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## **Bridgestone VT-TRACTOR tyre: developed and produced in Europe**



*Bridgestone's Technical Center (left) and Puente San Miguel plant (right)*

The Bridgestone VT-TRACTOR was developed and tested at Technical Center Europe (TCE) near Rome, Italy, Bridgestone's European development centre, and is manufactured exclusively at the Puente San Miguel (PSM) plant in Spain.

### **Developed at the Technical Center Europe**

TCE plays a leading role in materials research, tyre design, the manufacture of prototypes, and all forms of indoor testing. Within a total complex of 32 hectares, approximately 17,000 m<sup>2</sup> of covered floor space house a self-sufficient range of design and development facilities. In 2010 TCE was expanded with new indoor facilities, and physical and chemical laboratories hosting new advanced equipment.

TCE's testing capability has been further extended by the introduction of a dedicated 3-metre diameter drum that allows all size ranges to be validated indoors before exposure to the field. More than 200 tyres have been tested to confirm VT-TRACTOR performance (indoor, outdoor and field).

The engineers, chemists, technicians and support personnel at TCE have three main roles:

- 1) Design and development of tyres for passenger, commercial van, truck, bus and agricultural vehicles, to meet European customer requirements;
- 2) Process and equipment design for the nine Bridgestone manufacturing plants in Europe;
- 3) Quality systems to meet ISO-9000, QS-9000 and ISO-14000 requirements.

The VT-TRACTOR was developed at TCE by the agricultural tyre development group, a team fully dedicated to agricultural products. This group worked on two key features of the VT-TRACTOR: the use of VF standard and the Narrow Rim Option (NRO) technology.

## **Very High Flexion tyres (VF)**

The VF standard was developed as the main VT-TRACTOR feature. VF describes a pneumatic tyre structure in which the casing is more resistant than that of the corresponding standard tyre\*.

Compared to standard tyres, the main benefit of the VF standard is that it allows the VT-TRACTOR tyre to operate at lower pressure in the field, which reduces soil compaction. It allows the vehicle to carry more load on the road, which means making fewer transport cycles. Finally, it is capable of driving at higher speed when moving from the field to the road since the load capacity is now independent of speed and there is no need to adapt inflation pressure.

*\* According to ECE R106 para 2.20.1.*

## **Narrow Rim Option (NRO) technology**

Adding to the benefits of VF, the VT-TRACTOR provides the extra advantage of being fitted on standard rims. Indeed, VF tyres usually require wider rims, making it necessary to purchase new rims when switching from standard to VF tyres. However, a new Experimental Standard has been introduced in E.T.R.T.O. (European Tire and Rim Technical Organization), called NRO (Narrow Rim Option), which enables VF tires that would normally require a wider VF rim to also be fitted on a standard rim\*.

*\* Please consult Bridgestone technical product information for more details on which tyres are NRO marked and the complete range of rim widths that can be used on VT-TRACTOR products.*

## **Produced in Puente San Miguel**

The plant employs around 400 people, including office and warehouse staff, on a site covering an area close to 100,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The sole producer of the VT-TRACTOR tyre, PSM started manufacturing it last year to support the introduction of the product in the European market in autumn 2014.

Enrique Luzán, plant manager at Puente San Miguel, highlights Bridgestone's decision to choose Puente San Miguel as the plant to manufacture this new tyre as "a sign of the strong commitment that the Group is making both to the plant and the local community".

## **Bridgestone, world leader in agricultural tyres**

For decades, Bridgestone has remained at the forefront of the agricultural tyres segment through its legendary Firestone brand. Thanks to this long history and its powerful legacy, Firestone is the world's leading brand of agricultural tyres with a strong presence in Europe. The recent Firestone range upgrades and expansion now allow the Bridgestone company to cover about 95% of current market demand for tractor tyres. The new Bridgestone-branded VT-TRACTOR will complete the needs of the high-end agricultural tyre segment, giving Bridgestone a full portfolio of products able to meet all market requirements with Firestone products in standard and IF categories and Bridgestone products in the VF category.

**Media information:** G. Meylemans: +32 2 714 68 40

### **About Bridgestone Europe**

Bridgestone Europe (BSEU), with European headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, is a key regional subsidiary of Tokyo-based Bridgestone Corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of tyres and other rubber products. Bridgestone Europe operates an R&D center, 9 plants and offices in more than 30 European countries, with 12,500 employees. BSEU's premium tyres are sold both within Europe and globally.

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