

Space Systems

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CNES selects Airbus Defence and Space to build instrument for MicroCarb to map CO₂ levels

- MicroCarb will map global carbon dioxide levels and monitor global warming

CNES, the French Space Agency, has awarded Airbus Defence and Space, the world's second largest space company, a contract to design and build the optical instrument for MicroCarb, a microsatellite to map global carbon dioxide levels. After launch in 2020, the satellite will study carbon dioxide sources (which produce CO₂) and sinks (which absorb it) to understand how this greenhouse gas is affecting climate change.

"When it comes to understanding what is happening to our climate here on Earth, we need the latest technology to give us reliable and accurate data," said François Auque, Head of Space Systems. "This is where MicroCarb comes in, a next-generation instrument which will help us to finally understand what CO₂ is doing to our environment and our climate."

MicroCarb will be the first European mission dedicated solely to measuring CO₂ levels using a spectrometer scanning at visible and near infra-red wavelengths. The instrument is so accurate it can measure CO₂ levels accurately to within one part in a million. This mission complements Merlin, which measures methane levels by LIDAR, an instrument that measures distance by illuminating a target with a laser light, which Airbus Defence and Space is also designing and building for CNES and the German Aerospace Centre DLR.

MicroCarb is a priority to understand and monitor climate change. The programme launch was announced at COP21 in Paris in December 2015. Airbus Defence and Space will lead the manufacture of the optical instrument at its Toulouse site, with a large contribution from French SMEs.

Airbus Defence and Space

Airbus Defence and Space, a division of Airbus Group, is Europe's number one defence and space enterprise and the second largest space business worldwide. Its activities include space, military aircraft and related systems and services. It employs more than 38,000 people and in 2015 generated revenues of over 13 billion Euros.

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