



Press Release

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Hydrogen buses: Safra and Symbio announce 1500 vehicles

Having already partnered up in designing France's first hydrogen-powered bus, Safra, based in Albi, and Symbio (a subsidiary of Michelin and Faurecia) agreed terms to build 1500 buses to be fitted with an optimised hydrogen system and a range of services that suit how these vehicles will be used.

Hydrogen buses available by the end of 2021. With the Businova—the first French hydrogen Safra-developed, Symbio-fitted bus—already on the streets of several cities such as Artois-Gohelle, Versailles and Le Mans, the two companies are today announcing 1500 more 12-metre buses available from December 2021. “Safra is currently the only French manufacturer making hydrogen buses”, says Vincent Lemaire, CEO of the Albi-based company.

A plug-and-play hydrogen solution. These buses will be equipped with Symbio's *plug-and-play* solution, designed specifically to meet the needs of this market segment. It contains a powerful fuel cell that meets automotive standards (45 kW at system output). This technology, ready to be mass produced, will have a significant cost advantage. It also includes other key components (especially a compressor and power converter) that have been pre-approved to optimise system performance while their integration is designed to meet the specific needs of these vehicles. “A bus might be running seven days a week, explains Philippe Rosier, CEO of Symbio. This is why we have designed an integration pattern that makes maintenance easier, especially on certain components and filters. Above all, Symbio has a 24/7 maintenance services specifically adapted to commercial vehicles.”

Both partners are accelerating their processes. With this strengthened partnership, the two companies are demonstrating their desire to ramp up the roll out of a competitive hydrogen bus range and large-scale production for the purpose of international deployment. This is in line with French and European hydrogen strategy objectives. Safra has invested in doubling the size of its manufacturing facility in order to significantly reduce manufacturing time and cost. “We have launched a first phase to accelerate our rate of production, which sees an expansion to our production tool in terms of materials, technology and human resources. This first step will allow us to quickly produce 140 buses per year. The next stage will be even more ambitious, as we plan to invest a total of €100 million over 10 years to produce more and faster in order to generate a significant reduction in costs”, says Vincent Lemaire.

Symbio has begun construction of Europe's largest fuel cell plant in Saint Fons, France, where it will eventually produce 60,000 systems per year. The company is also continuing to improve its products' performance through accelerated innovation processes. Specifically, it has submitted an Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI). “We have a clear roadmap to accelerate both innovation and production, says Philippe Rosier, CEO of the company. It is the key to our global competitiveness in all segments of hydrogen mobility”.



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About Safra

SAFRA (Société Albigeoise de Fabrication et de Réparation Automobile) was founded in 1955 and is based in Albi in the Tarn region. Now a Group, its 4 companies are spread over a site of more than 8 hectares, with 16,000 m²+ of covered buildings. In 2020, the SAFRA Group had a turnover of €24 million and employed 245 people across the different companies. SAFRA Matériel de Transport Public, which is the modern incarnation of the company's traditional business, comprises two fields: SAFRA Constructeur, which designs, manufactures and markets a complete range of electric city buses under the Businova brand. This bus, with its quirky design and innovative architecture is sold in different versions, with 2 lengths (10.5 m and 12 m) and 3 types of engines (rechargeable hybrid electric, pure electric or hydrogen), all of which strictly comply with the new Energy Transition Law directives. The other area, SAFRA Renovation, specializes in equipping, fitting out, renovating and the heavy maintenance of urban transport vehicles (buses, trams, metros and railcars).

About Symbio

A global technology partner to manufacturers in hydrogen systems for transporters, Symbio has been joint-owned by Faurecia and Michelin since November 2019. With its unique expertise and focus on setting automotive production standards, the company offers a complete range of products—including StackPack, its pre-approved and pre-integrated hydrogen systems—as well as a range of services. It meets the needs of light and commercial vehicles, buses and trucks and various formats of electric vehicles. The company's aim is to become a world leader in hydrogen mobility by producing 200,000 StackPacks per year by 2030, for use by manufacturers around the world. Symbio is playing a role in increased hydrogen transport, which by nature is emission free and has fewer limitations for end users in terms of charge time and range.