
Airbus-built Biomass forest measuring satellite shipped to Kourou

Toulouse, France, 21 February 2025 - Biomass, the European Space Agency's (ESA) Airbus-built satellite, has left Toulouse for its journey by ship to Kourou, French Guiana, ready for launch.

Biomass, an Earth Explorer satellite, is ESA's flagship mission to measure forest biomass to assess terrestrial carbon stocks and fluxes from an altitude of 666km above the Earth. The spacecraft will carry the first space-borne P-band synthetic aperture radar, delivering exceptionally accurate maps of tropical, temperate and boreal forest biomass.

Alain Fauré, Head of Space Systems at Airbus Defence and Space said: "Shipping this flagship mission is a major milestone after years of hard work and dedication from all our teams. The satellite's groundbreaking technology will enable climatologists to accurately assess carbon stocks and fluxes from space and improve the understanding of the part that forests play in regulating climate."

The spacecraft features a large 12x15 metre deployable antenna to capture the reflected SAR data that will be used to provide accurate global maps of tropical, temperate, and boreal forest biomass. Data on changes in biomass due to forest loss (for example from logging/burning) and regrowth is unattainable by ground measurement techniques.

Airbus engineers from Stevenage (UK), where the satellite was built, led the successful test campaign in Toulouse, supported by colleagues on site and from Airbus in Friedrichshafen (Germany), plus the wider industrial team. The teams will now prepare for the in-orbit commissioning and operational phases, with a separate team managing the delivery of the ground calibration transponder, located in New Norcia, Australia. The Biomass satellite's development and testing have involved more than 50 companies across 20 countries.

Biomass is scheduled to launch in April 2025 on a Vega-C rocket from Kourou and will operate in orbit for five years.

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Biomass satellite being packed ready for shipment – Copyright Airbus

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