



For some time Finland's Sisu Auto has been working on finding new markets for its heavy duty trucks beyond its traditional markets of the Finnish Army and the forest, mining and construction industries. Now a major breakthrough has come with an order from Romania: Sisu's 10x10 truck has been chosen as a platform for a new fleet of workover rigs to be supplied by local project prime contractor UPetrom 1 Mai SA to the operator OMV Petrom.

The Sisu E15TP 10x10 heavy duty truck, with its ten wheels and caterpillar engine, has already proved its exceptional off-road capabilities as a bridge launching platform for the Finnish military. The extreme mobility and durability demanded in this role make it ideal for the equally demanding conditions encountered in oil field operations, where it will have to operate in all seasons and all weathers. The technology of the rig itself – the mast, platform, hydraulics etc. – is the responsibility of the co-supplier German company KOLLER Maschinen und Anlagenbau.

Ewald Stoecke, the team leader of OMV Petrom's Workover Rigs Intervention Business Unit, says, "The Workover Rig project will have a great impact on our operations and productivity. The Sisu 10x10 platform will give the workover rigs totally new mobil-

ity, significantly increasing their operational availability. The lower maintenance cost over their expected lifetime of up to 25 years is also a major benefit to us."

The first of the new workover rig packages are scheduled to be delivered in the second half of 2014. For Sisu Auto CEO Timo Korhonen, the order is of particular importance in that it takes the company not only into a new geographical market but also into a new application. "This is really good news for Sisu – we have broken into the market for platforms for the international oil industry which until now has been pretty much dominated by US companies," he says. "It proves that the versatility and adaptability of the products and technologies that Sisu originally developed for the extreme conditions of military use are just as effective in the very different operational uses of the civilian sector. It is also an important benchmark as we expand our offering to the export market of special vehicles."

Engineering inspiration

Timo Korhonen is not only the CEO of Sisu Auto, he is now also the owner of the whole company, following his acquisition in 2013 of the 50 per cent of the company's shares that he did not already hold. Beginning his

working life as a ship's engineering officer in the Finnish Navy, Mr Korhonen has formerly been R&D director at Sisu as well as working on engineering research at Wartsila Diesel; he also used to run the Sisu truck racing team, first as manager then as owner. Returning to Sisu Auto in 2006, he took over as managing director in 2010 following an MBO of the company.

"My experience is focused on engineering, at Sisu, Wartsila and with my own consultancy, which has years of experience providing engineering services to the vehicle industry," explains Mr Korhonen, "and innovative engineering will drive Sisu forward to create new, profitable business opportunities by developing and adapting our excellent range of military and civilian trucks and finding new markets for our products and our engineering services. We have a great record as a supplier of exceptionally capable vehicles in our home market but Finland is too small a country to support our future success so we are looking not only for new customers for our products in foreign markets – the order for Romania is a great example of success in this drive – but also to make our engineering services available to commercial vehicle manufacturers right around the world. We are focusing on ▶

TRUCKS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Sisu Auto is a byword in Finland for heavy duty vehicles that can handle anything that their military and civilian users throw at them. Now the company is looking to new markets and specialised vehicles to secure its growth. Peter Mercer reports.





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the vehicle industries in the BRIC countries, for example, and we are already supporting companies in China in the design and development of their trucks.”

Heavy-duty specialists

Sisu Auto has specialised in the most heavy-duty and most demanding class of trucks since it was established in 1994 as the successor to Oy Suomen Autoteollisuus AB, which had been producing trucks in Finland since 1931. Its current Polar range of trucks includes a rock gravel truck and a timber truck for transporting logs as well as a multi-purpose road maintenance truck, a crane truck, a carrier equipment transport truck and a roll demountable body truck. The company's defence division manufactures armoured off-road vehicles for military purposes and Sisu Engineering provides engineering consultancy services to customers worldwide.

A key feature of the Sisu Polar range is that each truck, including its superstructure, trailer and other equipment, is designed specifically according to the customer's requirements and is delivered as a complete product. “Truck manufacturers usually just make the chassis but Sisu supplies the customer with a complete vehicle,” explains Timo Korhonen. “Working from some 300

base vehicles, we consult with the customer to choose the number of axles, the wheel base, engine, transmission and so on to meet exactly his needs. All the components are pre-designed but each truck is specially configured for the customer.”

The main component supplier of the Sisu Polar range is Daimler AG. The special strong Sisu chassis features a unique tandem drive that allows the rearmost axle to be raised and disconnected from the drive while the other option, Sisu bogie lift, replaces the tandem drive in many driving tasks – it features a lighter structure which means a larger payload and greater agility. There are three cab options in the range; in the high roof cab there is enough room to stand up inside.

Under one roof

In 2012 all production of Sisu trucks was brought back in-house. This move brought to an end an arrangement to outsource assembly of two important delivery projects for the Finnish Defence Forces to Komax Oy, a specialist in sub-contracted assembly. Now all Sisu trucks are produced by the company's own personnel at its Karjaa plant.

“As sales move ahead, we need to have seamless cooperation between all depart-

ments, from design and R&D to production and marketing,” says Mr Korhonen. “We need to accelerate the production process and increase flexibility to deliver the customer-specific solutions that are our trademark. It's much easier to do all this with all our operations under one roof; we have more control over every aspect of production, easier communications, quicker problem-solving and I believe that making the complete truck here at Karjaa helps to motivate our employees. Of course our factory is very small compared to those of our direct competitors, such as Volvo, but it's important for us all that we have here a full vehicle production line and that complete Sisu trucks roll out of the plant ready for customers.”

Sisu has also brought its domestic sales operations back in-house. “When we started to sell the Polar range we made a deal with a Finnish Mercedes importer to sell Sisu trucks alongside the German trucks but we have now brought the entire sales force back under our own control,” explains Timo Korhonen. “We see this integration of sales operations as crucial to our customisation offer. Our sales people begin the process by discussing with the customer his exact requirements and they then use our sales configurator program to establish the individual specification of the

order from the 300 base vehicles and 1500 module options. This information is then fed back to the factory where we have recently made major investments to ensure that we can produce these highly configured vehicles on what is still a serial production line. What we have to achieve is the capability and efficiency of a custom-made vehicle at not much more than the cost of a standard product. That's why we need to coordinate and carry out the whole process here at Karjaa.”

Looking to the immediate future, Mr Korhonen sees continuing opportunities in applying the experience that Sisu has built up in its military vehicle business to the civilian sector. “We intend to build upon our reputation as a developer of special vehicles for very demanding applications but we will also maintain our position in the domestic vehicle market, especially in the construction vehicle business where we have always been strong. Where we see really good opportunities for growth is in our newly developed ‘hybrid’ vehicles; that is, off-road vehicles developed from our military range that offer exceptionally high mobility and load carrying capacity. What we are offering is essentially the very high capabilities of trucks made for the army at the cost of a civilian vehicle. We are confident that it is a winning formula.” □

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