Matthew Nondwayi has over 30 years of experience in the industry, from managing a large tyre retail chain to successfully growing his own dealership network. The Eastern Cape-born entrepreneur's first business was Eastern Cape Tyres, which grew to three branches in Alice and King William's



Town. His commitment to quality ensures his customers receive tyres that are reliable and purpose-built for SA roads.

"This partnership is the culmination of three decades of hard work and belief in quality service," said Nondwayi.

"Starting out supplying small bakkie tyres and now supporting the assembly line for an automotive giant like IMSAf, right here in the Eastern Cape, shows what is possible when big business supports local enterprise. We are bringing world-class expertise to the Struandale plant and are incredibly proud to call this assembly line the newest addition to the Eastern Cape Tyres family."

For IMSAf, the partnership delivers the advantage of a trusted tyre expert

backed by Dunlop's technical training, customer service, and nationwide network. The transition into operations has been seamless, with positive feedback from IMSAf teams.

"As Isuzu Motors South Africa, we are committed to driving transformation and inclusivity by empowering local businesses and strengthening our local value chain, said Komane Pitso, Executive Vice President for Procurement and Logistics at IMSAf. "Partnering with Dunlop Tyres South Africa and Mr Nondwayi represents a significant step forward, together we are committed to advancing opportunity and economic inclusion across the sector."

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By John Stone

For the past two decades Sapphire Media has supported the worldwide tyre and automotive industry as a unique Business Media Consultant delivering professional editorial and marketing/PR services to a global client base and as a regular columnist in leading publications.

MICHELIN, SONATUS

DEMONSTRATE PREDICTIVE TYRE MAINTENANCE AT CES 2026

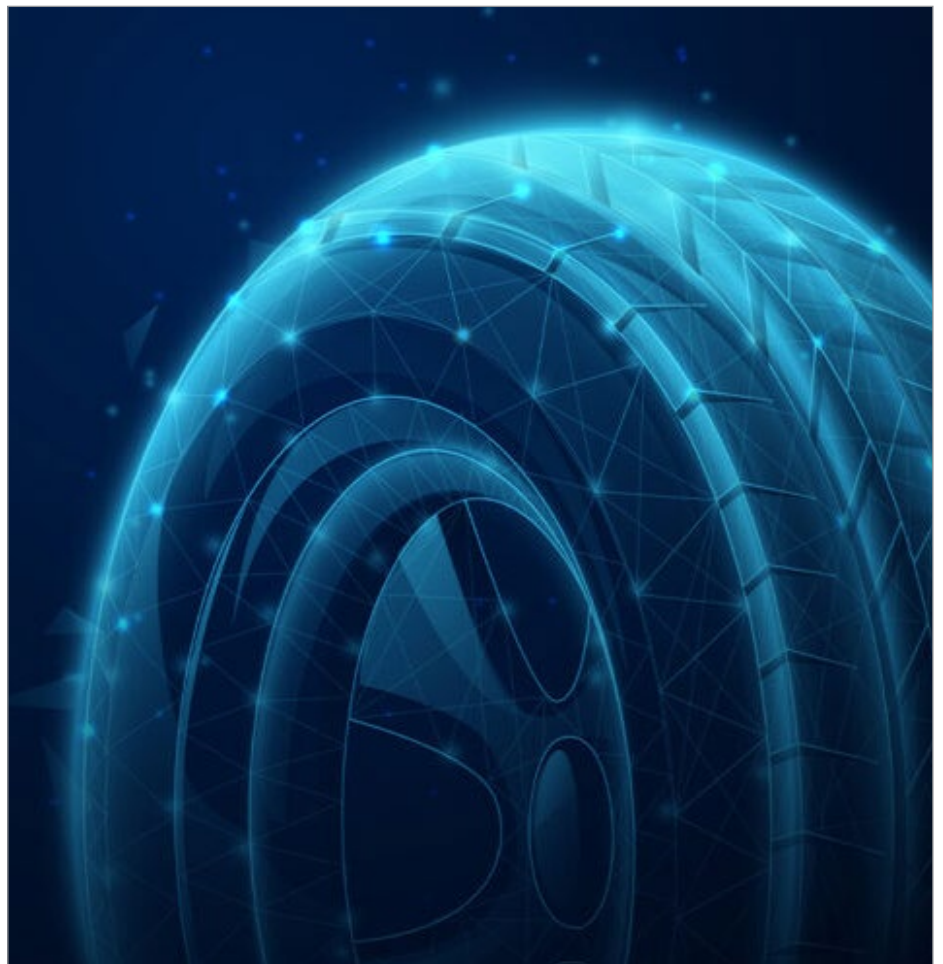
Michelin demonstrated predictive tyre health technology using a 1970 Ford Bronco retrofitted with Sonatus technology.

Michelin and Sonatus will showcase predictive tyre health technology at CES 2026. The demonstration will highlight Michelin's SmartLoad and SmartWear models deployed through Sonatus AI Director to deliver real-time, in-vehicle tyre insights.

The companies said predictive tyre health technology can help fleets and drivers better understand how real-world conditions affect tyre performance and longevity.

Predictive Tyre Health Technology Goes Beyond Sensors

Traditional tyre monitoring systems rely on pressure sensors or mileage estimates. These systems do not account for braking intensity, vehicle load, or cornering forces.



Michelin said it designed SmartLoad and SmartWear to analyse high-frequency vehicle signals instead.

The models deliver continuous insights

into tyre health. Michelin said this approach can help fleets optimise tyre usage, improve safety, and reduce

operating costs. According to Frost &

Sullivan, software-based tyre monitoring that virtualises sensors could reduce bill of materials costs by \$1.68 billion by 2030.

In-Vehicle Deployment Supports Tyre Digital Twin

Michelin combines tyre physics, modeling, and data with Sonatus' in-vehicle AI orchestration. Together, the companies demonstrate how Michelin Tyre Digital Twin can support predictive maintenance at scale.

Sonatus Collector AI allows Michelin to calibrate algorithms for new automakers. Sonatus AI Director enables secure, containerised deployment across multiple electronic control units, it said.

This setup allows the models to run at the vehicle edge, reducing cloud reliance and helping protect sensitive data.

"Our demonstrations at CES 2026 showcase how software-defined vehicle platforms can operationalise advanced partner solutions," said Alexandre Corjon, senior vice president of engineering, Sonatus.

"We are illustrating how predictive tyre maintenance can be integrated into the vehicle environment. This provides a clear view of the potential for safer, more efficient, and more sustainable mobility."

"Michelin SmartLoad and SmartWear showcase how our expertise in tyre physics and modelling turns complex data into clear, predictive insights," said Michelin Vice President of Michelin Tyre Digital Twin, Ali Rezgui.

"These solutions help automakers and fleets extend tyre life, improve safety, reduce costs, and support sustainable mobility. Michelin SmartWear and SmartLoad are the first building blocks of a full portfolio that will enable the OEMs to have Tire Digital Twin in their vehicles. As the tyre is the vehicle's only link to the road, its digital twin must be unique, versatile, and integrated with most vehicle dynamic software functions."

CES 2026 Demonstration Details

Michelin will demonstrate predictive tyre health technology using a 1970 Ford Bronco retrofitted with Sonatus technology. The display will show how SmartLoad and SmartWear generate real-time insights.

Michelin will also demonstrate how its MyTyres application converts vehicle data into actionable information.

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TRELLEBORG TIRES WINS 'BEST AGRICULTURE TIRE' AT THE VISÃO AGRO BRAZIL AWARDS



A jury of executives, researchers, and decision-makers from Brazil's agricultural institutions selected the winners.

Trelleborg Tires received the "Best Agriculture Tire" award during a ceremony held in Ribeirão Preto, Brazil. The trophy was accepted by Fábio Metidieri, agri sales director at Yokohama TWS Brazil.

Best Agriculture Tire Award Highlights Technology Focus

Trelleborg Tires said it continues expanding the adoption of its ProgressiveTraction technology across the TM range. The lineup spans from the TM600, designed for row-crop applications, to the TM1000, developed for high-horsepower

tractors.

The advanced tread features a dual-edge lug design that works progressively on the ground. This design delivers improved traction, strong self-cleaning, and reduced vibration. These benefits increase efficiency, extend tire life, and improve soil protection. As a result, Brazilian farmers can improve productivity and sustainability across varying field conditions.

"Receiving this award at such a prestigious event once again reinforces our commitment to Brazilian agriculture," added Metidieri. "Our goal is to keep advancing in technology and field performance, ensuring that every Trelleborg tire delivers real value — helping farmers operate more efficiently, sustainably, and profitably."

CONTINENTAL STRIVES TO MAKE TYRES EVEN QUIETER

Continental is developing tyres with exceptionally low rolling noise, helping to reduce overall traffic noise and improve comfort inside the vehicle. This is made possible by innovative technologies and tread designs. Alongside air pollution, noise is one of the biggest burdens for people and the environment – especially in urban areas.

The World Health Organization (WHO) ranks traffic noise as Europe's second-largest environmental health risk. In megacities across Asia and Latin America, noise is a daily challenge. Reducing overall noise emissions is therefore crucial – and tyre noise is no exception.

Tyre noise typically becomes audible to the human ear at moderate driving speeds. At lower speeds, engine noise dominates. With the shift toward electric mobility – and the much quieter motors of electric cars and buses compared with combustion engines – the importance of low-noise tyres has grown significantly.

"Noise, especially traffic noise from cars, buses and delivery vehicles, is a major burden for people and the environment. With tyre technologies like ContiSilent and innovative tread designs, we are actively reducing rolling noise without compromising safety," says Achillefs Tsotras, head of Continental's Tire-Vehicle Interaction department. "This makes every ride noticeably quieter, benefiting drivers, pedestrians, residents and the environment alike."

Continental places a strong focus on developing quiet tyres without sacrificing safety or performance. Rolling noise occurs when tires come into contact with the road. The resulting sound is only audible within certain speed ranges – typically from about 30 to 50 km/h up to 80 to 100 km/h. The exact noise level depends on factors like road surface, drivetrain, tyre type and driving style. Generally, at lower speeds, engine noise masks tyre noise, while at higher speeds, wind noise tends to do.

Silent Pattern tread design reduces rolling noise

To specifically target tyre noise audible to humans, Continental has developed the Silent Pattern tread design, which is already featured on



the EcoContact 7 and EcoContact 7 S models. This tread is optimized for sounds that occur at around 50 km/h, the speed at which rolling noise is most noticeable. To reduce this noise, the spacing and angles of the tread blocks have been deliberately varied.

On conventional tyres, evenly spaced tread blocks hit the road at regular intervals, producing an audible humming sound. By contrast, the irregular arrangement of the Silent Pattern blocks breaks up this regular rhythm, reducing the humming noise. In addition, the pattern is specifically tuned to cancel out noise emitted by the different tread elements – similar in effect to noise-canceling headphones. The result is reduced road traffic noise in urban areas, making busy streets noticeably quieter for pedestrians and residents.

ContiSilent: special foam inside the tyre absorbs noise

To reduce noise inside the vehicle and enhance comfort, Continental offers its ContiSilent technology. This can reduce rolling noise in the vehicle cabin, caused by air vibrations inside the tyre, by up to nine decibels. Since the human ear perceives a 10-decibel reduction

as halving the volume – regardless of the surrounding noise levels – ContiSilent has a major impact on driving comfort.

The ContiSilent technology uses a special, ultra-light polyurethane foam applied to the inside of the tyre during production. This foam absorbs part of the tyre's vibrations, preventing them from reaching the vehicle interior. Driving performance, fuel efficiency, load capacity and top speed remain unaffected. Designed for summer tyres, ContiSilent is available on various products, including the ultra-high-performance SportContact 7.

Continental offers a wide range of tires engineered for low rolling noise. Examples include the Conti Urban NXT developed for city buses and the EcoContact 6 Q summer tyre for passenger cars. In the van segment, the VanContact A/S Eco stands out as a quiet, safe and efficient tyre, meeting the highest EU labeling standards for rolling resistance, wet braking and external rolling noise (A/A/A). When shopping for tyres, customers can easily identify low-noise options by checking labels – such as the EU tyre label – which clearly indicate noise levels in decibels.



NEW AUDI A6 FITTED WITH CONTINENTAL TYRES

Continental will fit the new Audi A6 with its summer tyres as standard. The Ingolstadt-based car manufacturer has approved two options for its premium mid-size model: the high-performance SportContact 7 and the efficiency-focused EcoContact 6 Q.

The SportContact 7 is a high-performance tyre designed for particularly sporty, precise handling. Its rubber compound and tread pattern are optimised for excellent grip and short braking distances on both dry and wet roads. Even at high speeds, the tyre offers maximum stability and reliability. In independent tests, the SportContact 7 consistently earns top marks, particularly in safety-critical areas such as braking and handling.

In the 2025 ADAC summer tyre test, the SportContact 7 in size 255/40 R18

underwent rigorous evaluation and received a rating of “good” as the test winner. Testers praised its high stability and balanced performance during sporty driving.

Continental developed the EcoContact 6 Q for drivers who prioritise efficiency,

durability and comfort. A special rubber compound and optimised tread pattern significantly reduce rolling resistance and noise. This not only lowers energy consumption and extends range but also enhances ride comfort – without compromising safety.



CHINA'S SINOCEM PROPOSES SOLUTION TO END GOVERNANCE SPAT WITH PIRELLI

Pirelli's Chinese shareholder Sinochem has put forward a "structured solution" to end a governance spat with the tyremaker's Italian investor Camfin. This, according to Reuters.

The announcement was made as the government assesses options to limit Sinochem's (600500.SS), opens new tab, or even turn it into a passive shareholder, in a bid to facilitate the tyremaker's U.S. expansion.

Beijing-controlled Sinochem is Pirelli's largest shareholder with a 34.1% stake while Camfin, the vehicle of Italian businessman Marco Tronchetti Provera, holds a 25.3% stake, with plans to increase it to up to 29.9%.

Sinochem said in a statement on Monday it had submitted a "structured, well-founded proposal based on standard and widely used corporate tools in line with best international practice, with the objective of addressing both Pirelli's governance framework and the concerns relating to U.S. regulatory requirements if any."

Camfin and Pirelli itself complain that having a Chinese company as its main shareholder poses a hurdle to the group's U.S. expansion, as Washington tightens restrictions on Chinese technology in the automotive sector.

The Chinese investor said it hoped its proposal would be "neutrally assessed



with genuine cooperative spirit by other involved parties," without providing details of its solution.

A person close to the matter said the solution entailed spinning off some Pirelli assets into a separate corporate entity to distance those activities from the company's Chinese investor.

In response to Sinochem's statement, Camfin, however, said the proposed solution would harm Pirelli's business model and technological development and still not help the company comply

with U.S. regulation on connected vehicles.

Camfin said it had put forward its own proposal and remained open to discussing a solution.

Last week, Camfin said it would not renew its shareholder pact with Sinochem, paving the way for a new intervention by the Italian government on the tyremaker's governance through "golden power" legislation aimed at preserving the national interest in business matters.

PIRELLI LAUNCHES THIRD GENERATION OF THE SCORPION TYRE, DESIGNED FOR SUVs

Pirelli introduces the new Scorpion, the latest evolution of its summer tyre dedicated to SUVs, delivering safety, driving comfort and long-lasting performance. First launched in 1986 specifically for high-driving-position vehicles and originally fitted to the Lamborghini LM002, the Scorpion brand today ranges from SUV tyres to on-road enduro and motocross motorcycle tyres, as well as off-road applications in the bicycle sector.

DRY AND WET SAFETY, COMFORT AND HIGH MILEAGE

The new Scorpion stands out for its excellent performance in both dry and wet conditions, certified by the independent TÜV institute[1], which awarded it the Premium Quality Mark. The tyre ranked first in dry braking tests and obtained first place in wet handling, while also positioning itself at the top for wet braking and straight-line aquaplaning. When launched, the entire Scorpion range was designated Class A in European tyre labeling for wet grip[2], while also providing acoustic comfort (Classes A/B)[3] and high mileage performance. In addition, it is Class B for rolling resistance[4]. In addition, the tyre delivers consistent performance in both dry and wet conditions over the range of summer temperatures.

DEVELOPING THE NEW SCORPION, PIRELLI'S SPECIALIZED SUV TYRE

Developing a product specifically for the SUV segment requires dedicated design to meet the characteristics of these vehicles, such as greater weight and higher centre of gravity. The improvements delivered by the new Scorpion are chiefly the result of an integrated design approach, leveraging a new tread compound that ensures stable performance in different conditions, improved wet grip and excellent mileage, in line with the characteristics of today's Sport Utility Vehicles. The reinforced structure and



updated compound also ensure uniform wear, making the tyre ideal for heavier vehicles. The profile and tread pattern with its new groove geometry, optimised for SUVs, improve not only handling but also acoustic comfort, achieving Class A/B in European noise labeling.

NEW VIRTUAL DEVELOPMENT METHODS

For the development of the new Scorpion, Pirelli's R&D team designed and tested the product using virtual development processes. In particular, thanks to mileage-prediction tools developed by Pirelli engineers in Milan, more than 20 technological variants—combining different compounds and tread patterns—were evaluated entirely in a virtual environment to find the best way to increase mileage. Virtual development, supported by driving simulators, also made it possible to optimise handling, dry performance and driving pleasure. Subsequent physical testing confirmed the improvements compared with the previous generation.

THIRD GENERATION SCORPION

The new Scorpion has been developed

specifically for the SUV segment using dedicated technical solutions, including a reinforced carcass, wider central tread blocks and an optimised profile to promote uniform pressure distribution and reduce deformation in the shoulder area.

The product also uses some of the innovative materials that contributed to the success of the latest generation of Cinturato, Pirelli's summer tyre for saloons and CUVs, which topped the Tyre Reviews comparative test for premium summer products at its debut, demonstrating an excellent balance between safety and efficiency while averting typical trade-offs such as between durability and rolling resistance.

Already available in 16 sizes from 18 to 22 inches, the new Scorpion also features technologies such as Elect, which can increase the range of electric[5] and plug-in hybrid vehicles by up to 10%, and adopts solutions specifically designed for the characteristics of these powertrains. Developed in collaboration with leading car makers, and building on the Scorpion summer range that boasts 300 homologations, the new generation already has more than 40 homologations currently under development.

NOKIAN TYRES BETULA CONCEPT TIRE FEATURES RAW MATERIAL MADE FROM RESIDUE BIRCH BARK

Nokian Tyres launches the Nokian Tyres Betula concept tire containing groundbreaking raw material made from birch bark. The renewable material by Swedish company Reselo utilises the residue of the global pulp, paper and plywood industry.

The Nokian Tyres Betula represents the first time the material has been used in a tyre. The material is included in the tread compound of the concept tyre, bringing the amount of renewable and recycled material content to 93% of all materials used on the tread.

The new material is seen primarily as a performance-enhancing addition. The concept tyre, that has the tread design of the Nokian Tyres Hakkapeliitta R5 non-studded winter tyre, has been tested in the Nokian Tyres test centers in Ivalo, Finnish Lapland as well as in Nokia, Finland with promising results.

“Since the early stages, the potential of the material to be used in tyres has been evident. The Nokian Tyres Betula concept tyre confirms its applicability and highlights the material’s potential for commercial use in the future. Furthermore, the material is not only sustainable but according to our testing it also shows promise to improve tire performance,” says Teemu Soini, Vice President, Innovations & Development from Nokian Tyres.

The Nokian Tyres Betula concept tyre represents a significant step toward Nokian Tyres’ goal to increase the share of recycled and renewable materials in tyres to 50% by 2030. By pioneering sustainable solutions, Nokian Tyres seeks to set new benchmarks for environmental responsibility across the



tire industry. Achieving this ambition depends on strong partnerships, such as the collaboration with Reselo.

“For Reselo, this partnership represents much more than a technical development project. The tyre industry’s sheer scale and traditionally conservative approach make it a challenging but vital space for rubber innovation and seeing the collaboration with Nokian Tyres continue to the next level is something we’re especially proud of. Birch bark is a high-volume forestry side-stream abundant in the Nordics, and step by step we are working together towards better-performing and more sustainable products with circularity at the core,” says Josefin Larsson, CEO from Reselo.

The cooperation between Nokian Tyres and Reselo started already in 2023, when the biomaterial science company won Nokian Tyres’ FAST RACE BIG CHANGE sustainable tyre innovation challenge. In 2024, Nokian Tyres signed a development

agreement with Reselo to further develop their renewable material for tyre production. The development project continues together with Reselo after the launch of the concept tyre.

Concept tyres are an important part of product development enabling testing of new materials, technologies and design ideas before commercial production. In 2022, Nokian Tyres introduced the Nokian Tyres Green Step concept tyre with its ambitious design consisting of 93% of all the materials used either recycled or renewable, and in 2024 the company launched the Nokian Tyres Green Step Ligna containing a renewable lignin-based alternative for traditional carbon black. The Nokian Tyres Seasonproof 2 all-season tyre launched in 2025 for the Central European market has the highest share of renewable and recycled materials in commercial production by Nokian Tyres with up to 38%.

CO-CREATION ACTIVITIES BY **ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES GROUP** AND **BRIDGESTONE** TO SUPPORT SAFE AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS WITH PEACE OF MIND

Bridgestone Corporation (Bridgestone) announced that it has launched unique co-creation activities with Ethiopian Airlines*1, the largest airline in Africa, and Ethiopian Airports at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (Bole International Airport). This initiative aims to reduce Foreign Object Debris (FOD) on airport surfaces to enhance safe aircraft operations with peace of mind. It is the first time that Bridgestone has continuously collaborated with both an airline and an airport on such co-creation activities.

Managing FOD at airports is essential to ensuring safe aircraft operations with peace of mind. Previously, FOD at Bole International Airport, the main hub for Ethiopian Airlines, caused tyre-related problems that could affect flight schedules, highlighting an opportunity to improve

operational efficiency through FOD management.

Bridgestone has a system to inspect and analyse all used tyres returned from airline customers and accumulates FOD data specific to each airline. Utilising its accumulated data and expertise, the company analysed the FOD situation at Bole International Airport and proposed collaborative activities with Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Airports to reduce FOD. Bridgestone continuously supported and strengthened regular FOD patrols by the airport staff through data analysis based on FOD distribution information, creation of hazard maps, recommendations for efficient FOD collection, and awareness activities regarding FOD impact.

As a result of ongoing collaboration, the incidence rate of aircraft tyre issues caused by FOD has significantly decreased compared to the period before the



initiative began. This improvement has led to better on-time performance and contributed to safe aircraft operations with peace of mind by Ethiopian Airlines. Furthermore, through increased utilisation of retreaded tyres, the initiative has enhanced productivity, economic value, and sustainability in aviation operations.

Going forward, Ethiopian Airlines Group and Bridgestone will continue to amplify the value of co-creation, contributing to the development of the aviation industry and society as a whole.

TRIANGLE TIRE PLANS \$462 MILLION INVESTMENT IN CAMBODIA PLANT TO SUPPLY U.S. MARKET

Following completion and startup, Triangle Tire projects annual operating revenue of about \$371 million.

Triangle Tire plans to invest \$462 million to build a tire manufacturing plant in Svay Rieng province, Cambodia. The company intends the facility to supply the U.S. market.

The project supports Triangle Tire's globalization strategy, it said. The company aims to expand its overseas manufacturing footprint. The Cambodian plant will be located in Svay Rieng province.

Triangle Tire USA Operations

Triangle Tire USA is headquartered in Franklin, Tennessee. It operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of Triangle Tire Co., Ltd.

Triangle Tire USA markets and sells off-the-road radial and bias tires. Its portfolio includes giant radial tires for construction,

mining, and aggregates. The company also supplies medium radial truck tires to the U.S. trucking industry. Additional offerings include specialty trailer tires and select passenger and light truck tires.

Construction Timeline and Production Capacity

Triangle Tire expects construction to begin in March. The company will use its self-developed tire manufacturing technology at the facility.

The plant will have capacity to produce 6 million high-performance passenger car tires annually. It will also manufacture 1

million commercial vehicle tires per year.

Target Markets and Financial Projections

The facility will primarily serve markets like North America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Following completion and startup, Triangle Tire projects annual operating revenue of about \$371 million. The company expects an investment return rate of 15.1%.

Triangle Tire plans to establish a wholly owned subsidiary in Cambodia. The subsidiary will implement and operate the manufacturing project.



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