

Biomass forest sensing satellite shaping up

Satellite to deliver exceptional insights only possible from space

Structural model is now ready for test campaign

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Stevenage/Toulouse, 11 February 2021 – Biomass, the European Space Agency's (ESA) forest measuring satellite is taking shape at Airbus' site in Stevenage with the Structure Model Platform completed. In line with UK Government guidelines the Stevenage site is COVID-secure – enabling spacecraft production to continue safely.

Assembly of the satellite's mechanical structure could not be carried out as planned due to COVID. But during April and May 2020, the Airbus team put in place a digital solution to enable collaboration with ESA and suppliers, ensuring progress continued on the development of the satellite's mechanical structure.

Airbus teams finalised the structure build in the second half of 2020 and integration hardware onto the Structure Model Platform was completed in early January 2021. The Structure Model is now at Airbus Toulouse for its mechanical test campaign.

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Richard Franklin, Managing Director, Airbus Defence and Space UK said: “Despite the pandemic the teams have really stepped up finding innovative ways to keep manufacture on track. The progress made demonstrates the high level of skills and capabilities of the Airbus teams and their commitment to deliver on the project.”

Michael Fehringer, ESA’s Biomass Project Manager said: “The status of the structure build as of today is a remarkable achievement given the number and variety of problems the teams had to face.”

Biomass is an ESA Earth Explorer mission due to launch in 2022. It will measure forest biomass to assess terrestrial carbon stocks and fluxes for five years. The spacecraft will carry the first space-borne P-band synthetic aperture radar to deliver exceptionally accurate maps of tropical, temperate and boreal forest biomass that are not obtainable by ground measurement techniques.

About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2019, it generated revenues of € 70 billion and employed a workforce of around 135,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as one of the world’s leading space companies. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

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