

METALWORKING NEWS

VOLUME 25.2

May 2026



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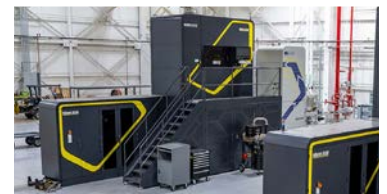
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Into the unknown

The effects of the Middle East conflict are beginning to reveal themselves in every aspect of our daily lives now – from commuting to and from work to the overall increase in the cost of living. Hardly a person on the planet – perhaps bar some isolated subsistence farmers or uncontacted tribes deep in the Amazon

Rainforest – have been spared the consequences.

So far, the conflict has reportedly cost the United States more than 25 billion dollars.

Online vehicle forums debate the cost of owning an internal combustion engine vehicle versus an electric vehicle. Some commentators even suggest that charging their EV while at work is helping them offset electricity price hikes at home.

Supply chain disruption and inflation fears are gripping world markets, and the worst is likely yet to come.

While there was certainly some resistance in recent years against the forced adoption of electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, their application now seems very appealing. And recent statistics from Europe show this in no uncertain terms.

“During the first quarter of 2026, and in March 2026, the Volkswagen Group was again the largest car producer in Europe (European Union, EFTA, and UK), followed by Stellantis and Renault. Despite weaker sales, VW remained the top-selling brand in Europe, while strong sales moved Skoda into the second place for the first time ever. The Renault Clio was the best-selling car model in Europe during 2026 Q1 while the Tesla Model Y was Europe’s favourite car model in March 2026. The European new car market expanded by 4.1% to 3 521 110 cars in the first quarter of 2026, with all-electric car sales taking a record 20.6% market share.”

“Škoda Auto has recorded a strong start to 2026, emerging as Europe’s second best-selling car brand during the first quarter, supported by robust demand, expanding electric vehicle adoption and solid financial performance. Between January and March 2026, the company delivered 271 900 vehicles worldwide, reflecting a 14 per cent year-on-year increase. In Europe, deliveries rose 17.1 per cent to 222 500 vehicles, significantly outpacing overall market growth. March marked the highest monthly delivery volume in the company’s history in the region, with over 90 000 vehicles delivered.”

“The strong performance was driven in part by growing demand for electric vehicles. Models such as the Elroq and Enyaq featured prominently among Europe’s top-selling battery electric vehicles, contributing to a near doubling of global BEV deliveries. Electrified vehicles accounted for more than a quarter of total deliveries in Europe during the quarter, underscoring the company’s progress in its transition towards sustainable mobility.”

The company also reported growth in key international markets. In India, deliveries increased to 17 400 vehicles, while North African markets such as Morocco and Egypt recorded strong gains.”

Škoda Auto is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Volkswagen Group and the Czech automaker joined the Volkswagen family in 1991.

So, are you a glass half full or half empty person? There are always positives that emerge from these circumstances. On recent automotive announcements and investments in South Africa, a colleague said to me: “What do they know that we don’t know?”

And that got me thinking. The new budget conscious consumer is looking for budget conscious purchases in every aspect of their daily lives. And when it comes to larger financial decisions like purchasing a vehicle, their budget is probably the most important aspect in their decision-making process, closely followed by aspirational characteristics like onboard tech.

New foreign automotive investment in South Africa can only have benefits for the local manufacturing industry – both upstream and downstream – perhaps it comes down to how you feel about legacy brand loyalty or new brand loyalty?

Manufacturing is a very important contributor to South Africa’s GDP and I’m all for growing that sector of the economy in this country in whichever way it might happen, from advanced, smart manufacturing through to skilled artisans laying down perfect welds, the opportunities are out there.

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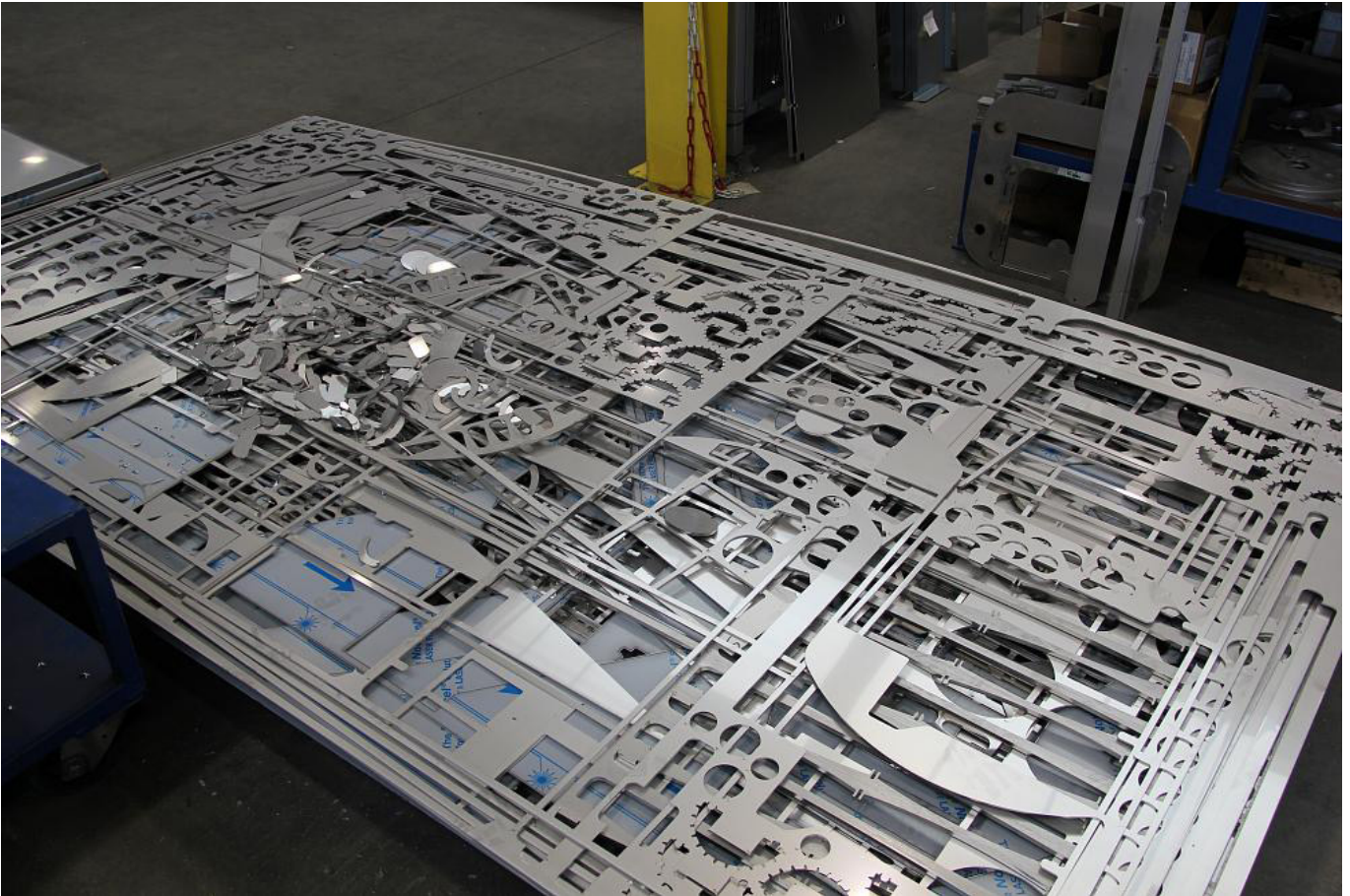
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Reducing cost overruns in industrial projects



Design and Engineering Mistakes: Incorrect dimensions, inconsistent units, and ignoring material thickness or bend allowances lead to parts that don't fit, requiring rework.

Cost overruns are a persistent challenge in industrial projects, often arising from inefficiencies in planning, communication and project execution. With the increase in building scale and complexities, traditional methods struggle to deliver the coordination to stay within budgets. Building information modelling (BIM) and digital collaboration tools offer solutions through the ability to integrate data, improve visualisation and enhance communication among stakeholders.

At its core, BIM provides a centralised, data-rich platform that integrates design, construction and operational phases. It introduces accurate 3D modelling capabilities with detailed cost estimations to keep you aligned with budget targets. As a result, material waste is reduced and potential project delays are avoided by preventing over/under ordering of materials.

The Beijing National Stadium, nicknamed The Bird's Nest, is a true testament to BIM. The Olympic stadium was constructed for the 2008 games out of 36km of steel, spanning a massive 258 000m². Detailed 3D modelling and precise quantity take-offs ensured the project remained within budget, while clash

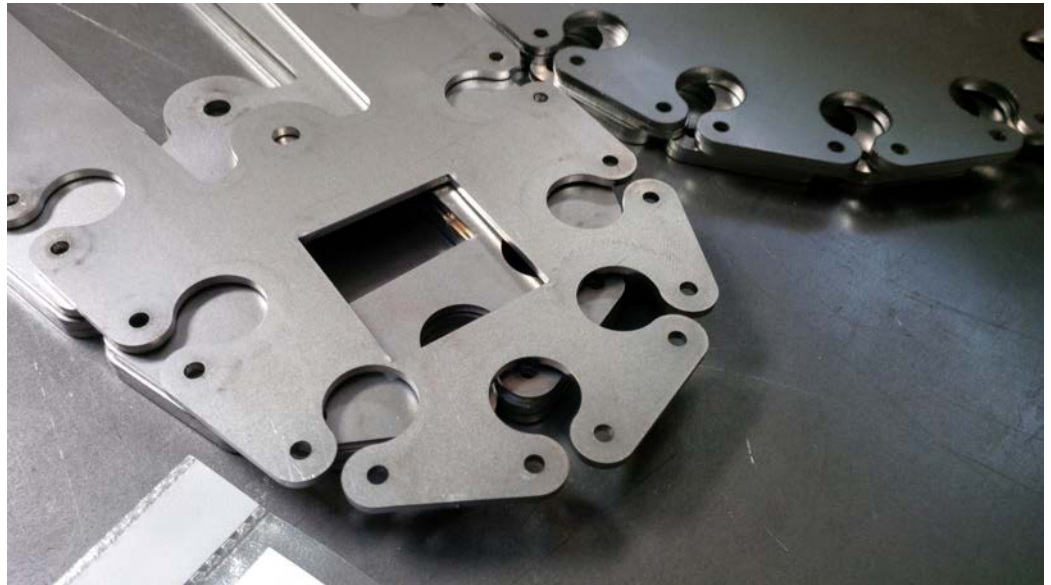
detection and error mitigation minimised potential costly delays.

BIM implementation enhances data accessibility by all teams involved and centralises critical project information. 3D models, material specifications, schedules and project costs can actively be viewed and understood by all involved. Being able to visualise all of these elements in one location enables project teams to identify a variety of potential issues early in the process. Additionally, alignment of relevant stakeholders through BIM's remote collaboration platform increases productivity, fosters open communication and prevents misunderstanding of project goals.

A good example showcasing BIM's ability to increase efficiency and digital collaboration is shown in the Ovalo Monitor Bridge in Peru. The new bridge was designed to connect two districts in Lima. The bridge was a recipient of the Tekla BIM Award for Infrastructure in 2022. Remote collaboration tools accelerated this project to completion by allowing designers stationed in different locations to have access to the same models and information.

BIM benefits are most significant during project planning, including precise cost estimations, construction simulations and risk reductions, including: ▶

- Open collaboration between project teams during the planning phase.
- BIM shows real-time changes to project costs as edits are implemented.
- Simulations can be run on the construction sequence to prevent bottlenecks that can result in costly project delays.
- Clash detection tools identify potential issues with fit-up before construction starts.
- Visualisation of energy usage can help project planners choose renewable energy sources and more environmentally friendly materials.



Implementing BIM in industrial projects often faces challenges that hinders its full potential. Resistance to change is a common barrier, especially in organisations with traditional workflows. Targeted training for the affected stakeholders and positive reinforcement during the learning phase can facilitate feelings of optimism during the early stages. High initial costs for software, hardware, and training can also be a roadblock. Implementing BIM in phases can

help alleviate some of these burdens as well as adopting cloud-based options.

Other challenges include poor data management and insufficient expertise. This can further complicate implementation, highlighting the need for standardised protocols. Remember, your results will only be as good as your inputs. Finally, as digital collaboration grows, cybersecurity risks increase. These risks are inherent with any digital tools, however robust protections such as encryption and access controls can help safeguard sensitive project data. Understanding these barriers prior to implementation will make overcoming them that much easier. ■



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cover story

Superexcel Precision Engineering invest in a Victor VTurn-S26 – a robust 3-axis CNC turning machine

The latest addition to Superexcel Precision Engineering's machining department is a Victor Vturn-S26, a 3-axis slant bed CNC turning center. The VTurn-S26 horizontal turning center, has an increased swing over the bed of 600mm and this increases the maximum turning diameter to 430mm.

The new Victor Vturn-S26 was installed in February 2026 and takes the tally of Victor CNC machines that are currently on the shop floor at Superexcel Precision Engineering to 9.

Owner Steve Bothma continues: "We have always been a fan of Victor Taichung machines and will continue to be so going forward. The only reason we have other manufacturer's machines on our floor is either Victor did not have stock machines – although I must say that of the dealers that we have dealt with Victor Taichung South Africa are one of the few that do carry stock – or their machine was not suitable to the component or components that we had to machine."

"This is our second VTurn-S26 and we also had its predecessor the V26 plus."

"A great reference for Victor is not so long ago we sold two of their machines – one 32-years-old and the other 30-years-old – for more than what we had paid for them. They had had some maintenance done on them but nothing major. The one had a spindle bearing change and the other one had some small tweaks done, which are understandable because of the mechanical wear part factor, and both had some electronic upgrades. Both were replaced with new Victor machines."

"In total we now have 28 CNC machines on ▶



Owner Steve Bothma with his son Stefano who joined the company in 2008 straight from school



The new Victor Vturn-S26 was installed in February 2026 and takes the tally of Victor CNC machines that are currently on the shop floor at Superexcel Precision Engineering to 9

the floor and most of them have been purchased after 2018. In fact, we have purchased 18 new CNC machines since 2014. At one stage we were up to 35 machines but with the unprecedented advancements in machine technology, driven by innovations in electricity, electronics, and computing it has allowed us to reduce our numbers, although two new machines will be arriving shortly.”

“Many have Y-axis and live tooling operations included. Y-axis and live tooling on CNC lathes combine turning, milling, drilling, and tapping in one setup, significantly reducing cycle times and increasing accuracy for complex parts. The Y-axis enables off-centre machining (milling flats, slots, and holes) with better surface finish and rigidity compared to C-axis interpolation alone. Live tooling uses rotating tools in the turret, while Y-axis movement allows true interpolation.”

“With the company focussed on turning and lathe work the majority of these machines are CNC lathes. If we need to do other machining work, we do have 4 Fanuc Robodrills that will generally take care of our requirements. We are not big in heavy milling and it will always be secondary to our lathe work.”

“My son Stefano joined the company in 2008 straight from school. He is typical of someone who joins a company with very little knowledge of the manufacturing side but with hard work, dedication and the right mentoring and experience he is now our go-to-guy on the machining side. And he is always looking at how to make the company more efficient and profitable.”

“For example, we don’t have a machining software package. We do it all ourselves and Stefano is very proficient in this department. The only package we have is Fusion and this is all we need. We are not a design company and don’t intend to manufacture our own products.”

“However, we will advise our machine suppliers on what we think is a better way for a machine to operate or perform. And we are proud to say that these suggestions have been included in future models of the machine on a number of occasions.”

“We have looked at using cobots for machine tending but right now with the type of component mix that we are machining it is not going to suite our parameters. I acknowledge that robotics can improve precision, energy efficiency and safety, while at the same time lessen operator fatigue. But a simple operation like removing swarf from the tool, chuck or jaws is not quite there with a cobot. I am sure it can be done but with all the lathe work that we do our swarf is often referred to as turnings and not chips. These turnings are the complication and being metal it easily gets caught.”

Superexcel Precision Engineering has roots dating back to 1979 when it was established as Mauderer Engineering by Bernhard Mauderer, who immigrated from Germany in the 1960s. Bothma purchased the business in November 1996 and began trading in January 1997, changing the name to Superexcel Precision Engineering CC on 1 March 2003. Initially he only had one CNC machine but that has since grown. There were also a number of CAM automatic machines, but these were all gotten rid of by 2010.

“I was the auditor and accountant for the company at the time and I was meant to sell the company for him. We tried to sell the company, but he scared off everybody that was interested in buying the company because he was so involved in the business. He was the backbone of the business and ran it like a Swiss watchmaking business.”



“As the new owner my association with the Victor brand goes back to 1997, shortly after I had purchased the business. I attended the 1997 machine tool show in Johannesburg and made contact with Victor Machine Tools, as they were known at the time. The company had purchased its first CNC machine from Victor, a V26. The machine colour was green, not an unknown colour for machine tools in those days. I subsequently purchased another V26 CNC lathe from them and have continued to do so.”



Superexcel Precision Engineering has two Victor Vturn-S26s

“With no success on the sales side I decided to buy the business. I am a chartered accountant (CA) by profession and had very little mechanical knowledge and experience. But I donned my overalls and got my hands dirty on the machines, while at the same time training staff to take over what I was doing. I remember spending many hours on the machines learning and then cutting gears, which would ultimately benefit in the company winning some major orders. It was the best way to learn and still today I can operate the machines, which is very unusual for a CA.”

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“The only time where there has been a bit of a lull in the company’s purchases of CNC machines was between 2008 and 2013 when there was a slump in the world economy.”

“We specialise as a jobbing shop – but in mass production. We are in the region of about 45 000 components a week but this could vary. For example, currently we have an order for 200 000 of four different components. We have to finish the 800 000 components in three months. This requires us to run two shifts a day either 5 or 6 days a week, depending on the requirements.”

Special Steels

“As our machine shop is primarily occupied with turning work, Special Steels have become a very important material supplier. We learnt about them two years ago and because of their service and support we have reduced our material costs by about 60%. We can machine most materials, and we do machine all the specialised engineering steels. But we also have a lot of call for hollow bar and the black and bright steels. Special Steels have been very instrumental in sourcing materials which are not manufactured in South Africa but are required by our clients. Others give up, but between ourselves and Special Steels we deliver.”

“We now have a staff compliment of 58. This represents a 65% growth in staff since 2019. We have also recently added another 500m² rented premises to our owned 1 100m² floor space and are desperately looking to purchase our own building with more space.”

Bothma prides himself and his employees on being goal driven and getting the maximum out of the business, “We operate by three rules: To produce components of the highest quality; to give decent service and to always be on time with delivery. Driven by European ethos we strive to delight the customer. We always strive to make the perfect component.”

For Steve and Stefano, nothing is impossible, and there is always a solution – even if that means finding a way on a turret lathe.

Contact Victor Fortune on TEL: 011 392 3800 or visit www.victor.co.za or Superexcel Precision Engineering on TEL: 021 905 0572/082 338 9391 for further details. ■



In total Superexcel Precision Engineering now have 28 CNC machines on the floor and most of them have been purchased after 2018. With the company focussed on turning and lathe work the majority of these machines are CNC lathes

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Duvenage to lead Iscar South Africa into its next era



With the forthcoming retirement of long-serving Managing Director Gavin Adams, cutting tool specialist Iscar Ltd has announced the appointment of Nico Duvenage as Managing Director of its South African operation, effective July 2026

With the forthcoming retirement of long-serving Managing Director Gavin Adams, cutting tool specialist Iscar Ltd has announced the appointment of Nico Duvenage as Managing Director of its South African operation, effective July 2026.

Adams, who dedicated 45 years to Iscar South Africa, leaves behind a legacy of stability, growth, and strong market positioning. His tenure has been instrumental in establishing the company as a trusted partner in the local manufacturing sector. Iscar operates as part of the IMC Group, a global organisation under the umbrella of Berkshire Hathaway.

Duvenage's appointment marks not just a leadership transition, but the continuation of a long-standing culture of consistency and strategic growth. As Iscar South Africa approaches its 60-year milestone in the local market, the company finds itself at a pivotal point, balancing a proud heritage with a rapidly evolving manufacturing landscape.

"Iscar South Africa has always been built on strong values, innovation, technical excellence, and long-term partnerships. We are not simply supplying tools; we are enabling productivity, improving processes, and helping our customers remain competitive in demanding environments," said Duvenage.

The company's global strength, combined with local expertise, continues to differentiate Iscar in a highly competitive market. Backed by advanced manufacturing facilities and research capabilities in Israel, the South African operation is well positioned to deliver cutting-edge solutions across a wide range of industries.

Looking ahead, Duvenage highlights a clear strategic direction: Strengthening customer partnerships, expanding market share in key segments, and leveraging innovation to drive productivity. With increasing pressure on manufacturers, from cost constraints to skills shortages, the role of a solutions-driven partner has never been more critical.

"South African manufacturers are under constant pressure to do more with less. Our focus is to support them with reliable tooling solutions, technical expertise, and process optimisation that delivers measurable value," explained Duvenage.

While the focus remains firmly on the future, Duvenage acknowledges the importance of strong leadership foundations and continuous development. In 2025, he completed a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) NQF Level 7, graduating Cum Laude, an achievement that reflects his commitment to personal growth and leadership readiness.

As he takes over the reins, Duvenage steps into a role defined by both responsibility and opportunity. With only a handful of Managing Directors having led Iscar South Africa over its six-decade history, the position carries significant weight.

"This is an exciting time for Iscar South Africa. We have a strong team, a powerful global backing, and a clear vision. The next chapter is about building on our legacy while driving innovation and sustainable growth into the future," said Duvenage.

For further information, contact Iscar South Africa on +27 11 997 2700 or visit www.iscar.com.

AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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In a major development, **Lead Machine Tools** recently became the sole South African agent for German CNC Machinery giant, **GROB**. With 100 years of experience and almost 10 thousand employees globally, GROB is one of the largest manufacturers Lead has ever signed with.

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SPP Precision Engineering creates its own unique space in custom machining of intricate, high-end components



SPP Precision Engineering's Managing director Kelly Scholtz in front of the newly arrived DN Solutions Puma 2100LY, a 3-axis turning lathe with driven tools, that the company purchased from Puma Machine Tools

It takes courage to start your own business. Running any kind of business is complicated, but there's something special about manufacturing in particular or, in the case of SPP Precision Engineering, machining intricate, high-end products such as aerospace components and sub-systems. Machining the physical products adds layers of complexity and risk that pure service or software companies don't have. Safety is a massive risk and must always remain top of mind. Hiring talent is an ongoing challenge. Inventory, materials and investing in machinery consume working capital. Scheduling is an impossibly complex and mostly unsolved problem, especially for high-mix manufacturers. Quoting tends to be labour-intensive and inefficient. Equipment is expensive. Competition is unforgiving, margins can be slim and cash flow often is a challenge.

Businesses that rely on one specialty or only a handful of customers suffer the most if there is a recession, they lose a client or the orders dry up. In many cases they shut down altogether. It is therefore imperative that if you start your own business that there is either going to be a constant demand for your product or services or you are very adaptable to changing times, which we have certainly experienced over the last 30 to

40 years. The current world scenario is a great case in point.

However, creating a niche can help your business to win repeat business, which ultimately allows you to have a steady revenue and income flow and help you survive tough times.

SPP Precision Engineering was only established two years ago through a partnership between the directors of Stainless Plate Products (SPP) South Africa and SPP Precision Engineering's Managing director Kelly Scholtz.

"The companies, the directors and myself are more interwoven and connected than even we realise at times. SPP's owner Freddie Visser and myself go back many years, even before Freddie started his own business Stainless Plate Products. Freddie worked for an engineering company manufacturing and fabricating fittings for ISO tank containers and tanker vehicles in Cape Town. After finishing my mechanical engineering studies at Stellenbosch University Freddie employed me at the company. He was the company's Engineering Manager."

"When he started his own business in 2009, I was one of ▶



Some larger components that have been machined on the company's Kitamura Myrunnion 4G, purchased from WD Hearn Machine Tools

his first employees and I remained with him for 3 years. I then wanted to get back into a technical environment and joined Rheinmetall Denel Munition in Somerset West, Western Cape where I gained valuable experience in design, development, and manufacturing of components and product rather than machining, which I had done at the previous companies where I worked.”

“I spent 9 years with them and worked my way up to be one of their brand managers before I left them for what I thought was a good prospect at a medical waste company. After a short period with that company the yearn to start my own company soon took over and that is when I approached my partners and started SPP Precision Engineering with them.”

“At first I was housed at one of the profiling and fabrication companies in the Bellville area of Cape Town, while I looked for my own premises, which I eventually found in the Firgrove Industrial area just outside Somerset West.”

“From the beginning the idea was for SPP Precision Engineering to create its own unique space in custom machining of intricate, high-end components. They say the easiest jobs are also the ones that are the most competitive to quote. This usually means there are strict limits on how profitable these kinds of jobs can be. While high-complexity jobs may have some teething troubles the first few times a company machines them, they build the skills and notoriety that enable companies to carve out niches with repeat customers.”

“I knew we would have to build the company on hard work, technical expertise and know-how, and a willingness to take on challenges others often wouldn’t – those jobs that require a high-level of thinking as to finding the solution and then skilfully carrying out the machining to micron tolerances. Or those that don’t have any drawing or reference to refer to.”

“I had limited space and funds so took over an existing CNC lathe that was available at the company. A few months later we were able to purchase a CNC mill and another CNC lathe.”

“From the beginning we wanted to separate ourselves from the rest. But when you start a business with no clients you can’t be fussy. Fortunately, SPP, where I was housed, were getting regular enquiries for work that did not fit the profile of their machine shop. They were happy to direct them my way.”

“But of course, many were for one and two-offs. No production type work. Applying operational excellence or lean manufacturing can be difficult in any circumstance, but especially in the highly variable environment that is a custom machining shop. Production type businesses will have job routings and calculated processing times. Every now and again they will have swings in demand but this scenario does not meet the challenge of custom machining.”

“You have to adapt your low-volume, high-product-mix environment to being very flexible. Flexible, adaptable manufacturing does not happen by chance, but by design. But implementing lean concepts successfully will uncover significant benefits for your long-term business strategy. But the question is: Are you willing to put in the necessary effort to take your company to the next level?”

“We have and it is gradually starting to pay off. We delivered and we started to get our own enquiries. Companies and individuals in the agriculture industry gave us work. It is quite astounding the amount of wear parts that are needed by our farmers. Components like axle and bearing housings, for example.”

“This has now led to a bigger enquiry from a business in the agriculture industry that ran out of machining capacity. The added advantage is that the order is not just for one-offs.”

“In the mean time we found this 600m² factory in a business park and we moved in 7 months ago.”

“The area where we are located has exposed us to some high-tech industries, namely the aerospace industry. A company ▶



Another recent purchase is the COORD3 ARES NT, which is a high-precision, small-to-mid-sized bridge-type CMM



The company knew that if they wanted to continue building their reputation of speed and flexibility for complex high-mix, small-batch production, 5-axis machining was the way. Hence the arrival of the Kitamura Mytrunnion 4G in September 2025, which was supplied by WD Hearn Machine Tools



Some examples of components that SPP Precision Engineering have machined for clients

in the aerospace manufacturing space came knocking on our door to help them in an emergency. We were only too happy to go all out for them which has resulted in more business coming our way. Initially we made tools and fixtures for them but have gone on to making limited production runs with some parts in the micron range tolerances.”

“Most companies are impressed with our super-fast turnaround. We are always busy these days but you can’t plan your day like a production shop. The work we do is always different and this is what makes it interesting for ourselves. We have done some production work and continue to do so – we machine the brass nozzles for Donkey Long Tong’s Blower. We were involved in helping with the design and development of the nozzle.”

CNC equipment

Just arrived at SPP Precision Engineering is a DN Solutions Puma 2100LY, a 3-axis turning lathe with driven tools, a machining length of 760mm, turning diameter of 406mm, a bar working diameter of 65mm, a 22kW motor and spindle speed of 5 000rpm.



The company also has a Fanuc Robodrill α -D21LiB5 Plus

“This is now the third DN Solutions CNC machine that we have at our disposal. The other two are a Lynx 2100LSYB, which is a high-performance mill-drill turning center that combines Y-axis milling, live tooling, a synchronised sub-spindle, and full C-axis contouring and a Puma DNT 2100M CNC lathe with XY travels of 230mm by 580mm, maximum swing diameter of 650mm, maximum turning diameter of 320mm and a maximum turning length of 513mm. The Lynx has an lemca Advantage 66 bar feeder attached to it. All of these machines were supplied by Puma Machine Tools.”

“However, as we started to take on more complex work, and looking at the industries that we have clients in, we had to investigate 5-axis machining. Up until then we had been very proficient in setting up on our machines and we could do more than one operation on the Lynx. We also do our own programming and post-processes and need no more than the Fusion software to assist us. But we knew that if we wanted to continue building our reputation of speed and flexibility for complex high-mix, small-batch production, 5-axis machining was the way. Hence the arrival of the Kitamura Mytrunnion 4G in September 2025. The machine has been supplied by

WD Hearn Machine Tools. We might not be using the machine to its maximum capacity but we know that it is possible for a client to arrive with an idea in the morning and we can have his component delivered back to him the same day.”

“Another recent purchase is the COORD3 ARES NT, which is a high-precision, small-to-mid-sized bridge-type CMM. The machine is housed in a temperature-controlled room which we built ourselves.”

“We also have a Fanuc Robodrill α -D21LiB5 Plus that has a table size of 850mm by 410mm, XYZ travels of 700mm by 400mm by 330mm and a table load of 300kg, as well as 4th axis.”

“We are a very young company but have experienced strong growth and we will keep the momentum going. We have built a reputation of being reliable with an emphasis on precision and quick turnaround. At the same time, we will remain solution driven for our clients.”

Contact SPP Precision Engineering on TEL: 021 200 5347 or visit www.spp-precision.com for more details. ■



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Alu-Cab – the evolution of vehicle-based overlanding

Sometimes understanding where your efficiencies in your production processes lie is better than trying to do it all yourself.

Cape Town-based Alu-Cab is widely considered an industry leader in the adventure canopy market, known for their expansive, high-quality range of aluminium overlanding canopies and vehicle accessories. For 25 years, the company has followed the philosophy of 'make it better', building a cult following all over the world.

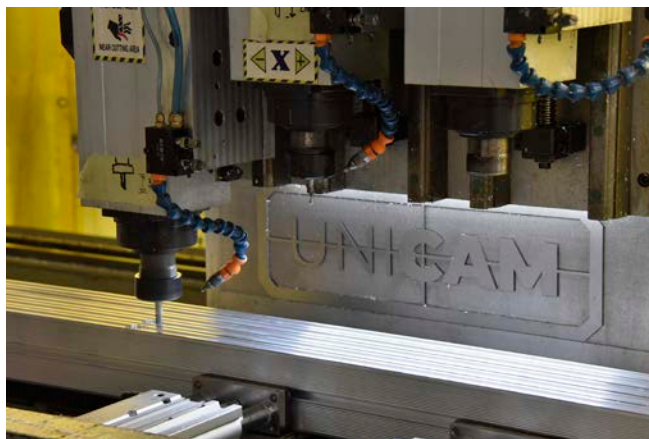
The story began with founder Jeremy Bergh, a plumber by trade, realising a gap in the market and a need for himself personally. Bergh was unable to find a vehicle canopy that suited his requirements. He matched that need for both work and recreational adventure purposes.

"Alu-Cab was a dream, a challenge and a pleasure. It's been the greatest gift too. This is something that I was passionate about since I was a boy. I have always made things and some of those things grew into what we have today," says Bergh.

"I started Alu-Cab as a practical option on the back of a vehicle. Something that I could work and play from and would get me into the wilderness. Nature is the most special place. Because when you connect with the earth it's good for the soul. To build a business around that is a pleasure.



Alu-Cab does all its own in-house cutting to length of aluminium extrusions that are supplied by a local mill



Alu-Cab have a custom-made Unicam CNC router T-slot machining center that takes care of most of their high-precision slot milling that they need to do on their extrusions

When I see somebody use our products to connect with nature it's really rewarding. Knowing that we've opened a door for people to experience that same sort of adventure that I went through in the early days of Alu-Cab," reflects Bergh.

"It's also been difficult building this business. There was a massive amount of pressure. I was doing the marketing, design, running workshops and trying to sell. And we fought and struggled and designed and built and we started to make a mark. And then we broke into international space. This was never supposed to be part of the story, but it became a huge party of our story and that's come with its own challenges."

"The pressure was unbelievable. We'd be preparing for a show and would be building up to that three, four nights in a row, pumping out late hours, doing what we had to do until everything was ready and we'd jump into our cars and drive off to Joburg, arrive at the show, perform at the show, turn around, come home, and start building if

we'd sold anything... Because often in those early days we didn't often sell anything."

"And we'd have the bank manager coming to us and saying, 'Look, we're reducing your overdraft facility because we don't see any hope for you guys.' And I remember telling ▶



About 99% of Alu-Cab's products are made up of aluminium



Alu-Cab products are hand-made and proudly South African

my bank manager, 'Won't you do me a favour and grab the electric fence on the way out?' The pressure was unbelievable. I was in so deep. I put everything that I owned on the line."

"I had a home and a family, and I had to keep soldiering on, because I had this dream. And I knew that we were doing something right. And that if we just kept fighting, we'd start to see the fruits of our hard work. And our accountants were telling us that it's time to get out and I said no. Because I knew we were nearly there."

"We just had to keep fighting. Even though most weeks ended with me folded over in my chair in tears because the stress was getting to me and I just didn't know how to control it. I'd go to bed broken, wake up at three o'clock wide awake, make notes, send messages to my staff, and was fighting everyone and everything until eventually I went into my office with a migraine coming on, lay down and woke up five days later."

"It turned out I had a brain tumour. Fortunately, as stupid as I am, I thought this was just another one of the battles that I had to fight my way through. I was also fortunate to have a wife that supported me and a partner like Warwick Leslie who was there to pick me up when I fell over. And he's still holding me up."

"I kept on fighting. The tumour in my brain as well as anything that came between me and my dream of building this business. And I won. Alu-Cab has been an incredible lesson. Nothing's been gifted to us. We made this work. We made this happen. What we've built in this little town at the bottom of Africa is so special because, yes, it's come from a lot of hard work, a lot of fighting and a lot of stress, but it all started with a dream."

Knowing your business, and knowing how to grow it in Bergh's case, meant living the product for Bergh and his team in those early days. Many adventures, trials and errors led to innovative designs and this was real R&D straight from the workshop to the field. It's likely that Alu-Cab can be credited with bringing to market the first commercially available canopy kitchen setup.

Bergh worked out of his double garage at home, using a single garage next to it as his office. Today Alu-Cab runs its manufacturing and assembly operations from three facilities with a total of 24 000m² under roof.

"You could say that approximately 97% of our products are put together by hand," says Christopher Morgan, Alu-Cab's CIOO. "Over the years we have had discussions about bringing our sheet metal processing in-house but for the volumes we process, now around 53 tons a month of sheet metal alone, we have made the decision to stay with our suppliers that have been very good to us over the years. We've experienced innovations too in terms of how our sheet metal is processed and roller forming now makes up a substantial ratio of how our sheet metal products are manufactured, especially for our canopies and rooftop tents."

"Not only has this innovative technique in sheet metal forming brought about visually appealing changes to our products but it has also brought about weight savings and we have been able to reduce material thicknesses as a result," explains Morgan. "The industry has also moved away from what was the traditional chequer plate or tread plate look. About 99% of our product is made up of aluminium, it's only really your brackets and some other components that are manufactured out of stainless steel."

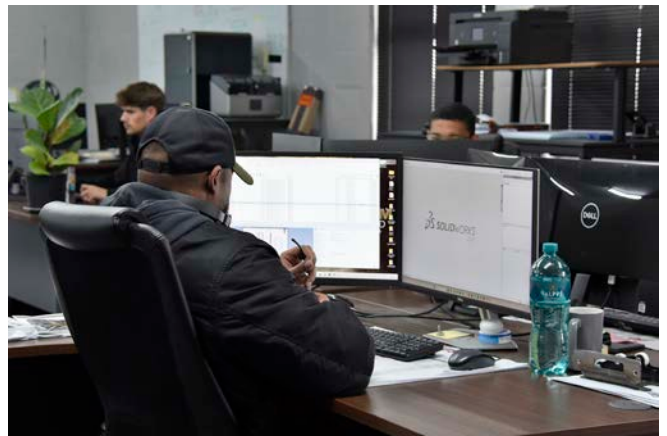
"We do all our own in-house cutting to length of our aluminium extrusions that are supplied to us from a local mill," explains Andre Crafford, Alu-Cab's Production Manager. "We have also had a custom-made Unicam CNC router T-slot machining center supplied to us that takes care of most of our high-precision slot milling that we need to do on our



Alu-Cab employs approximately 600 people across its three factories, many of whom are skilled artisans



"We have stuck to MIG and TIG welding because it gives us the strength and aesthetics these welds provide that we are looking for with our products. Laser welding may look pretty, but if it's not structurally there, we are not going to take the risk of a customer who is driving down from Europe into Africa having a product fail in the middle of nowhere."



"We have an engineering team of 18 people now and we also have an R&D department of five people. This is broken up into designers, engineers and draughtsmen. On the CAD side of the business, we use SolidWorks."

extrusions. We have standardised on the M8 bolt here and that makes everything modular in terms of adding accessories to the slots. You only need a 13mm spanner for the hex head making everything simpler for our customers. This approach has meant that our products and accessories modular and compatible with fitment to other brands on the market," continued Crafford.

"We do have a laser welder, but we have found that for our needs, and the complexities of our products, that the

technology is just not there yet. We have stuck to MIG and TIG welding because it gives us the strength and aesthetics these welds provide that we are looking for with our products. Again, this welding is all done by hand by our experienced artisans. The integrity of these welds is extremely important if you consider where our products are intended to go such as the tough roads of Namibia and elsewhere in Africa and the world.”



Material and production flow are key to Alu-Cab’s operations

“Laser welding may look pretty, but if it’s not structurally there, we are not going to take the risk of a customer who is driving down from Europe into Africa having a product fail in the middle of nowhere. Another challenge we looked at when it came to deciding whether to introduce robotic welding and semi-automated lines or not was the vast number of different components that we manufacture and assemble. We are also constantly innovating, designing and redesigning products and the sheer number of jigs that we would need to manufacture or have manufactured just for welding didn’t add up. It would also take the personality out of the products that we manufacture – hand-made and proudly South African,”

says Crafford.

“Alu-Cab now has roughly 1 800 Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) on our books, of which 1 200 are products and accessories with the balance being made up of spare parts. Changing our welding processes would also mean taking jobs away from some of the 600 people that we employ. You also need to consider the amount of mouths that these jobs feed both upstream and downstream so is that worth substantially changing our production methods for?” asks Morgan.

On tariffs and the effects that they have so far had on Alu-Cab’s presence in the US, Morgan says candidly: “It’s been difficult for anyone to really know what has to be paid.

We have seen cautiousness from both distributors and customers in that market and that is twofold in that distributors don’t really know the real costs of importing product and what their margins might be, and customers being cautious in that, because our products are luxury items, do they really need that product right now or are they better off waiting to see if they’ll need that money for food, electricity or fuel costs? We have adjusted production schedules accordingly but it’s also a bit of a yin and yang situation in that we are also seeing, as we did in Covid, while there may not be the money for that overseas holiday, there is the interest in exploring your own country, overlanding or camping. We are also not going to compromise on the quality of our products.”

“With having to adapt to challenges like Covid and now tariffs, for us it’s been about gaining efficiencies in our factories wherever we can. We have a huge product



“The next big thing for us has been the design and commissioning of our new powder coating plant. It has been custom-made and installed by Bendet Engineering Services. It features both an automated facility as well as a manual facility where we can run different kinds of batch runs. Previously with our powder coating facility – we’ve long done powder coating in-house – we had to run two shifts. That will now consolidate into one shift.”



Approximately 90% of Alu-Cab's products are exported to more than 70 countries around the world

range – some products like the canopy campers will see us manufacture 200 a week of, and other products 200 a day of. Placing larger stock orders with suppliers, streamlining how manufacturing operations flow through the factories and overall, generally consolidating our operations and some of our shifts have been where we have realised not just cost savings, but time savings too. Over the last two years we have also moved from 15 factories into the current three that we have now, and with that we have become a lot more organised,” explains Morgan.

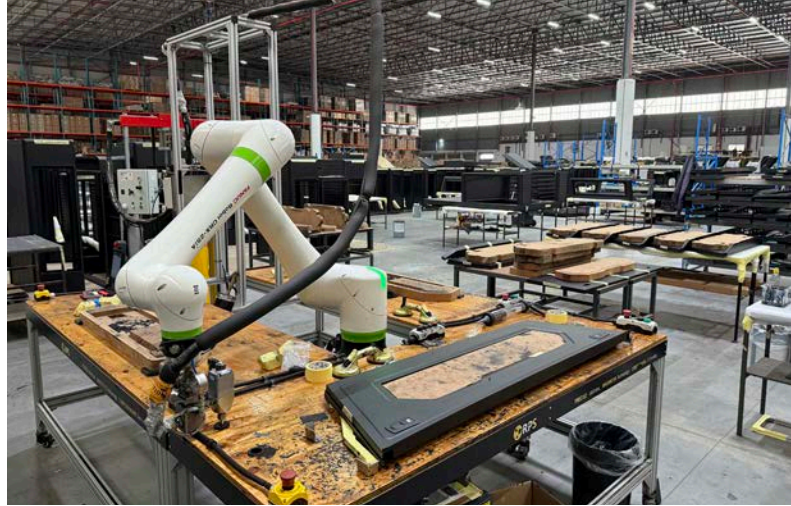


“We’ve experienced innovations in terms of how our sheet metal is processed and roller forming now makes up a substantial ratio of how our sheet metal products are manufactured, especially for our canopies and rooftop tents. Not only has this innovative technique in sheet metal forming brought about visually appealing changes to our products but it has also brought about weight savings and we have been able to reduce material thicknesses as a result.”

Image courtesy of Craig Kolesky



A roof conversion for the new Ineos Grenadier. Image courtesy of Craig Kolesky



A FANUC CRX-25iA robot dispenses bonding agent onto an aluminium panel before a press operation seats the window. The result: Repeatable adhesive placement and consistent joint quality

“The next big thing for us has been the design and commissioning of our new powder coating plant. It has been custom-made and installed by Bendet Engineering Services. It features both an automated facility as well as a manual facility where we can run different kinds of batch runs. Previously with our powder coating facility – we’ve long done powder coating in-house – we had to run two shifts. That will now consolidate into one shift. Overall, the new facility takes up 3 300m² of factory floor – this includes the prep areas, continuous line, batch plant and effluent plant. This plant will give us a good understanding of what the flow through the whole operation will look like,” explains Warwick Leslie, Alu-Cab’s CEO.

“Because of the nature of our products and their unique designs that include slots, spaces and angles, we are still going to have a manual aspect to the powder coating process.”

“We have an engineering team of 18 people now and we also have an R&D department of five people. This is broken up into designers, engineers and draughtsmen. On the CAD side of the business, we use SolidWorks.”

“All of our canvas is manufactured by a sister company of ours here in Cape Town called AC Gear. There are approximately 60 machinists employed at that factory and we use a CNC cutting machine for pre-cutting all of our various patterns and designs for our canvas before the machinists take over.”

Approximately 90% of Alu-Cab’s products are exported to more than 70 countries around the world with the remaining 10% consumed by the South African market. Alu-Cab recently took back control of its local distribution market and has already seen an upswing in market growth from being able to deal more directly and interact with its customers.

Apart from beautifully powder coated final products, Alu-Cab’s processes of taking raw material to finished products include cutting to length, grinding, welding, material preparation and cleaning, sealing, rigorous quality control checks and testing. All of Alu-Cab’s rooftop tents undergo waterproof testing in a dedicated facility where water is reused for this testing process via a purpose-built in-house water recycling plant.

For a number of years, Alu-Cab have used Hilti’s power tools. Together with Hilti, Alu-Cab have developed an in-house ERP tracking system for monitoring power tool use. This system allows Alu-Cab to know where a tool is in its factories, as well as which employee had access to that tool for the day. An added feature to this software system in its final development and trial stages will be the accurate measurement of a specific power tool’s use for that day, directly measuring that tool and an employee’s daily productivity.

Brand Manager, Dylan Muhlenburg, returns to Alu-Cab’s ▶

philosophy of continuous improvement, “We always say, let’s look at what already exists and how we can make it better. Take for example the Alu-Cab Tow Bar Step. It’s a heavy-duty, self-retracting step for vehicles with a standard 50mm tow hitch and is designed for easy camper or tent access without permanent modification as it simply bolts onto a standard 50mm tow hitch. Now you don’t need to carry a separate step. The MOLLE plate is another example – these plates are so



Alu-Cab accessories make for endless applications.
Image courtesy of Craig Kolesky



Alu-Cab’s products have been described as the Swiss Army Knife of overlanding equipment. The company manufactures aluminium overlanding systems centred on bakkie/pickup-based travel. The range includes load bin canopies, canopy campers, rooftop tents and roof conversions, supported by awnings and accessories such as draw systems, canvas gear and fridge slides. Core products such as the Contour Canopy and ModCAP Camper combine sealed aluminium structures that can be integrated with modular sleeping and storage systems. Image courtesy of XOverland

versatile in terms of the accessories that you can mount to them as well as the extra storage options they provide. We manufacture MOLLE plate that can be mounted directly to a vehicle internally or externally as well as plate that mounts to some of the tents and canopies. The options for end use are limitless.”

Alu-Cab’s products have been described as the Swiss Army Knife of overlanding equipment. The company manufactures aluminium overlanding systems centred on bakkie/pickup-based travel. The range includes load bin canopies, canopy campers, rooftop tents and roof conversions, supported by awnings and accessories such as draw systems, canvas gear and fridge slides. Core products such as the Contour Canopy and ModCAP Camper combine sealed aluminium structures that can be integrated with modular sleeping and storage systems. Turnkey solutions allow staged upgrades. Products are built around durability, corrosion resistance and compatibility with off-grid systems, including lighting, solar wiring and internal storage, with endless accessory options.

Contact Alu-Cab on TEL: +27 21 703 3028 or visit <https://www.alu-cab.com> for further information. ■

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GROB strengthens market presence in South Africa through partnership with Lead Machine Tools

GROB is further expanding its international sales and service organisation, focusing on strengthening its presence in the South African market. The machine manufacturer is entering into a strategic partnership with South African company Lead Machine Tools to provide even more targeted support to local customers and tap into new market potential.

The collaboration builds on a long-standing connection to the region: GROB delivered its first machines to South Africa more than 20 years ago. Since then, the company has consistently established itself as a reliable partner for sophisticated manufacturing solutions. With Lead, this development is now being systematically continued.

Focus on customer proximity and sustainable growth

As part of the partnership, Lead will handle both the sales of new machines and the support of the existing machine fleet. The goal is to accompany customers throughout the entire lifecycle of their systems – from the investment decision through to service and maintenance. In this way, GROB ensures that users in South Africa will continue to have access to high-performance technologies in the fields of machining, automation, and assembly technology.

“Together with Lead, we will fully leverage our potential in the South African market,” explains Carsten König, Head of the Machining Technology and Digital Products Department at GROB. “In addition to our traditionally strong focus on the automotive industry, we see attractive growth opportunities in the aviation and mining sectors in particular. At the same time, our solutions can be used across various industries.

Our goal is to achieve sustainable success together with our customers.”

The partnership enables GROB to significantly strengthen its local presence and respond more quickly to specific on-site requirements. Especially in a market environment increasingly characterised by customised manufacturing solutions and short response times, proximity to the customer is becoming crucial.

Long-term prospects in the South African market

For GROB, South Africa is one of the markets with promising future prospects. Industrial development, particularly in technology-driven sectors, opens up a wide range of opportunities for innovative production solutions. With Lead as a locally established partner, GROB is laying the groundwork to sustainably tap into this potential. The strategic partnership thus represents another step in GROB’s consistent internationalisation. At the same time, it underscores the company’s commitment to combining globally uniform quality standards with regional expertise – to the benefit of local customers and partners.

“I want to echo what Carsten has stated about the future potential for GROB’s growth in South Africa and elsewhere across the continent of Africa,” said Mark Burn, Lead Machine Tools’ General Manager. “This is exactly why we are proud to be representing this brand as the potential for growth in the industries that Carsten has mentioned looks bright for South Africa.”

“There is furthermore a lot happening in the power skiving and gear manufacturing industries taking place in South

Africa and GROB’s offerings in this regard when it comes to the technology available is something that Lead wants to be able to offer to the market. We are very optimistic about the growth in advanced manufacturing in South Africa.”

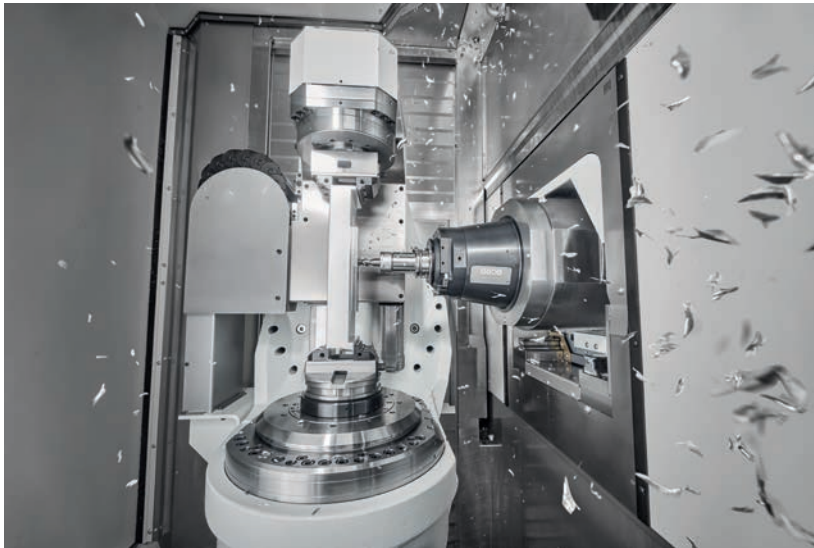
“We have the people to be able to make these machines do what they need to do for customers and GROB’s turnkey offerings finish off our product portfolio with industry-leading technology.”

100 Years of GROB

In March 2026, under the motto of “100 Years of GROB”, tradition met technological progress, and more than 4 000 visitors ▶



GROB G150 Universal Machining Center



Machining a single blade on a GROB universal machine

new era. The GP1350 is designed to meet the manufacturing demands of tomorrow: Maximum flexibility, high precision, and uncompromising performance,” explained GROB CSO Christian Müller during the machine’s presentation.

About GROB

For over a century, GROB has been operating globally as a family business developing and manufacturing systems and machine tools. Customers include the most renowned automotive manufacturers, their suppliers, and companies from a wide range of industries. With production facilities in Mindelheim (Germany), Bluffton, Ohio (USA), São Paulo (Brazil), Dalian (China), Pianezza (Italy), and Bangalore (India), as well as service and sales offices worldwide, GROB have a strong international presence.

GROB’s portfolio ranges from universal

machining centers and highly complex manufacturing systems with integrated automation to manual assembly stations and fully automated assembly lines. Production systems for electric motors and assembly systems for battery and fuel cell technology are also part of the product range. For machining turbine housings and processing structural and chassis components, GROB develops its own solutions. GROB’s proprietary software for digitising and networking production processes, GROB-NET4Industry, allows for a digital and transparent representation of these processes.

helped set a new record for GROB’s celebratory in-house exhibition. The 6 000m² exhibition space offered them plenty of room to experience the full range of the GROB world. Trade visitors, customers, and partners gained exclusive insights into machines, processes, and digital solutions – live in action and accompanied by GROB experts who shared their know-how in a personal and practical manner.

The in-house exhibition featured over 40 machines, whose diversity reflected GROB’s technological advancements over the past decades: More than 30 universal machining centers demonstrated their capabilities, including in conjunction with modern automation systems such as robotic cells and rotary and linear pallet storage systems. In the field of machining technology, the 5-axis machining center G920F5 for mega-castings demonstrated the precise task of machining large-format components. In addition, a hairpin bending station showcased GROB’s expertise in electromobility, and the GROB Metal Printing machine GMP300 demonstrated what additive manufacturing of the future looks like.

Four selected special areas also showcased future markets that are currently gaining importance worldwide: Semiconductor, aerospace and defence, energy technology, and die and mould. In addition, GROB offered insights into business areas such as humanoid robotics and drone technology for the first time at its in-house exhibition.

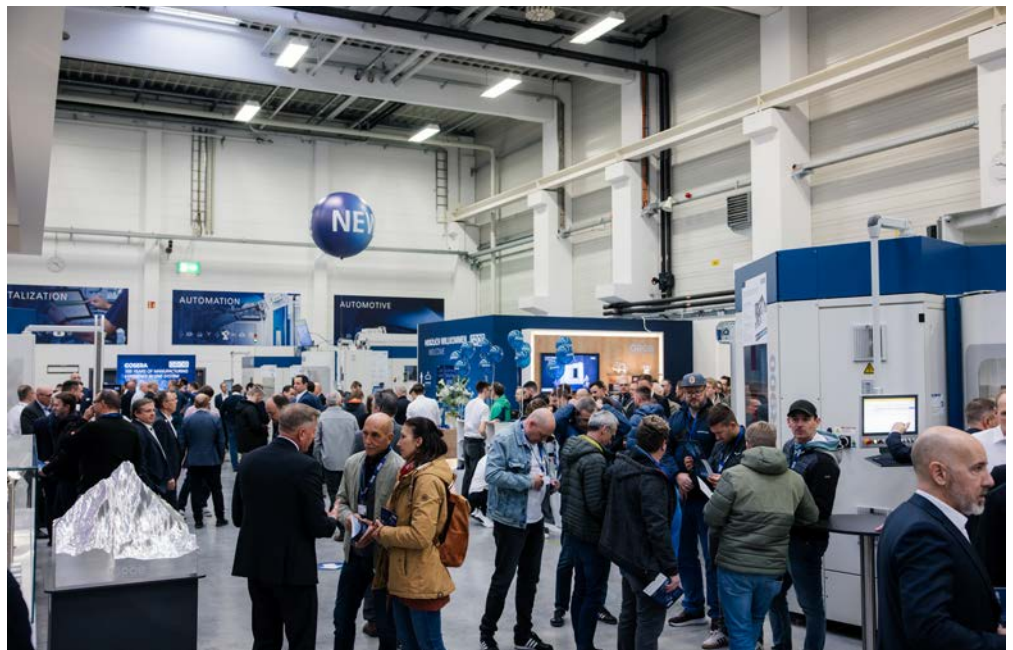
More than 70 plant tours through 14 production halls gave the numerous participants a first-hand look at the depth of vertical integration and precision with which GROB operates in Mindelheim.

A highlight of the anniversary trade show was the premiere of the new GP1350 5-axis portal milling machining center, with which GROB is opening a new chapter. “With the GP1350, we are launching our first portal machine and thereby entering a

About Lead Machine Tools

Established in 2011, Lead Machine Tools has been recognised as one of South Africa’s fastest growing machine tools and related equipment suppliers. Not only does 2026 see the company proudly celebrate 15 years in business, but it has also purchased and moved into a new premises in Epping, Cape Town.

Contact Lead Machine Tools on TEL: +27 21 301 2159 or visit <https://www.leadmachinetools.co.za> for further information.



In March 2026, under the motto of “100 Years of GROB”, tradition met technological progress, and more than 4 000 visitors helped set a new record for GROB’s celebratory in-house exhibition

Easson-Vertex appointed agents for Werka 2D and 3D measuring and inspection equipment

“The buzz in the CNC precision world might be all about not stopping a machine to measure a workpiece because it is a waste of time and money. This is a fact because not only is a high-priced piece of CNC equipment being taken out of production, but the measurements obtained when a machinist leans into a machine with a micrometer or bore gauge also means that you can’t compare the accuracy to those generated by a coordinate measuring machine or inline probe,” said Paul Hammerton, one of two partners in Easson-Vertex, a company established to provide high-quality machine tool accessories used in the engineering, tool and die making, steel and metalworking industries.

“But there are limitations and barriers of entry, namely costs, and for many companies the high-tech equipment is not justifiable for the type work that they are engaged in or their production run work is limited that does not require

quality control or quality intelligence at the tip of the smart phone or computer.”

“Equally unattended machining is not a factor although, machine uptime is important for those that run expensive CNC equipment, as is the quality and inspection. We can’t deny that the need to measure and verify components faster, more accurately, and with greater repeatability are driving developments in metrology systems and equipment. Ultimately it is an individual choice on how they want to run their quality, inspection, measuring and metrology aspects of their business. What we do know is there are many that still want quick access to hand-held, high-quality measuring instruments.”

“Many of these companies have been buying other product from us. We started the business 24 years ago to source and supply DROs, vices, chucks and revolving

centres, for example, as we knew how difficult it was to source machine tool accessories and parts,” continued Hammerton.

“Our product range includes coolant pumps, collet chucks, clamping kits (individual spares available), vices, lathe chucks, power feed units, rotary tables, dividing heads, quick change toolposts, revolving centres, magnetic lifters, drill chucks, pull studs, angle plates, lubrication pumps, arbours, tapping attachments, magnetic chucks, knobs and handles, revolving grips, boring bars, turning tools, wheel balancing stands, verniers, micrometers, clock gauges, slotting attachments, hydraulic chucks, ISO tooling, NT tooling, BT tooling, R8 tooling, morse taper tooling, ER collets, reducing sleeves, threading tools, soft jaws, extra height soft jaws, T-nuts and many, many more.”

“Many of these products we import ourselves from all over the world and we regard ourselves as one of the suppliers that has the most complete range of machine tool accessories and related equipment.”

“For quality, inspection, measuring and metrology systems and equipment we have never been a direct importer and when myself and my business partner Seamus Thompson visited the EMO Hannover 2025 last year, we found Werka Co Ltd, a Swiss origin company that is now based in and headquartered in Shanghai, China and is focussed on the manufacturing of 2D and 3D measuring and inspection equipment, non-standard ▶



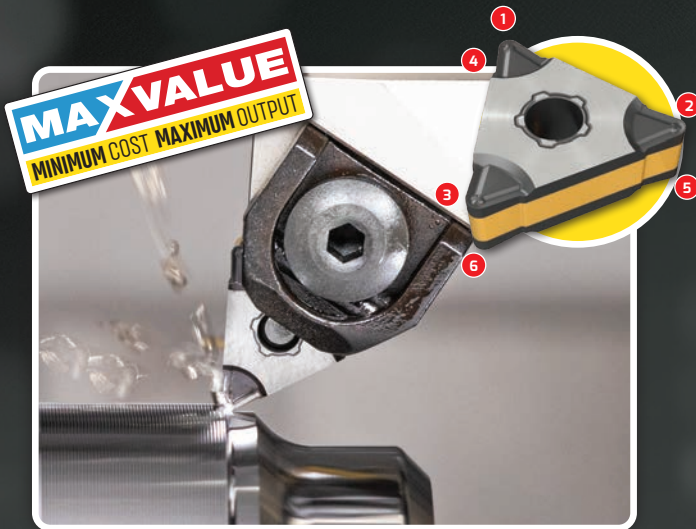
Easson Vertex are now representing Werka quality, inspection, measuring and metrology systems and equipment and have dedicated an area for the tooling in their showroom

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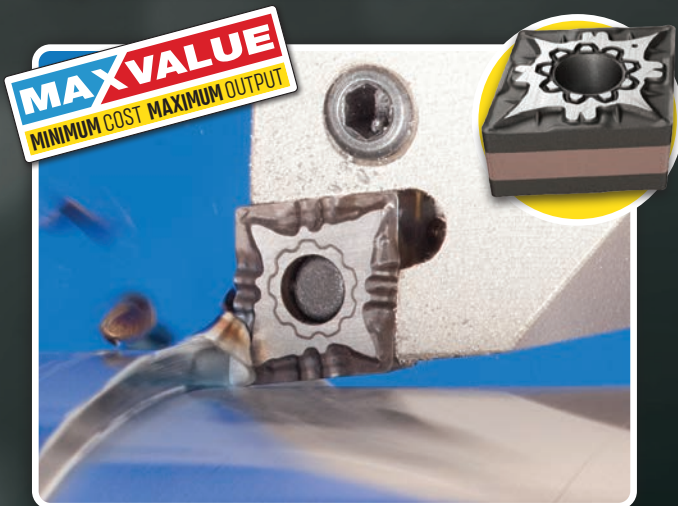
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ISOTURN

ISCAR FLASH-TURN offers a **more economical alternative** to standard-size inserts by lowering cost per cutting edge, improving operational efficiency, and minimizing inventory costs.

gauges and online automatic measuring and inspection systems.”

“The company also has factories in Wuxi and Suzhou.”

“We immediately struck up a relationship with them and this is why we have now been appointed their agents.”

“Their product range fits in perfectly with our range and objectives.”

“The company was founded in 1950 by Swiss Henri Finzi and became a specialist in manufacturing and supplying cutting tools to the West European market. They would also be one of the first to introduce Japanese HSS drills and threading tools into the European market in 1960s.”

“13 years ago, the company made a major decision in the company’s history when it decided to open a factory in Shanghai. But instead of manufacturing its tooling products it decided to add to its product range.”

“Hence the development and manufacture of 2D and 3D measuring and inspection equipment, non-standard gauges and online automatic measuring and inspection systems.”

“Their range now consists of vernier callipers, depth callipers, welding callipers, micrometers, comparators, rundown gauges, magnetic feet, surveying gauges, angle, marking and other gauges, squares, blocks, digital indicators, height measurement equipment, vernier depth gauges,



vision and optical measuring machines and other customised products.”

“We have dedicated an area in our showroom for clients to view and experience the products and keep a large stockholding of the fast-moving products. It is a very positive development in the company.”

Contact Easson-Vertex on TEL: 011 914 1855 or visit <https://easson-vertex.com> for further details. ■

South32 and Eskom advance electricity talks for Hillside Aluminium smelter

In a joint statement released South32 and Eskom said they are advancing discussions on a new, long-term electricity solution for the Hillside Aluminium Smelter in KwaZulu-Natal, targeted to commence in 2031, subject to compliance with all regulatory requirements.

Both organisations have reaffirmed their shared ambition to develop and deliver a long-term energy solution that supports Hillside’s competitiveness, contributes to regional economic stability and industrial growth, and aligns with South Africa’s broader decarbonisation objectives.

To support this ambition, South32 and Eskom have established a joint working group to explore mechanisms that can bring competitively priced renewable energy into the national grid, backed up by affordable firming capacity, within the existing regulatory framework. While this work will help support the long-term energy needs of Hillside, the solutions being assessed have the potential to benefit Eskom and its broader customer base.

This marks an important step towards supporting the future of one of Southern Africa’s most important industrial businesses. Hillside supports a total of 3 650 direct and indirect jobs, contributes to an estimated 29 000 jobs across

the economy, and plays a key role in supplying aluminium to the local downstream industry.

“As Hillside celebrates 30 years of operation this year, we are collaborating with the Government of South Africa and Eskom to secure its future for decades to come,” said South32 Chief Operating Officer Noel Pillay.

“We have made a solid start. It is important we continue this momentum, working towards a viable, low-carbon energy solution for Hillside from 2031, when the current electricity contract expires. Eskom values the longstanding partnership with South32 and the important role Hillside Aluminium plays in South Africa’s industrial economy. Through this joint process, we are working to develop a long-term energy solution that supports industrial competitiveness while advancing South Africa’s transition to a lower-carbon electricity system,” said Eskom Group Chief Executive Dan Marokane.

“By exploring innovative mechanisms to integrate renewable energy into the grid with appropriate firming solutions, this collaboration has the potential not only to secure the future of Hillside, but also to contribute to strengthening the resilience and sustainability of the national electricity system for the benefit of all South Africans.” ■

Hulamin disposes extrusions business to Norsaf ERS

Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal-based aluminium products manufacturer Hulamin Limited has announced the disposal of its Hulamin Extrusions business as part of its strategy to streamline operations and focus on its core rolled products segment.

The company confirmed in a statement that its wholly owned subsidiary, Hulamin Operations, had entered into “a series of inter-conditional agreements” with Norsaf ERS for the sale of its interest in Hulamin Extrusions. The deal also includes transitional arrangements that will allow the business to continue operating from Hulamin’s premises for a limited period.

Hulamin Extrusions was identified as a non-core asset last year (see <https://metalworkingnews.info/hulamin-decides-to-exit-extrusions-business/>) and earmarked for disposal to enable the redirection of resources and management attention to the Group’s core rolled products activities. The transaction is aimed at strengthening the group’s financial position and operational focus.

“The transaction is intended to support improved cost efficiency, liquidity, capital allocation discipline and strategic execution,” the company said.

While the business was sold for R10 million, additional financial arrangements linked to stock and intercompany balances could see the total value associated with the deal reach up to R100 million.

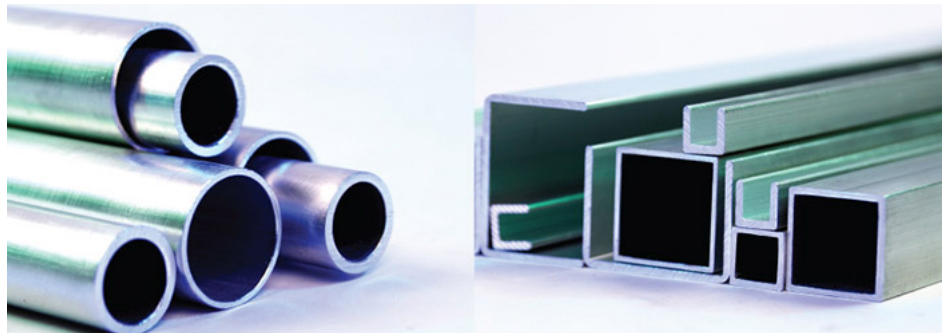
Hulamin Extrusions will assign to Norsaf ERS its rights to amounts owed by trade debtors and will transfer ownership of stock on hand to it at book value, which will be held on consignment and drawn down, also at its book value, according to the consignment stock agreement between the parties. At 31 March 2026, Hulamin Extrusions’ unaudited management accounts reflected a stock balance of about R106 million. It expects this amount to reduce considerably by the closing date. Accordingly, the amount to be paid in respect of the consignment stock and any loan account waiver in favour of Hulamin will not, in aggregate, exceed R100 million.

Hulamin Extrusions, which manufactures aluminium products for the automotive, transport and construction sectors, will continue to operate from its current sites under a lease and shared services agreement.

While the business recorded a net asset value of approximately R44.9 million as at December 2025, it posted a loss after tax of R35.7 million for the year. Proceeds from the transaction will be directed towards settling creditors, reducing debt and supporting working capital.

The deal remains subject to approval by competition authorities by 31 July 2026.

Hulamin Extrusions was founded 40 years



ago by Alcan. Today Hulett Extrusions have production plants in Olifantsfontein, Gauteng and Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Hydro Aluminium Extrusions – one of the world’s leading extruders became a shareholder in the extrusion division during the period 1997 to 2008. In June 2007 Hulamin listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and subsequently Hulett Hydro Extrusions changed its name to Hulamin Extrusions. In 2008 Hulamin acquired the Hydro Aluminium shareholding to become the sole shareholder of Hulamin.

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Toyota South Africa Motors recognises its suppliers



President's Award winners Angus and Malcolm Anderson with Nick and Stuart Beaumont, all of Ramsay Engineering, with Toyota South Africa Motors' President and CEO, Andrew Kirby

Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM) recently hosted its Annual Business Meeting and Supplier Awards in Umhlanga. The event brought together Toyota's supplier partners to recognise outstanding performance, strengthen collaboration and share the company's strategic vision for the year ahead.

The prestigious event marked the official introduction of Toyota's 2026 theme: "Challenge and Innovate" to suppliers. The theme will guide Toyota and its broader value chain through 2026, driving a renewed focus on achieving key milestones while fostering a culture of continuous improvement, innovation and resilience across the organisation and its stakeholders.

The event was attended by Mr Ken Yamamoto, General Manager for Global Purchasing Engineering from Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC). In his address, Mr Yamamoto shared the global supplier partner vision and emphasised the critical collaborative role that suppliers play in supporting Toyota's purpose of making ever better cars. He highlighted the importance of strong partnerships, shared values and innovation across Toyota's global supply network.

The 2025 Toyota Superior Supplier Award categories and recipients are:

- **Operational Excellence:** OP Mobility
- **Sustainability:** Smiths Manufacturing
- **Operational Support Excellence:** ROVD RSA
- **Customer Services – Parts:** Smiths Manufacturing
- **Customer Services – Conversions and Accessories:** MAXE

- **Customer Services – Logistics Services:** Tshepang Carriers and Rentals

The 2025 Toyota Runner-Up Award categories and recipients are:

- **Operational Excellence:** Bay Tool & Die Makers and Feltex Automotive Trim
- **Sustainability:** Bay Tool & Die Makers and XTC Engineering
- **Transformation:** Zee Bee Supply Chain Solutions
- **Operational Support Excellence:** MOL ACE South Africa and MC Design & Contracting
- **Customer Services – Parts:** Supreme Spring
- **Customer Services – Conversions and Accessories:** Brink Towing Systems
- **Customer Services – Logistics Services:** Namlog

The 2025 Toyota Achievement Award categories and recipients are:

- **Operational Excellence:** Antolin South Africa, Fischer Stainless Steel Tubing S.A and CRH Africa Automotive
- **Sustainability:** L&J Tool and Engineering Works, Engen Petroleum and KDG Logistics
- **Transformation:** Sirius Manufacturing
- **Operational Support Excellence:** UNILEC SA, Andre's Electrical and Grant Martie Builders

The President's Award was presented to Nick Beaumont and Malcolm Anderson of Ramsay Engineering, in recognition of leadership excellence, long-term partnership and a legacy built on people, capability and resilience. ■

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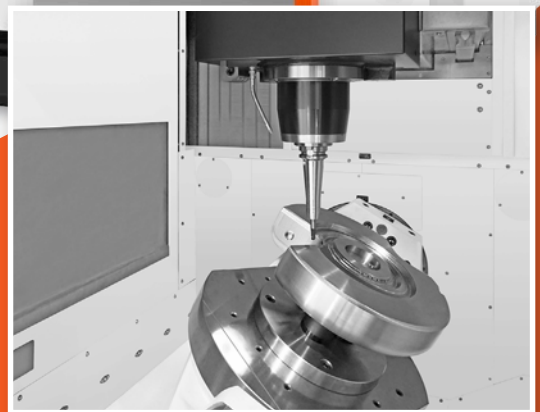
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PtSA presents 10-point plan that sets direction for South Africa's TDM industry

Major opportunities exist for the South African TDM sector. But only cooperative action will help realise the sector's future potential.

A 10-point action plan aimed at stabilising and developing South Africa's tooling, die and mould (TDM) sector places emphasis on coordination across industry, targeted capability development, and a structured approach to skills and transformation.

The Production Technologies Association of South Africa (PtSA) recently commissioned Professor Justin Barnes and his team from African Industrialisation Services to provide the PtSA with a clear strategic review of the South African tool, fixture, die and mould (TDM) manufacturing sector. The goal of the study was also to give a comprehensive set of recommendations to support the future development of the sector in South Africa.

The PtSA recently held a workshop to present a Strategic Review of the South African Tooling Industry.

The framework, presented by African Industrialisation Services' Professor Justin Barnes, outlines a sequence of interventions that move from advocacy through to firm-level development and workforce capacity, before addressing longer-term structural issues.

Alignment and advocacy

The first three actions focus on improving alignment between industry stakeholders and government, while positioning the sector within both domestic and regional value chains.

The starting point is improved engagement within South Africa. Industry bodies including NAAMSA, NAACAM, SEIFSA and Plastics SA were identified as key partners in aligning around a common strategy. The plan proposes structured engagement sessions with executive teams to ensure that sector priorities are consistent with broader manufacturing requirements.

To support this, the establishment of formal working groups is proposed. These forums are intended to improve communication, coordinate initiatives and identify opportunities for growth. The aim is to move beyond fragmented engagement towards a more structured approach to sector development.

The second action extends this focus into the rest of Africa. The plan identifies regional integration as a potential growth avenue, particularly in the context of automotive production. Engagement with the African Association of Automotive Manufacturers is proposed, alongside participation in trade-related initiatives linked to the African Continental Free Trade Area. The intention is to ensure that South African TDM firms remain part of emerging regional supply chains.

A third advocacy stream addresses awareness at a community level. The plan notes that manufacturing is not widely recognised as a contributor to long-term economic development. It was identified that the average South African family would never have even heard of the TDM sector and thus would not even be aware that this could be a prospective career option for young people.

Proposed interventions include promoting the role of manufacturing within local communities, encouraging participation in technical and vocational education, and

demonstrating the application of modern production technologies. This is aimed at strengthening the pipeline of future entrants into the sector.

Engagement with government

The fourth action focuses on engagement with government structures. While existing support mechanisms are acknowledged, the plan argues that these have not materially shifted the position of the domestic TDM industry, explained Barnes.

Formal engagement with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition is proposed, including a request for a dedicated session to present the sector strategy. In addition, the plan calls for a structured review of the TDM sector, with the aim of identifying targeted interventions. These interventions include measures such as local production incentives, improved access to finance, tariff adjustments on imported tooling, and support for skills development. The introduction of a monitoring and evaluation framework is also proposed to track progress against defined objectives.

Benchmarking and research

The next phase of the plan moves to industry development at firm level. A key requirement identified is the need to benchmark South Africa's TDM sector against international peers.

Implemented in partnership with the WBA (Werkzeugbau Akademie), a tooling research and consulting organisation, the programme is designed to measure the services and processes of South African TDM companies against those of organisations regarded as leaders in the global tooling industry.

Participation in global industry structures and benchmarking programmes is proposed to assess performance and identify areas for improvement. The plan also calls for the identification of local centres of capability that can be used to support knowledge sharing within the industry.

Alongside benchmarking, the plan highlights the importance of research. Both foundational and applied research are identified as necessary to ensure alignment with international best practice. This includes establishing research capacity within industry structures or through partnerships with universities.

Collaboration with international research institutions is also proposed. The intention is to ensure that South Africa participates in global research initiatives, rather than operating in isolation. Support for firms to access research and development incentives is included as part of this approach.

Technology adoption

Technology adoption forms a distinct component of the industry development focus. The plan notes that digital technologies are being integrated into TDM operations globally, and that local firms need to engage with these developments.

To address this, the establishment of demonstration capacity is proposed. This would allow firms to assess technologies such as additive manufacturing, industrial internet of things, artificial intelligence and digital twinning ▶



African Industrialisation Services' Prof Justin Barnes

in a controlled environment.

The plan also proposes engagement with technology providers to support the transfer of capabilities into the local industry. In addition, there is a focus on engaging multinational manufacturers that may establish operations in South Africa, particularly where this would introduce capabilities not currently available domestically.

Skills development

Actions seven to nine address skills development across different levels of the industry. The first of these focuses on existing firms. The plan identifies a need for short, targeted training interventions to address specific skills gaps. These gaps are linked to the introduction of new technologies and processes, rather than a lack of formal qualifications.

The proposed response includes engagement with industry to define current requirements, followed by a review and adjustment of existing training programmes. There is also a focus on promoting these programmes to ensure that they are taken up by firms.

A separate intervention targets maintenance and repair environments. These operations, which form part of the broader TDM base, have specific requirements linked to maintenance functions. The plan proposes engagement with these facilities to define skills needs, as well as the possible introduction of a dedicated qualification aligned to maintenance and repair work.

At a broader level, the plan calls for the development of a tiered skills pipeline aligned to international standards. This includes maintaining the quality of training programmes, increasing the number of graduates, and incorporating digital competencies into course offerings. The intention is to ensure that the industry has access to both basic and advanced skills over the long term.

Transformation and investment

The final action addresses transformation. While progress has been made at an employment level, ownership within the TDM sector remains limited.

The plan links this to the overall performance of the

industry. Barnes notes that limited growth and recent financial pressures have reduced investment, which in turn has constrained the introduction of new equity.

The proposed approach focuses on identifying investment opportunities linked to black economic empowerment. Engagement with funding institutions, including the Automotive Industry Transformation Fund and the Industrial Development Corporation, is proposed to support these opportunities. The underlying position is that transformation will follow improved performance, rather than precede it.

Implementation

The concluding section of the plan focuses on implementation. It proposes the establishment of four working groups to oversee the execution of the ten actions.

These groups are structured around advocacy, firm-level industry development, skills development, and transformation. Each group is expected to define how the actions will be implemented, identify responsible organisations, how the PtSA may be able to support them, and set timelines and resource requirements.

In addition, key performance indicators are to be established to monitor progress. The framework represents a shift towards defined interventions, with execution identified as the next stage.

About the PtSA

"The PtSA is the collective voice of the Tooling industry in South Africa," says Bob Williamson, PtSA National Secretary. The PtSA is a non-profit membership organisation founded in 2006 whose mission it is to promote, protect, and support the Tool, Die, Mould, and Special Machining (TDM) industry in South Africa to grow and develop the national manufacturing sector.

Earlier this year, the PtSA Western Cape moved into its brand-new 3 500m² Centre of Excellence in Parow in the Western Cape. It says: "The space is designed not just to house machines and classrooms, but to inspire the next generation of toolmakers and innovators."

For more information on the programmes offered by the PtSA throughout South Africa visit: <https://www.ptsa.co.za> ■

Jetour to start manufacturing SUVs in South Africa

At Auto China 2026, President of Jetour International, Mr Ke Chuandeng, made the exciting announcement that from 2027, Jetour will be producing some of their models locally in South Africa. The announcement marks another significant step for South Africa's automotive industry, and its growing role in global vehicle production. Auto China 2026, also known as the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition 2026, is currently underway, running from 24 April to 3 May 2026.

While Jetour and Chery are positioned as separate brands locally, they are closely related at a global level, with Jetour being one of the brands under the Chery Group umbrella.

Chery's recent acquisition of the Rosslyn manufacturing plant from Nissan means Chery South Africa transitions from an importer to a local manufacturer. By mid-2027, Chery aims to produce 50 000 units annually and create over 3 000 jobs across manufacturing and supply chain sectors. Importantly for Jetour, Mr Chuandeng's announcement indicates that the increasingly popular T-Series, launched in South Africa in October last year, will begin local production at the plant from next year.

Since the launch of this series, the Jetour T1 and T2 models have seen better than expected sales, with over 4 500 units of the T-Series already sold in South Africa.

While Auto China 2026 features a broad mix of internal combustion, concept and performance vehicles, this year the

focus is firmly on electrification, hybridisation and intelligent mobility systems. Electric and plug-in hybrid (PHEV) technologies are no longer an optional offering, but a core to any automotive brand's future success.

Fast-tracking developments in line with this locally, Jetour also recently launched its PHEV models in South Africa, the T1 and T2 iDMs, which are already on sale locally.

Under the theme "Future of Intelligence", this year's Auto China exhibition is officially the biggest ever, spanning two exhibition centres amounting to 380 000 square metres, and establishing Auto China among the largest and most influential automotive shows globally. Over 1 450 vehicles were on display, including the launch of over 180 new global models and 71 concept cars and prototypes.

"Being at Auto China has been an important moment for us," said Nic Campbell, Vice President of Jetour South Africa. "This announcement to produce the Jetour T-Series locally positions South Africa as an integral part of Jetour's global ambitions and underscores the growing influence of Chinese automakers in our market. This is undoubtedly a very exciting time for Jetour. In just 18 months since launching independently in South Africa, we have introduced four internal combustion models and two PHEV models, with further upgrades and new models planned for this year and next. This latest step into local production really marks a significant next phase in our journey." ■





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South Africa's steel industry needs demand not belligerence, ITAC commissioner says

This comes as ArcelorMittal pushes for the removal of a 20 per cent export tax on steel scrap, arguing it benefits smaller mini mill competitors that rely on recycled metal. It has been reported that Cawe's analysis is incomplete and dangerously detached from the human reality on the ground.

The key to rescuing South Africa's ailing steel industry, in which a unit of ArcelorMittal is feuding with smaller competitors, is by growing demand rather than fixating on export controls, the country's chief trade regulator has said, according to a Bloomberg report.

ArcelorMittal South Africa last year shut a steel mill, citing competition from so-called mini-mills that use scrap metal as their feedstock rather than iron ore. The company, which still runs Africa's biggest steelmaking plant south of Johannesburg, has demanded the government end a 20% tax on the export of scrap, which it says reduces the cost of the material for its rivals.

"There's a bubbling belligerence that says I can only survive by you kind of killing that instrument," Ayabonga Cawe, chief commissioner of South Africa's International Trade Administration Commission, said in an interview recently at Bloomberg's office in Johannesburg.

"Instead, the issue that needs to be addressed is how do you fix the demand side," he said.

South Africa's annual steel production collapsed to about 4.5 million tons last year, down from 9.7 million tons in 2006, with domestic producers struggling to compete with cheaper Chinese imports, while contending with surging power and logistics costs, and a stagnant economy.

"We need a rapid and aggressive infrastructure programme," Cawe said.

ITAC is responsible for customs tariff investigations and recommending trade remedies including import and export controls.

While Arcelor uses coking coal to fire blast furnaces that convert iron ore into steel, rivals including Scaw Metals and Cape Gate use electric arc furnaces to melt scrap metal. In addition to the export tax, the electric-furnace operators benefit from controls on the price of scrap metal, which are set at a discount to the international price. The discounts were implemented in 2013 and the tax in 2020.

"As steel scrap is a recycled material, it's more environmentally friendly than iron ore and is therefore a strategic material," Cawe said.

"Prior to the imposition of export controls in 2013, South Africa shipped more than a million tons of scrap to India annually. If we can all agree that in principle that scrap metal is a strategic material that has to be regulated, then we can have a debate about how you recalibrate the different rents," he said.

"We must find a balance, but that balance I am afraid is framed in very antagonistic terms." ■

Stop deindustrialisation before it's too late: BLSA

In her weekly newsletter Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) CEO Busi Mavuso has warned: "Any aspiration that South Africa has to rebuild its industrial base is disappearing before our eyes. The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition should take the lead in changing that, if they indeed regard industrialisation as strategic to the growth of the South African economy. If it fails, a generation of South Africans will pay the price."

"Manufacturing contributes roughly 12% of GDP and supports more than 1.5 million jobs directly, with multiples of that in supply chains. But we are watching this foundation erode. In the last two years alone, Bridgestone and 13 other automotive component manufacturers have shut down operations. Now Nissan has effectively exited manufacturing here, maintaining only marketing and sales functions after selling its Rosslyn plant, which had built bakkies for over 60 years, to Chinese manufacturer Chery. And the problems go far beyond the automotive sector – to cite just one example,

British American Tobacco closed its remaining South African factory last year."

"Last week Nissan announced a \$45 million investment to expand manufacturing capacity in Egypt. Not South Africa. Egypt. That decision speaks volumes about where we stand in the global competition for manufacturing investment."

"The DTIC should be the part of government that welcomes manufacturers and helps them succeed. Instead, Minister Parks Tau's department is seemingly becoming a source of policy uncertainty that is actively driving investment away. The proposed amendments to B-BBEE regulations are a recent example."

"Original equipment manufacturers have spent years building local supply chains, deliberately including majority black-owned businesses as part of their transformation commitments. Now the DTIC's proposed amendments threaten to strip them of their BBBEE status because many suppliers are not 100% black owned. But this raises some fundamental questions." ■

Green Hydrogen project in Namibia unlocks low grade iron ore for climate neutral steel production

Technology could cut costs and expand global supply for green steel production.

An international consortium led by Germany's Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing has successfully completed the first industrial scale pilot test to extract iron from low grade ore using green hydrogen, marking a significant milestone in the global transition to low carbon steel.

The trial was conducted at the Oshivela site in Namibia and operated by Hylron Green

Technologies. During the pilot, approximately 80 tons of untreated iron ore sourced from Australia were processed into Direct Reduced Iron. The project demonstrated the ability to work with ore containing just 56% iron, well below the roughly 70% typically required by conventional hydrogen based DRI shaft technologies.

At the core of the process is an electrically powered hydrogen rotary kiln developed by TS Elin GmbH. The

system is designed to achieve throughput of around five tons per hour, providing a scalable pathway for industrial deployment.

The breakthrough addresses a key constraint in the emerging green steel sector, namely the limited availability and high cost of premium grade iron ore. By enabling the use of lower grade material, the process removes the need

The system is designed to achieve throughput of around five tons per hour, providing a scalable pathway for industrial deployment

for costly pelletisation and reduces dependence on high grade ores, which can be priced at nearly twice the level of standard grades.

The development also broadens the potential supply base for climate neutral steel making. Resource rich countries such as Australia could benefit from exporting lower grade ores that were previously less attractive for green steel applications.



SAISC expresses concern about implementation of anti-dumping tariff measures. Proposes an emergency rebate

“Following the publication of SAISC’s initial industry perspective on 8 April 2026, the institute continues to engage actively with stakeholders across the steel value chain to monitor developments and represent the interests of the industry. Recent media coverage has contributed to broader awareness of the potential implications of anti-dumping tariffs on steel supply, project delivery and overall market stability,” SAISC have said in an updated statement.

“These discussions are consistent with the early feedback highlighted in SAISC’s initial communication where it noted the recent implementation of anti-dumping tariff measures on structural steel imports from China and Thailand, as well as flat rolled steel imports from China, Japan and Taiwan, as published by The International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC) on 20 March 2026.”

SAISC’s initial communication

SAISC said: “These developments highlight the increasing pressure on the South African steel sector and the importance of maintaining a fair and sustainable operating environment across the steel value chain.”

“SAISC remains supportive of the intent behind these interventions, namely to protect and strengthen local industry capability and ensure fair participation in global trade. The role of ITAC and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the DTIC) in enabling a balanced and rules-based trade environment is both necessary and valued.”

“However, it is important to highlight a developing concern from within the industry. Recent market feedback indicates that steel merchants and service centres are beginning to cancel or delay import orders in response to the sudden implementation of tariffs, particularly where pricing and supply certainty have been materially affected. At the same time, certain locally produced product lines are no longer available at previous volumes following changes in domestic manufacturing capacity. This creates a potential supply gap in the market.”

“If not carefully managed, the current tariff structure may inadvertently contribute to shortages of critical steel products, particularly in sizes and specifications not readily available locally. This has direct implications for project delivery, cost stability, and the broader competitiveness of South African construction and export markets.”

“In this context, SAISC recommends that consideration be given to a phased or delayed implementation of these tariff measures, allowing the market to adjust without disrupting ongoing projects or supply commitments.”



“Imposing tariffs on steel products that are not readily available from local manufacturers risks increasing the cost of infrastructure projects, delaying delivery timelines, and reducing the competitiveness of South African exports. This outcome would be contrary to the intended objective of supporting a stable and competitive local steel industry.”

“Much of the industry conversation has centred on protectionism versus free trade. The reality, however, is more nuanced. At its core, this moment reflects a deeper challenge – how to ensure a steel industry that is not only competitive, but credible, consistent, and trusted across the value chain.”

“Steel plays a fundamental role in the built environment. Its performance is structural, long-term, and often irreversible once installed. This places a responsibility on all stakeholders to ensure that materials entering the market meet the required standards, specifications, and performance expectations.”

“In parallel with these market dynamics, questions of quality, compliance, and material integrity have become increasingly prominent, particularly as supply patterns shift and alternative sources enter the market.”

“Tariffs alone are not the solution. They form part of a broader system attempting to address imbalances in global trade and local industry pressures. Long-term industry resilience will depend on more fundamental principles.”

SAISC’s Quality Certification Programme

“This is where industry-led mechanisms become critical. SAISC’s Quality Certification Programme, scheduled for launch in 2026, is being developed to strengthen confidence in both locally produced and imported steel. The programme will support traceability, verification, and compliance across the steel value chain, while providing engineers and project stakeholders with greater assurance when specifying materials.”

“A measured approach to tariff implementation would allow sufficient time for such mechanisms to take hold, ▶

ensuring that quality – not only price – becomes a defining factor in procurement decisions.”

“South Africa’s steel industry must remain globally connected, while ensuring that the materials used locally meet the expectations of performance, safety, and durability required by the built environment.”

“At SAISC, our role remains to support this outcome. Through technical guidance, industry engagement, and the continued development of quality-focused initiatives, we aim to contribute to a steel sector that is not only competitive but respected for its integrity and performance. As the industry evolves, the focus should remain clear. Not simply where steel comes from – but whether it can be trusted to perform.”

Developments since initial publication

“Since the announcement of the tariff measures, ITAC has continued its formal review process, incorporating further submissions from industry stakeholders. Additional engagement has taken place across industry bodies, including STEASA and SEIFSA, with a view to consolidating input and providing coordinated feedback.”

“The regulatory environment therefore remains active, with outcomes still progressing through formal channels.”

Market response and implications for supply continuity

“Feedback from across the industry indicates that import programmes have, in some cases, been delayed or reconsidered. Certain orders have reportedly been cancelled due to increased cost pressures and uncertainty, while the availability of specific long product sizes remains constrained.”

“These dynamics are particularly significant in instances where products are not currently manufactured locally, resulting in continued reliance on

imports during a transitional phase. Such developments have also been reflected in recent media coverage, reinforcing the importance of a measured and coordinated industry response.”

Technical insight into the evolving rebate framework

“Further clarity on the rebate process has been obtained through engagement with STEASA and industry stakeholders. Existing rebate provisions apply to certain long products, including I sections and H sections, under defined conditions relating to product dimensions and manufacturing processes. These provisions are generally applicable where products are not available within the SACU market and are ▶

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subject to administrative approval.”

“In addition, initial rebate recommendations arising from ITAC’s preliminary report have been submitted for ministerial consideration. A second round of submissions has been initiated to expand coverage to additional product categories and tariff codes not previously included. The rebate framework is therefore not static, but continues to evolve in response to industry input and regulatory review.”

SAISC intervention through an emergency rebate proposal

“In response to these developments, SAISC submitted a formal motivation for an emergency rebates process. The submission outlines that structural changes in local production have created temporary supply gaps, and that import channels have played a critical role in maintaining continuity across infrastructure, mining and export-related projects. The introduction of tariffs has introduced additional cost and uncertainty into this environment, with the potential to exacerbate short-term supply constraints if not addressed.”

“SAISC has therefore proposed a fast-tracked rebate process applicable to both landed material and near-

term imports. This proposal includes a defined six-month transitional period, subject to review in line with anticipated developments in local production capacity. The proposal is positioned as a targeted and temporary intervention aimed at stabilising the market during a defined period of adjustment.”

A balanced and coordinated approach to implementation

“SAISC’s position remains consistent. While support for local industry development is essential, it must be balanced with the need to ensure supply continuity across the value chain, stability in project delivery and effective cost management for infrastructure and export markets.”

“The effectiveness of tariff measures is therefore closely linked to the manner in which they are implemented, and the extent to which they are aligned with operational realities within the industry.”

SAISC have listed further points in their statement and in conclusion it says it remains actively engaged with regulators and industry stakeholders.”

For further details visit: <https://www.saisc.co.za/industry-focus/industry-perspective-on-recent-steel-tariff-measures/> ■

Isuzu Motors South Africa achieves its highest-ever annual production

As the production shift ended on 31 March 2026 at the Isuzu Motors South Africa (IMSAf) manufacturing plant, a defining milestone in the company’s history was achieved. During this financial year, IMSAf recorded a significant 21% year-on-year increase in production volumes for both the Isuzu D-Max bakkie and Isuzu Trucks, with over 27 400 Isuzu D-Max bakkies and more than 3 800 Isuzu Trucks produced at the plant to meet the growing needs of customers across the African continent.

This isn’t a story of a sudden surge; it is the culmination of a consistent journey of building trust. While hitting record production volumes, Isuzu has simultaneously retained its position as South Africa’s No. 1 medium- and heavy-commercial vehicle brand for the 13th year in a row. This achievement is not an isolated event but rather a reflection of sustained customer trust built through consistency, reliability and lifecycle value.

This milestone reflects a multi-year trend of growth, a measured, deliberate response to sustained market demand that signals confidence in the Isuzu brand and in the future of automotive manufacturing in South Africa. The achievement is grounded in disciplined execution and responsible business development, ensuring that growth never comes at the expense

of quality or reliability. By aligning production with actual market needs, IMSAf demonstrated its ability to scale while maintaining its reputation as a long-term manufacturing partner. ■





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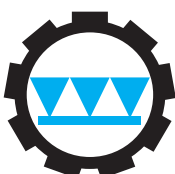
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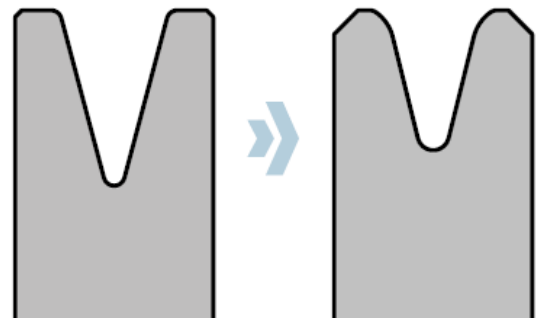
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Miltek Hydraulics commissions the Southern Hemisphere's first LANG Technik RoboTrex Automation System [VIDEO]

Automation has significantly reduced costs and increased the speed of delivery.

Miltek Hydraulics is a precision engineering business located in Centurion, Gauteng, specialising in the design and manufacture of machined hydraulic manifolds, valve systems, and control logic components. Miltek's components are utilised in some of the most demanding working environments, including the mining, marine, and motorsport sectors.

[Follow this link to watch Miltek's LANG Technik RoboTrex 52 Automation System](#)

Integrated hydraulic manifolds operate as the central control logic for fluid power systems where they connect and control the valves, pumps and actuators used to operate high-performance equipment such as continuous miners and excavators. By consolidating multiple hydraulic functions into a single part, a manifold reduces external pipework and hose routing, thereby limiting potential leak points, making better use of available space in confined installations. The integrated design also supports safer operation and assists in meeting industry safety requirements.

Manifolds, both within the regular and custom range, must be machined to the tightest of tolerances. For this reason, Miltek believes in deploying the latest in CNC machining and software technologies. "Our fully in-house manufacturing facility allows for rapid delivery and the highest quality control," explain Neville Jansen and Michael Chandler, both

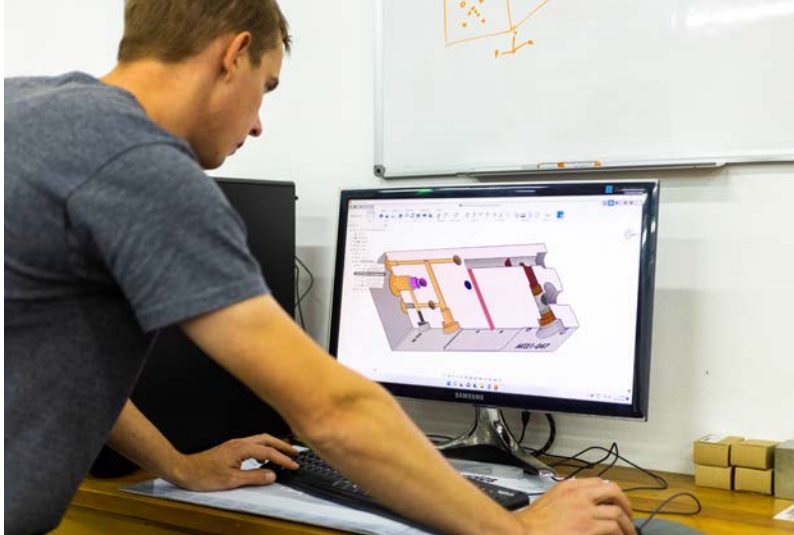
Mechanical engineers who started their company in 2021. A close review of their internal manufacturing processes led them to the realisation that automation could reduce the costs of some of their manifolds, particularly the smaller range, by up to 20%. A cost reduction that would allow them to remain competitive in the market.

Stepping away from a corporate environment with job security is never a simple decision to make, but the decision to join forces and start their own business has been a natural progression for the business partners. Applying their collective mechanical design experience to the manufacturing environment has yielded organic growth for the business. "We started operating out of a garage but later that year we were able to rent the current factory space we operate from and purchased our first CNC milling machine – a DN Solutions DNM 5700 machining center – shortly thereafter," said Chandler.

"One thing I learned from my previous career as a technical manager in the medical device space is that when you work with a variety of products that require very tight tolerances and consistent quality, having control of the machining process allows you to deliver components quickly and monitor the quality more effectively than you can if the machining is outsourced. So, in-house machining and quality control have been fundamental to Miltek's business model from the outset," explains Jansen. "Having said that, we look at the business holistically and aim to optimise all of our processes," Jansen further explains. ▶



Miltek manufactures and stocks a range of manifolds compatible with cartridge valves from Sun-Hydraulics, Common Cavity and Parker



Miltek utilises both SolidWorks and Fusion 360 for their CAD / CAM requirements

With experience in the mining sector and their collective experience working with machined components that require precision engineering, the co-owners decided to drive Miltek's focus toward hydraulic manifolds. Operating in this space involves very specific form tooling and reamers so investing in top quality tooling from the outset was a conscious decision made by the team, which has grown to include production and inspection staff.

"Investing in the right equipment gives us an advantage in the spaces we are now operating in. It enables us to make our components quickly and accurately. We also have machine capacity available to accommodate urgent orders or customer breakdowns," commented Chandler.

In reflecting on their business, Chandler mused, "It has been fun and enlightening for Neville and I to learn more about machining work after coming from design-focused environments. We have learnt to work within the parameters of machines and the tooling capabilities available to us, thus refining our design skills too. Both of us have always had a keen interest in this aspect of engineering and this is ultimately what drew us together."

"We seldom receive a design drawing for an order and maybe that's something that is unique and has refined our skillset on the design and machining side as well. We do however receive samples occasionally and we then reverse

engineer and redesign where needed. Often that process starts in a CAD software like SolidWorks and then we move to Fusion 360 for programming the CNC machines. We find that SolidWorks is more powerful when it comes to designing or redesigning a complex assembly from scratch," says Chandler.

Miltek made the strategic decision to focus their design and machining capabilities on a specific line of hydraulic manifolds and related components and not to adopt too much of a 'job shop' mentality. Jansen and Chandler believe this will allow them to build a sustainable business but also enable them to offer the custom design and machining work they enjoy. "We need to be specialised, we need to keep our focus," the business partners say.

These hydraulic components and valves must be machined with extreme precision, usually to within 10-to-20-micron tolerances, primarily because they operate under intense pressures and in harsh environments where component failure is not an option. Most of Miltek's components are machined from certified, pressure rated Ductile Iron due to hydraulic pressure constraints, although they do also work with aluminium when the operating pressure is below 200 bar. Aluminium is, however, not a material commonly considered to be safe within certain underground mining environments due to its reactivity in those particular

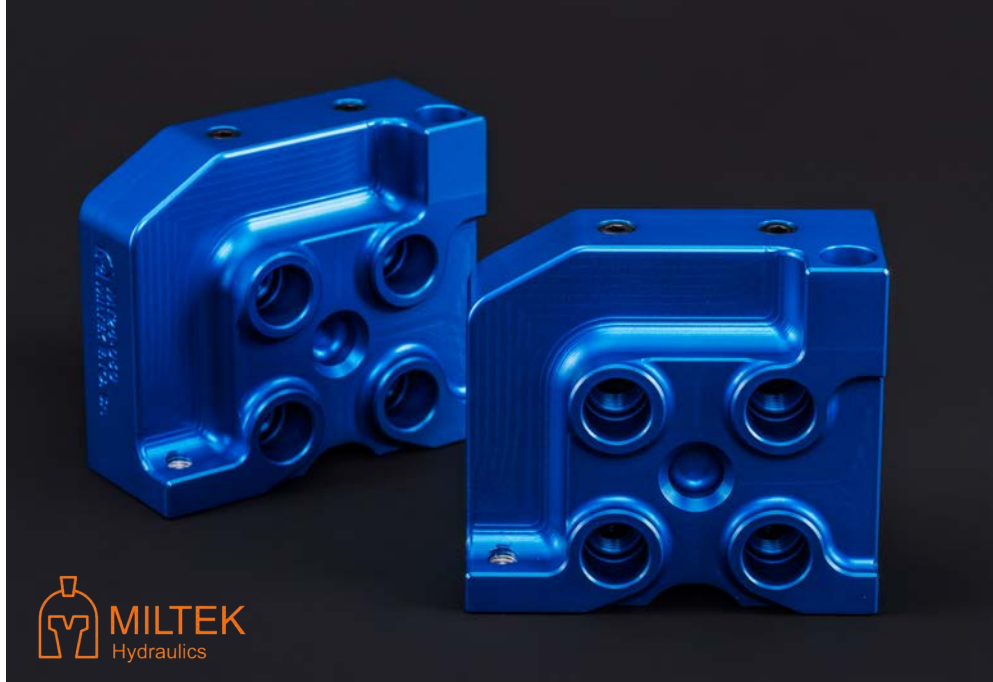


"Investing in the right equipment gives us an advantage in the spaces we are now operating in. It enables us to make our components quickly and accurately. We also have machine capacity available to accommodate urgent orders or customer breakdowns."

Miltek maintains a large variety of hydraulic cavity tooling

environments. Miltek also machines stainless steel components where required, but the vast majority of their machining is done using Ductile Iron.

We will always keep a stock of material on hand so that when an order comes in, we are immediately able to begin processing that order. Our customers should not need to wait for another supplier to cut and deliver our material," explains Jansen. "Customer service and maintaining good relationships with our clients and suppliers is extremely important to us, and this is one of the ways in which we ensure that."



An example of a lightweight aluminium manifold developed for motorsport applications

Africa's first LANG Technik RoboTrex automation system

Not shy of keeping abreast of the latest trends in shop floor automation and lean manufacturing efficiencies, Jansen and Chandler selected the LANG Technik's RoboTrex 52 automation system as their first foray into automated CNC machine tending. Not only is the system the first of its kind to be installed in Africa, but it's also the first of its kind to be installed in the Southern Hemisphere. This has put Miltek Hydraulics in a league of their own when it comes to this type of shop floor automation.

The system, commissioned by Advanced Tooling Solutions, is equipped with a M-20iD/25 robot from FANUC and is based on a trolley storage concept. Miltek optioned the system with two 30-vise configuration trolleys that handle up to 60 LANG vises. The RoboTrex system features its own touchscreen control panel that integrates with the FANUC CNC control. The trolleys are then configured on the touchscreen, allowing the automation to begin.

Workpieces are clamped in the vises outside the

enclosure and each vise is stored in the trolley ready for loading into the machining center. During operation, the robot removes a vise carrying the raw-material from the trolley and places it into the machining center. After machining, the vise is returned to the storage location on the trolley and the next unit is loaded. This removes manual clamping from the machining cycle and keeps the spindle running. "This has opened up capacity for us to focus on other aspects of our business," explain the business partners.

The M-20iD/25 robot has a 25kg payload and a reach of about 1 830mm. This allows it to handle a loaded vise, depending on part size and material. The RoboTrex 52 is aimed at batch production where multiple jobs are scheduled but is also well suited to tending continuous same-component machining operations. Combined with LANG's zero-point clamping system, it allows vises to be exchanged without re-clocking. The result for Miltek is longer unmanned running time within a compact footprint, ideal for a business of this scope.



RoboTrex 52 implementation at Miltek Hydraulics

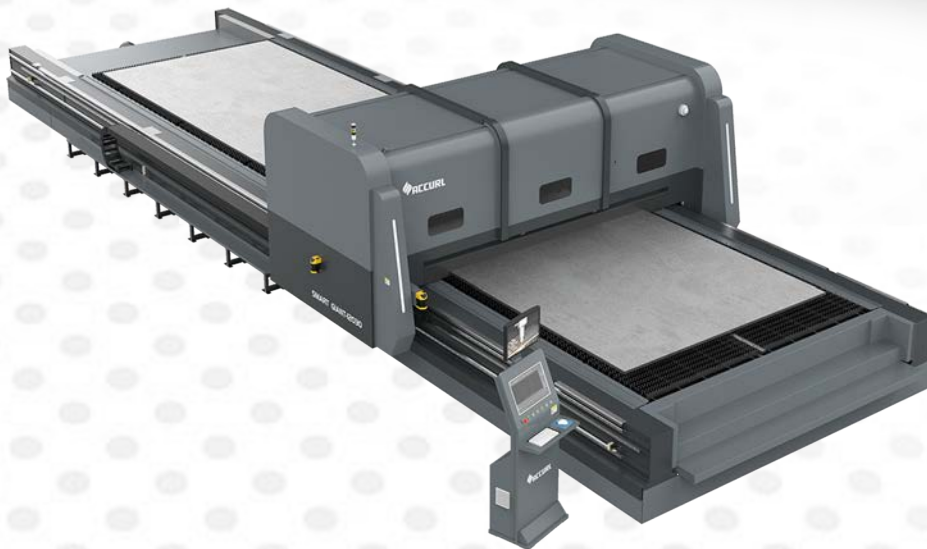


Miltek have 60 LANG Technik Makro•Grip® FS 77, 5-axis vises at their disposal, featuring jaw widths of 77mm, clamping ranges of 0mm – 120mm with continuous / full serration

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A batch of 20-of manifolds in production at Miltek Hydraulics



Miltek is able to produce a variety of manifolds in-house



Custom hydraulic manifolds are an integral part of Miltek Hydraulics' services. Their in-house design and manufacturing facility allows for rapid delivery and process control

Miltek paired the RoboTrex system with a DN Solutions DNM 5700 high-speed, vertical machining center. It features a 12 000rpm direct-coupled spindle, a working area with XYZ's of 1 050mm x 570mm x 510mm and a 30-tool automatic tool changer. Renishaw probing has been added for tool breakage detection while running unattended. The machine is perfect for heavy-duty cutting and complex contouring and finishing with a table size of 1 300mm x 570mm and a maximum load capacity of 1 000kg, though Miltek have not put this automation setup in place for large components. Currently Miltek will machine components of up to 500kg using the other CNC machining centers that they have at their disposal. All of Miltek's DN Solutions machining centers have been supplied by Retecon Group company Puma Machine Tools.

The RoboTrex system has been supplied with two LANG Technik Quick •Point® 96 grid plates that feature a zero-point clamping interface used to reduce setup times on milling machines and that mount according to the machine's table parameters. Having optioned the system with a two-trolley 30-vise capacity, Miltek have 60 LANG Technik Makro •Grip® FS 77, 5-axis vises at their disposal, featuring jaw widths of 77mm, clamping ranges of 0mm – 120mm with continuous / full serration.

This level of automation is designed for repeatability and although it can be run for small batch sizes, it really comes into its own when running larger batch quantities, freeing up the Miltek team to focus on design precision, quality control, and stock management. This is technology that is designed for lean, smart manufacturing.

Continuous investment

Continuous investment back into the business has been a hallmark of Miltek's success over the past five years and this has seen the company strengthen its machining capability. Miltek now has five multi-axis CNCs on the shop floor including their first machine, the DN Solutions DNM 5700 vertical machining center that the RoboTrex system is paired with. The other machines consist of two DNM 6700's and two Lynx 2100 LSYB mill turns featuring Y-axis capability, sub-spindles and live tooling.

Miltek manufactures over 500 unique hydraulic manifold designs which can be found anywhere from underground mining locomotives to within the hydraulic jacking systems of stage-winning vehicles competing in the world-famous Dakar Rally.

For Miltek, specialising in the hydraulic component sector means that speed of component delivery and consistent component quality are of the utmost importance as it can mean the difference between vast and complex operations coming to a halt or not. "Automation has been one of the key driving factors in realising increased efficiencies for the business," Jansen and Chandler conclude.

For more information visit Miltek Hydraulics at www.miltek.co.za

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AgriCAD:

Your grain farmers' friend



AgriCAD are well-known for their range of chaser bins for bulk in-field grain handling. The chaser bins range from 16 000 litres (13 tons) to 38 000 litres (30 tons)

The life of a grain farmer, in fact any farmer, is a physically demanding, high-stakes, and rewarding profession that revolves around the seasons, operating from dawn until long after dark to plant, manage, and harvest crops like corn, wheat, barley and soybeans. It requires balancing intense field work with business management, technology, and constant, uncertain weather, making it a 24/7 commitment to feeding the world. A dairy or cattle farmer has similar worries when it comes to land or weather. However, their paths split from a grain farmer thereafter.

A grain farmer is a specialised agricultural professional who cultivates, manages, and harvests cereal crops (e.g. wheat, corn, barley, soybeans) for profit, often owning or leasing large, machinery-intensive land. They are defined by their passion for the land, technical expertise in agronomy, and high-risk management skills to navigate unpredictable, seasonal, and capital-intensive operations.

Maize is the most extensively grown field crop in South Africa, followed by soybean and then wheat. Maize and wheat can both be farmed as dryland crops, thereby reducing input costs for irrigation. While both crops can be farmed in the summer and winter rainfall production regions,

maize production is overwhelmingly concentrated in the summer rainfall production regions of Mpumalanga, the Free State and North West. Wheat is mostly grown in the winter rainfall production regions of the Western Cape, with some production taking place in the summer rainfall region, albeit under irrigation.

For all of the grain farmers preparation time of the soil, planting and fertilising of the seeds and harvesting of the crop are all critical elements, over and above the weather, that contribute to a failed or low yield or a successful and profitable season. Starting on well-managed, non-compacted land is also important as is the cultivar of seed.

Helping the farmers achieve their required production is AgriCAD, a leading force in the African agricultural equipment industry, dedicated to serving the continent's farming community with advanced, durable, and purpose-built implements and equipment.

At the core of the company is a state-of-the-art design and development engineering house, paired with a modern manufacturing facility located in Pretoria. Every implement is developed using precision-driven, computer-aided engineering, ensuring exacting standards from concept to production. The facility operates under advanced

manufacturing practices that meet and exceed modern European benchmarks. This commitment to quality, innovation, and engineering excellence has positioned AgriCAD as a trusted name across Africa. From soil preparation to crop management, AgriCAD's implements are recognised for their reliability, strength, and practical effectiveness in the field.

AgriCAD equipment is successfully operating across South Africa and exported to over 14 African countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, the DRC, Uganda, Sudan, Nigeria, Angola, Tanzania, Namibia, and Botswana, demonstrating widespread adoption and proven performance across diverse farming environments. The company has also made inroads into Australia and New Zealand.

"AgriCAD was established in 2010," explained the current CEO Eben Potgieter who has a background in law and other businesses. Potgieter was also involved with the transition of Clover NCD from operating as a Co-Op to Clover Industries Limited, a branded foods and beverages group.

"AgriCAD is a design and manufacturing company that is building farming equipment to European standards but sold at South African prices, with its focus on the Southern African agricultural market. By using modern manufacturing practices and creating manufacturing drawings and processes, we have succeeded in developing a whole range of products at our factory in the Waltloo Industrial area just outside Pretoria, Gauteng."

"For me the best feature of the company is how a sheet or plate of metal arrives at our factory and after various processes leaves the factory as a quality, modern piece of equipment that transforms the daily lives of our grain farmers here in South Africa, in the rest of Africa and in other international countries."

"There are a number of aspects that a grain farmer has to consider but the key to his productivity lies in soil preparation, planting and harvesting and the machines he uses to assist in all of these areas. Keeping the machines operating at maximum capacity for as long as possible when planting, fertilising and harvesting his crop, is vital. This is where AgriCAD becomes a partner with the farmer, to make sure he gets the maximum yield."

"We are all about making the farmers' life easier and being his friend. We have a range of equipment that we manufacture that takes care of the soil preparation, fertilising, planting, harvesting, storage and transporting from the field to either the transport or the silo."

"Transport of the crop is a costly aspect for the farmer and he does not need trucks to stand around queuing ▶



A chaser bin in the process of being fabricated



A chaser bin being assembled



CEO Eben Potgieter with Engineering Manager Walter van Dalen



All of AgriCAD's products and variations are designed by the company and approximately 70% is manufactured in-house



The company makes use of a fiber laser with a 4 by 2 metre bed



The company has a 150 ton press brake. Not being a high-volume service centre, they have adequate capabilities but will need to upgrade going forward. They process 90% of their sheet metal work in-house

when one of our chaser bins can discharge its load into the truck in less than 3 minutes."

"The AgriCAD chaser bin's hydraulically operated bottom dump gate enables rapid discharge into a silo receiving pit. The discharge auger has a capacity of around 5t/minute for rapid unloading to a height of 4.2m and the 3m wide bin makes unloading from the combine easier, minimising spillage."

"Replaceable modular segments make repairs to panels easier, quicker and more cost effective as opposed to the more usual all-welded construction."

"Our chaser bins for bulk in-field grain handling range from 16 000 litres (13 tons) to 38 000 litres (30 tons) and come with flood lighting and a tarpaulin for protection against the elements and are easily operable by one person."

"We have also developed a weighing system that gives you exact amounts of the total grain loaded and offloaded. This system has saved plenty of shrinkage for farmers. As a result, the risk of theft, an ever increasing problem, has been reduced."

"But before it gets to harvesting time you have to prepare the soil. Here we have developed the ripper to fulfil the needs of the farmers that subscribe to a practice of deep soil preparation. With an effective working depth of 800mm most of the challenges associated with deep ripping are solved. In addition to normal ripping the implement can be adapted for granular fertilizer application with the addition of a towed fertilizer bin."

"There is also a ripper range that goes to 450mm and our tandem disc range has between 52 to 96 discs for soil preparation. The heavy duty offset harrow range allows the farmer to have 18 to 52 discs at his disposal."

"For planting time, we manufacture seed treaters and bulk seed carts and a fertiliser chaser bin, all of which are popular. However, it is our landroller series that farmers are looking at seriously and we believe we are the undisputed leader in South Africa for these. There are four available models with widths of 7.6m, 9.4m, 11.3m and 12.2m. Benefits when you roll include an increase in yield due to the ability to harvest closer to the ground – this could be as much as 15% – there are fewer breakages during harvesting (less soil, stones and lose impediments damaging the table), quicker disintegration of mealie residue and moisture retention is increased."

"During the harvesting period we have the mother bin, which presents the farmer an affordable solution for the challenges of handling bulk loads of grain during harvesting. The 80 000 litre capacity mother bin creates a 66 ton buffer and a 34 ton truck to be loaded in approximately 10 minutes."

"We also have a bulk trailer range."

"You certainly can't miss AgriCAD's products. Adorned in bright red they are shiny and gleam come rain or sunshine. These products not only look great on your farm, they also help make all your farming operations easier, more efficient, faster and smoother," says Engineering Manager Walter van Dalen.

"The electronic weighing system has been a very big development for the company, especially as it is our own product that we manufacture in-house, ►

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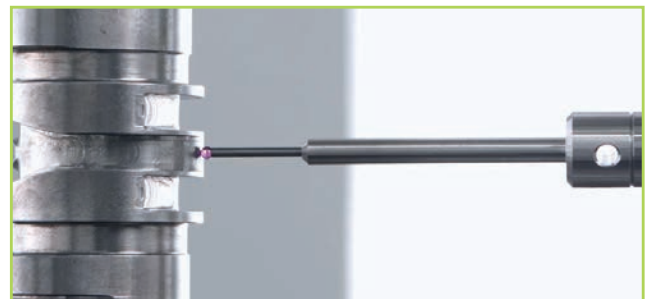
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The equipment that AgriCAD manufactures under their own brand name comprises many different sizes and shapes of components



“The AgriCAD chaser bin’s hydraulically operated bottom dump gate enables rapid discharge into a silo receiving pit. The discharge auger has a capacity of around 5t/minute for rapid unloading to a height of 4.2m and the 3m wide bin makes unloading from the combine easier, minimising spillage.”



More components processed in-house

including the electronics, and then assemble.”

“Likewise with our equipment, all of our products and variations are designed by ourselves and approximately 70% is manufactured in-house. The hydraulics, axles, tyres and braking systems are outsourced. Where we focus on is the chassis, the bin and all the necessary attachments – anything that needs to be attached to the chassis.”

“I must emphasise though that we provide the complete product. A farmer would not have to go off and buy his own tyres.”

“Our products are manufactured in a combination of mild steel and high carbon steel depending on various issues such as wear, safety and functionality. Most of the metal we use is sheet metal and we process on a fiber laser with a 4 by 2 metre bed and a 150 ton press brake. Not being a high-volume service centre, we have adequate capabilities but will need to upgrade going forward. We process 90% of our sheet metal work in-house.”

“We manufacture in a modular type process so that it makes shipping costs effective. We will visit site where the purchaser is not able to assemble or fabricate himself, which is very minimal. The product is generally fully assembled when the equipment is delivered.”

“However, we are very service orientated and will visit the farm if there is a breakdown or the equipment is in need of a service or a wear part needs to be replaced.”

“We realise that not every piece of land is the same so we are very flexible in custom designing a product to suite a farmer’s request. We can do this as we have our own in-house design department.”

“Simply put. We are not manufacturing automotive vehicles or aircraft and our products don’t have the electronic complexity of these examples. Agricultural equipment manufacturing involves designing, welding, and assembling durable machinery, such as tractors, planters, grain and other crop harvesters, using steel, rubber, and advanced electronics to improve farming efficiency. The optimal use of the correct equipment and implements is necessary to optimise farming production and to maximise operational profit. All mechanisation actions need to be considered for the whole conventional farming value chain.”

Agriculture equipment manufacturers are the unsung heroes of the modern farming industry. While the spotlight often falls on farmers themselves, the crucial role played by farming equipment manufacturers is often overlooked.

Yet, these innovators and creators are the backbone of agricultural progress, ▶

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“We manufacture in a modular type process so that it makes shipping costs effective. We will visit the site where the purchaser is not able to assemble or fabricate himself, which is very minimal. The product is generally fully assembled when the equipment is delivered.”

driving efficiency, sustainability, and productivity in farming practices.

Technology and innovation have sparked a revolution in the agriculture industry, fundamentally reshaping traditional practices. Advanced sensors, drones, and GPS systems enable precise monitoring and management of crops, optimising resource utilisation and minimising environmental impact.

Robotics and automation have transformed labour-intensive tasks, from harvesting to weed control, streamlining operations while reducing reliance on manual labour. Furthermore, data analytics and machine learning empower farmers with actionable insights, guiding decisions and fostering a more efficient, data-driven approach to agriculture.

These technological advancements continue to redefine the boundaries of what’s possible, propelling the farming industry toward greater sustainability and productivity.

Contact AgriCAD on TEL: 086 200 1204 or visit www.agricad.co.za for more details. ■



Although not a service centre many sheets and plates are cut, bent and welded to manufacture AgriCAD’s range of grain planting and harvesting equipment



The company makes its own augers. Augers are drilling tools featuring a helical screw blade (flighting) that rotates to cut, lift, and remove material, primarily soil or wood



The company also has to roll sheet for the equipment it manufactures

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Crucible | Brand new, never been used, silicon carbide

Cooling | Air cooled, built-in cooling/circulation fan

SPECIFICATIONS

Type | Non-tilting furnace

Power | 400V three phase

Melting capacity | +-250 kg/hr for aluminium ingots

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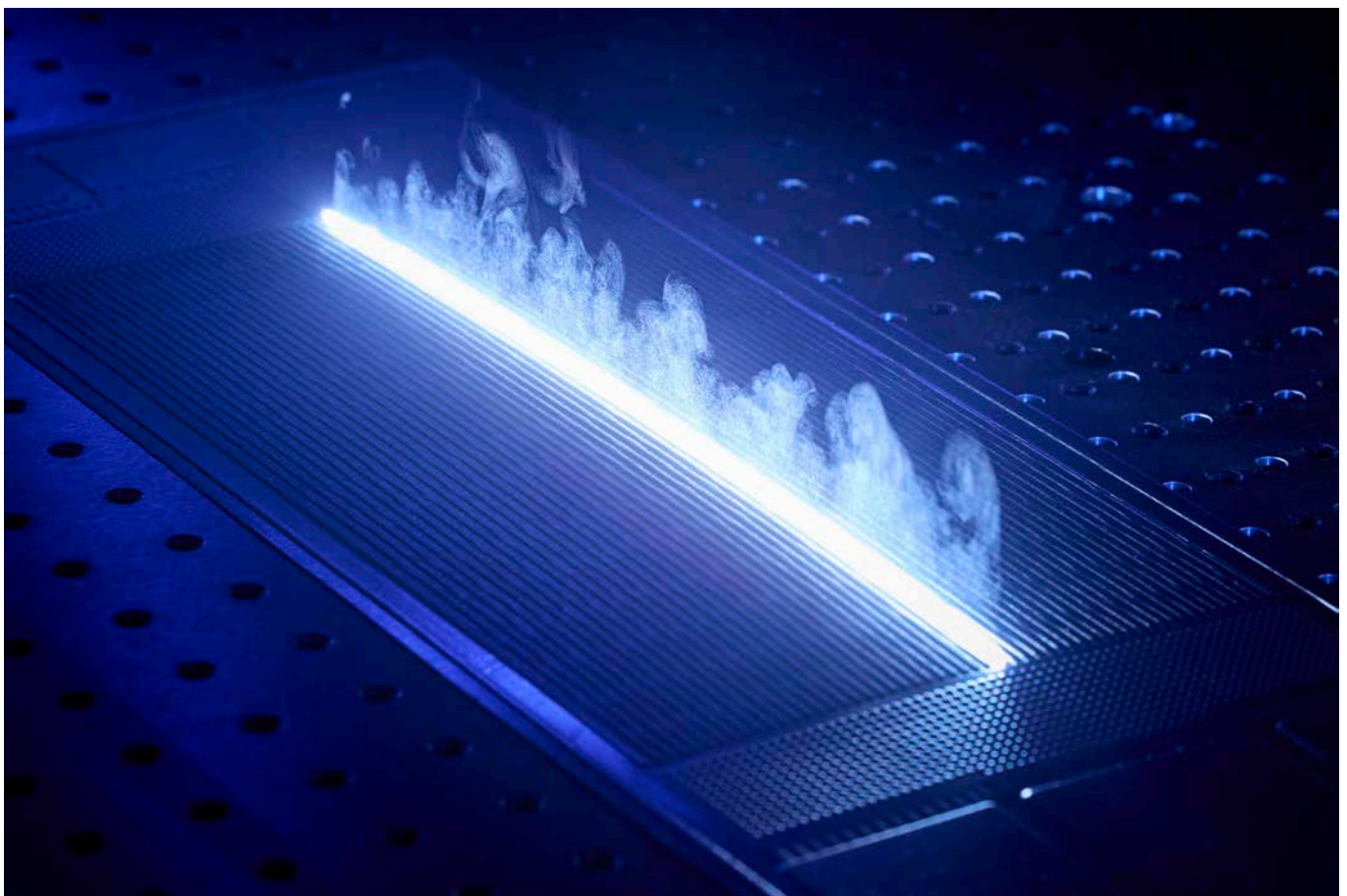
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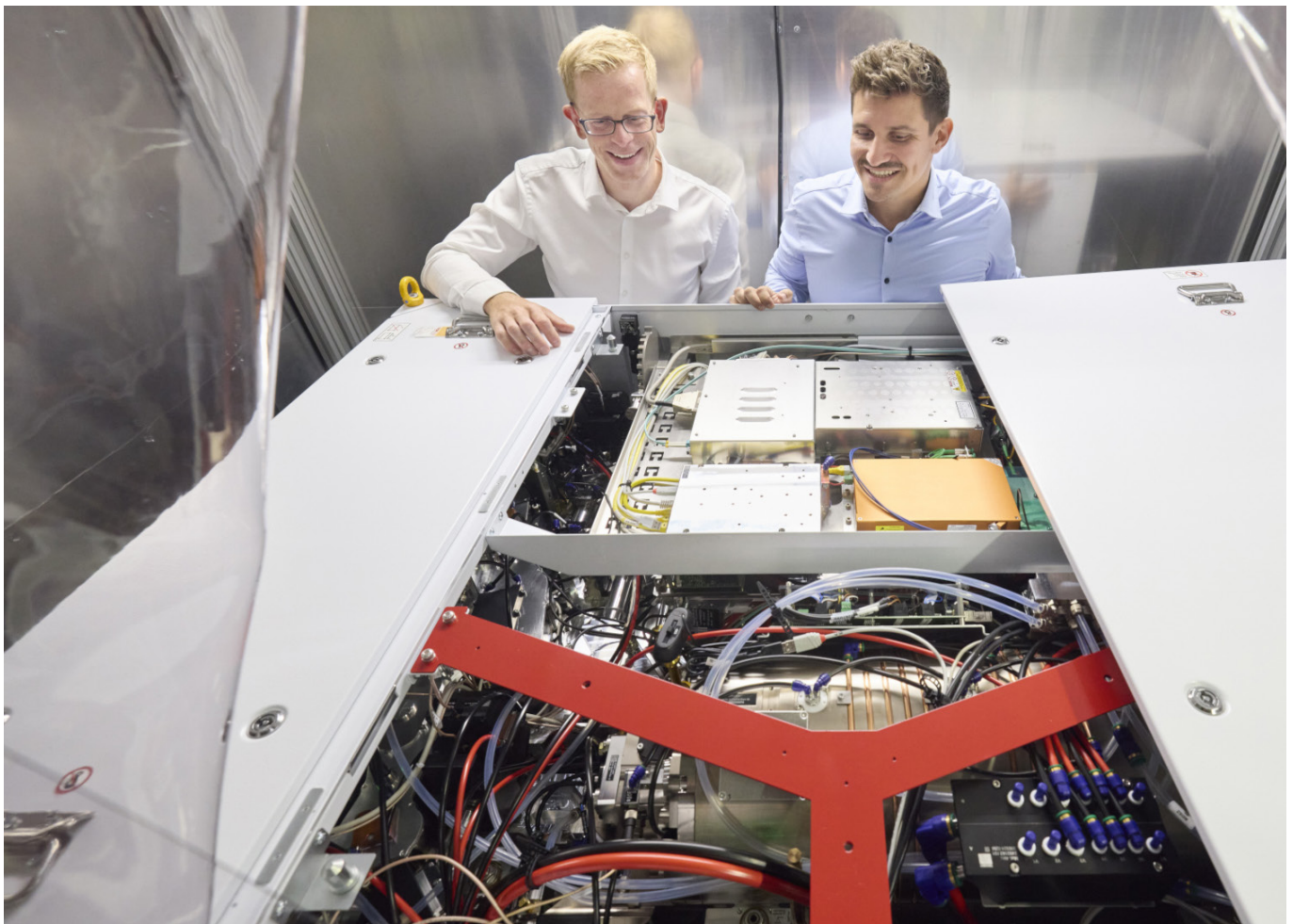
Powerful 100kW mega-lasers can cut steel, drill tunnels and boost mining speed



Laser technology is breaking into new dimensions

Laser technology is breaking into new dimensions. Ultra-short-pulse and continuous-wave lasers with average powers in the multi-kilowatt (kW) range promise to boost efficiency for material processing and pave the way for

entirely new fields of applications. Researchers in Germany have revealed that laser technology is entering a new era in which multi-kilowatt power lasers could significantly reshape manufacturing, as well as infrastructure and energy systems. ▶



Powerful 100kW mega-lasers can cut steel, drill tunnels and boost mining speed

“The average power of USP lasers is now reaching double-digit kilowatt levels thanks to developments within the Fraunhofer Cluster of Excellence Advanced Photon Sources (CAPS),” said Jochen Stollenwerk, PhD, Fraunhofer ILT acting director.

The rise of multi-kW lasers

Meanwhile, continuous-wave lasers already achieve outputs of several hundred kilowatts.

Such power levels make the laser attractive for previously unattainable target markets. In tunnel and deep drilling or in mining, high-power lasers could help shatter rock and massively accelerate existing processes. In shipbuilding and plant construction, high average powers enable more efficient and precise drilling, cutting, and joining processes for thick materials and high-strength steels. High-power lasers are also needed to process and functionalise large metallic, glass, and ceramic surfaces in parallel using multi-beam methods or optical stamps. Stollenwerk is convinced that “these methods will trigger a surge in efficiency in laser material processing.” Laser processes could then also be used to maintain rail networks or pipelines.

“These processes will deliver a major efficiency boost in laser material processing,” Stollenwerk continued.

At the same time, laser-based technologies could also be utilised for maintaining rail networks and pipelines. For Hagen Zimmer, laser technology CEO at Trumpf SE + Co. KG, a leading global high-tech company, this transition represents more than just incremental progress.

He, instead, considers the growing laser adoption as a critical strategic moment. “Many things that were previously deemed unfeasible are now becoming reality,” Zimmer explained.

The shift is also fuelled by declining costs as lasers become more accessible. Industrial lasers exceeding 50 kilowatts (kW) are already in use, with those above one hundred kilowatts now within reach. Zimmer believes this pushes the industry toward a strategic inflection point. According to him, the shift could unlock new photonics markets worth hundreds of billions of euros.

“When laser technology moves into new dimensions – drilling thousands of holes in a single shot, functionalising square metres of surfaces per minute, or precisely cutting and joining centimetre-thick steel – it will also open up entirely new markets,” Stollenwerk added.

Breaking barriers

High-energy laser systems, such as diode-pumped solid-state lasers (DPPS), have emerged as critical tools for future fusion power plants. The ability to deliver high pulse energy with precision makes the ideal for driving fusion reactions, as well as generating secondary radiation sources like extreme ultraviolet (EUV) and X-rays.

However, increasing laser power alone isn’t enough. Better process control is just as important. Researchers are now combining high-power lasers with AI-assisted strategies, optical neural networks, and precision beam shaping.

These systems can tailor laser profiles into complex three-dimensional patterns, and enable techniques like optical stamping, where entire surfaces are processed in a single shot instead of line-by-line scanning.

To read the full release visit:

<https://www.ilt.fraunhofer.de/en/press/press-releases/2026/3-26-high-power-lasers-at-ak126.html>

Laser welding process improves automotive body manufacturing

Gestamp and Trumpf develop industrial laser welding technology for coated high-strength steels, enabling faster joining and improved quality in automotive structural components.

Spanish multinational automotive supplier Gestamp, in cooperation with Trumpf, has developed an innovative laser welding process suitable for industrial use, setting new standards in speed, efficiency, and quality in joining structural body components.

The demands placed on modern vehicles are increasing. Components need to be lighter, production and investment costs more efficient. At the same time, production processes are becoming increasingly complex, especially in car body construction. Spanish multinational automotive component company Gestamp has taken up this challenge.

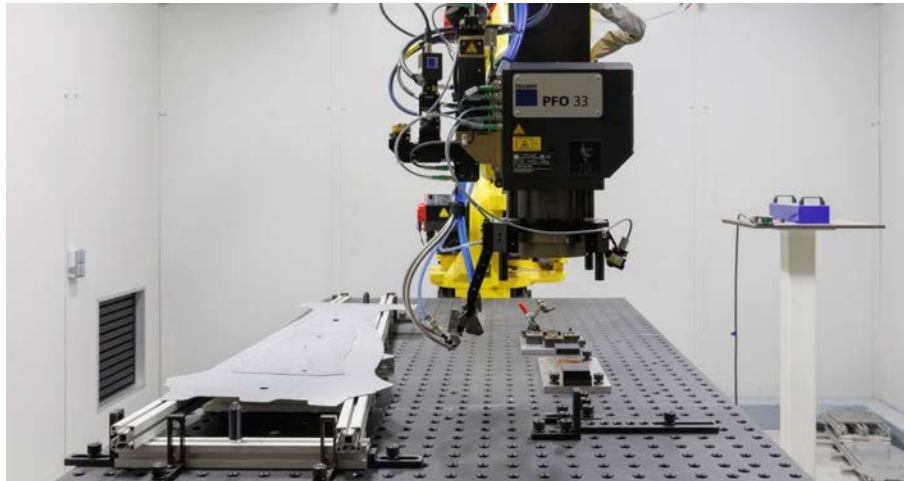
Thanks to Trumpf technology, Gestamp has developed an innovative, industrial-grade laser welding process that addresses the very areas where conventional methods reach their limits: The fast and flexible joining of large, coated structural components.

“We rely on large structural components instead of many individual components in order to simplify industrial processes. This reduces complexity in final assembly, which implies more cost-efficiency,” said Miguel Ángel Ferrández, Material joining and R&D Tokyo & Bilbao director at Gestamp.

Why large structural components?

In automotive production, the fewer components a vehicle needs, the more efficiently it can be manufactured and assembled. Gestamp is pursuing this strategy with its Ges-Gigastamping® family – large-format structural components using hot forming from high-strength steels. These parts offer enormous advantages in terms of weight, stability, and crash safety, but place high demands on the joining process.

“The challenge starts with the material. We process



Gestamp and Trumpf develop industrial laser welding technology for coated high-strength steels, enabling faster joining and improved quality in automotive structural components

press-hardened steels with an aluminium-silicon coating (AlSi). This protects the component from corrosion but makes welding rather difficult. It was therefore necessary to replace traditional welding processes with an industrial laser welding process that offers greater speed and flexibility,” explained Ferrández.

Multi-focus makes the difference

The challenge in laser welding coated components is that the two different materials do not bond homogeneously. During the melting process, intermetallic phases and alpha ferrite form, which are structural components that negatively affect the seam quality and the resulting structural mechanical properties of the component.

“The key to the solution lies in laser beam shaping – in Gestamp’s case, in the multi-focus optics option. With the multi-focus option, the laser beam is split into four individual beams, each with the same energy input. Each beam has

a core beam and a ring beam. The latter “calms” the melt pool with its additional energy and prevents spatter formation. The four individual beams mix the AlSi coating in a controlled and homogeneous manner in the melt pool, thus preventing the formation of intermetallic phases and alpha ferrite. The result: A stable seam with high strength and tensile hardness. You can compare it to stirring dough. The more stirrers mix the dough, the better it is at breaking up any lumps,” explains Marc Hummel, Global Business Development Manager Mobility at Trumpf.

For more information contact Retecon Machine Tools on TEL: 011 976 8600 or visit www.retecon.co.za



In automotive production, the fewer components a vehicle needs, the more efficiently it can be manufactured and assembled

Another step to intelligent coolant control

A follow up project by the Institute of Production Engineering and Machine Tools at Leibniz University Hannover (IFW) together with Open Mind Technologies AG has taken the idea of energy savings through demand-based coolant supply one significant step further. In collaboration with Kennametal Inc. and DMG MORI, the partners have developed a method that derives the required coolant flow directly from the material removal rate calculated in CAM planning and integrates this information into the NC code. The adaptive coolant supply programmed with hyperMILL® has achieved energy savings of approximately 82 per cent.

The study focused on developing a cycle time and tool specific method for planning coolant delivery directly in the CAM system. This includes the output of an adapted NC code for milling and drilling operations. This approach has the potential to build upon the existing adaptive coolant supply technology from DMG MORI. The project covered coolant demand modelling, integration into the hyperMILL® CAM software, and validation on the DMG MORI DMU 40 eVo linear machining center.

Modelling

The coolant demand model was based on the observation that rising material removal rates typically lead to higher levels of heat and chip generation, both of which must be removed from the contact zone. This simplified assumption provides a robust and tool specific method for calculating coolant demand using standard CAM data. Reference data for each tool's maximum material removal rate was provided by Kennametal. Pressure, flow rate, and electrical power consumption of the coolant pump were recorded, and characteristic curves were created to reflect the hydraulic conditions for each tool.

Programming

To implement the variable coolant flow along the toolpath

within the CAM environment, hyperMILL®'s Python API was used. During stock removal simulation, the system analyses the cutting parameters for each machining line and combines them with tool specific metadata to calculate the material removal rate.

The IFW module then determines the corresponding coolant flow. A smoothing routine is applied before extending the NC data with the commands for flow control, which helps prevent abrupt changes.

Verification

For validation, a demonstrator part made of 11SMn30+C free cutting steel was machined on a DMG MORI DMU 40 eVo linear with milling, drilling, tapping, and broaching all applied. Instead of controlling the coolant flow line by line, the tests used an average flow per machining step, which proved to be effective. The pump's energy consumption was recorded through the frequency converter. Compared with a conventional machining process, the adaptive method achieved energy savings of around 82 per cent while maintaining the same quality of results.

The CAM based solution also offers high flexibility. Users can deactivate the adaptive mode whenever the mechanical flushing effect of the coolant is required, for example during drilling. The methodology will now be further developed and researched, with the goal of making it available for additional tool types, machining processes, and materials.

The results of the study were published by Prof. Dr. Berend Denkena, Dr. Marc André Dittrich, Dr. Klaas Maximilian Heide, Dr. Alexander Krödel Worbes, Andreas Lieber, and Talash Malek (M. Sc.). The study was also published by Martin Winkler in issue 09/2025 of the German VDI-Z journal under the title "Coolant Demand Planning Directly from the CAM System".

For further details contact Hi-Tech Machine Tools on TEL: 011 608 0088 or visit www.hitech.co.za



Iscar addresses rising carbide prices by introducing the company's Maxout strategy aimed at higher productivity and improved machining economics

As cost pressure increases, manufacturers are being challenged not only to manage higher prices, but also to rethink how cutting tools are designed, used, and replaced.



Iscar, a member of the IMC Group, is addressing the rising carbide prices – specifically for raw materials like tungsten – by focusing on innovative tooling, high-efficiency machining and intelligent cutting solutions. As a leading supplier of precision carbide metalworking tools, the company manages these cost pressures through a strategy of increased productivity for its customers.

“Iscar is addressing this challenge head-on with its Maxout strategy, a calculated approach designed to help manufacturers achieve minimum cost and maximum output. The message is simple: When you choose Iscar, Maxout becomes Maxvalue: Higher productivity and improved machining economics,” a company statement says.

“For many shops that pressure shows up quickly right on the bottom line. When raw material costs rise, the gap between a ‘good enough’ machining setup and a truly optimised one becomes measurable in dollars per part, spindle uptime, and how often tools are being changed.

In today’s environment, productivity and tooling strategies aren’t just technical decisions they’re margin protection.”

The company says its Maxout strategy provides productive, stable machining with improved tool economy for turning, milling, holmaking, parting, and grooving.

“Iscar’s approach centres on stable, repeatable machining performance that supports aggressive cutting data while protecting consistency and tool life. The goal is to maintain throughput even when input costs are moving in the wrong direction, using tooling solutions that balance performance with economics.”

More components

“High-performance turning geometries combined with rigid, stable setups help shops increase feeds and speeds without sacrificing process stability. The payoff shows up in shorter cycle times, improved chip control, and more parts out the door per shift.” ▶



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As a global leader in optical technology, YOFC owns robust R&D strength and core advantages in laser source components.

Following the strategic acquisition of PENTA LASER, both brands completed full resource integration. By combining YOFC's upstream optical technology and supply chain resources with PENTA LASER's mature manufacturing experience, Italian laser technology and global production layout, we have established a complete vertical industrial chain, from core laser parts to intelligent complete machines.

Backed by powerful joint R&D and manufacturing capabilities, we provide high-reliable, efficient and cost-effective industrial laser solutions for global clients.

Spend less per cutting edge

The statement continues: "The cost of tooling, specifically solid round endmills and drills, increase significantly when carbide prices rise. Substituting these expensive tools for indexable insert options reduces cost since only the cutting edge is replaced not the entire tool. In many cases, Iscar's indexable options can meet the machining economics of the best round tools reducing cost per cutting edge, improving tool utilisation and reducing disposal requirements for used tools. Iscar solutions help stretch tooling budgets further while maintaining production demands. More parts, less carbide used, less tooling cost."

Repeatable results that protect quality

"Repeatability is critical, especially in long-running

production. Iscar's insert grades and geometries are engineered for reliable, consistent results supporting predictable surface finish and dimensional control while reducing the risk of rework and scrap."

"With the rising cost of inputs in the machining process, rejected parts are not acceptable. Consistency of process is a competitive advantage. Less inputs, less time will realise maximum value."

"When rising material costs squeeze margins Iscar's Maxout strategy is a practical way to maximise machining performance and minimise machine shop inputs which ultimately stops profit erosion," the statement concluded.

For further information, contact Iscar South Africa on TEL: +27 11 997 2700 or visit www.iscar.com ■

Kitamura Machinery powers sustainability with solar

Kitamura Machinery is taking significant steps towards a sustainable future with its impressive solar installations at its Northern Japan headquarters. As part of its Earth Day celebration, the company highlighted its ongoing efforts to enhance environmental responsibility in the manufacturing sector.

With over 1 000 photovoltaic panels installed, Kitamura is capable of powering key assembly and testing operations through renewable energy. This initiative not only helps to reduce operational energy costs but also significantly cuts more than 150 tons of CO₂ emissions annually.

This development underscores Kitamura's commitment to greater efficiency and sustainability in its industrial operations. By embracing clean energy solutions, Kitamura aims to reduce its environmental footprint while leading by

example in the machining industry.

The company continues to innovate in its quest to balance technological advancement with ecological consciousness. Kitamura's initiative demonstrates a proactive approach to environmental issues, reflecting the broader movement within the manufacturing industry to adopt sustainable practices.

Kitamura Machinery, known for its high-precision machining centers, remains dedicated to delivering cutting-edge solutions while maintaining ecological responsibility. As industries worldwide seek sustainable options, Kitamura's solar power strategy represents a forward-thinking model for future industrial developments.

For further details contact WD Hearn Machine Tools on TEL: 021 534 5351 or visit www.wdhearn.co.za ■





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Mitutoyo QM-FIT

A smart vision system for fast, intuitive measurement



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EuroBLECH 2026: 20 to 23 October 2026 at the Hannover Exhibition Grounds in Germany



The 28th edition of EuroBLECH 2026, organised by RX, will take place from 20 to 23 October 2026 at the Hannover Exhibition Grounds in Germany. Held every two years, EuroBLECH is the world's leading exhibition for sheet metal working technology. EuroBLECH 2024 welcomed 1 317 exhibitors and 38 946 trade visitors from 114 countries, occupying a gross exhibition space of 160 000 square metres.

"While the broader market remains challenging, EuroBLECH remains the most important global platform for showcasing sheet metal innovation. With new features launching and continued demand for cutting-edge, sustainable, digitalised and AI-enabled solutions, the event is evolving alongside the industry itself," said Evelyn Warwick, Exhibition Director for EuroBLECH, on behalf of RX.

The event's theme, 'For a Stronger Future – Smart & Sustainable Production', reflects the industry's ongoing transformation as it pursues greater efficiency, flexibility and resilience. From AI-enabled workflows and robotics to laser

innovations and circular manufacturing, the 2026 edition will spotlight the technologies, tools and strategies shaping a stronger, more sustainable future for sheet metal working worldwide. The event is evolving alongside the industry, addressing the demand for cutting-edge, sustainable and digitalised solutions.

New and enhanced features

EuroBLECH 2026 is introducing several new and enhanced features to deepen engagement and support more targeted business opportunities. These include Innovation Zone, Job Shop & Subcontractors Market and Guided Tours.

"Alongside the new additions, popular and valuable features will be returning to enhance the event experience," said RX.

These include the NextGen Technology Stage and EuroBLECH Awards, the upgraded Visitor App and Careers Day. For further details visit www.euroblech.com ■



THE NEW STANDARD IN MEASURING EQUIPMENT



Mastercam partners to Empower Autistic Individuals in Manufacturing

Mastercam has announced a pivotal partnership with The Uniquely Abled Project (UAP) in a bid to bolster the future of manufacturing with both innovation and skilled personnel. This collaboration focuses on creating accessible pathways to employment within the manufacturing sector for individuals with autism.

The Uniquely Abled Project is renowned for its role in facilitating job readiness for people with autism by bridging the gap between education, training, and industry employment. Through this initiative, candidates are prepared for roles in CNC machine operations, an area experiencing a growing demand in the industry.

Mastercam, a leader in manufacturing technology solutions, views this partnership as a further extension of

its dedication to workforce development and educational growth. The company has long been committed to nurturing a more inclusive and robust manufacturing environment, aligning closely with the goals of UAP.

This strategic alliance not only aims to address the skilled labour shortage but also enriches the manufacturing community by integrating diverse talents. The initiative underscores the importance of embracing innovation alongside a diverse workforce to ensure a prosperous future for the sector.

For those interested in exploring the details of this collaboration, further information is available on Mastercam's official channels.

For further details contact Mecad Manufacturing on TEL: 012 645 4300 or visit www.mecadmfg.co.za ■

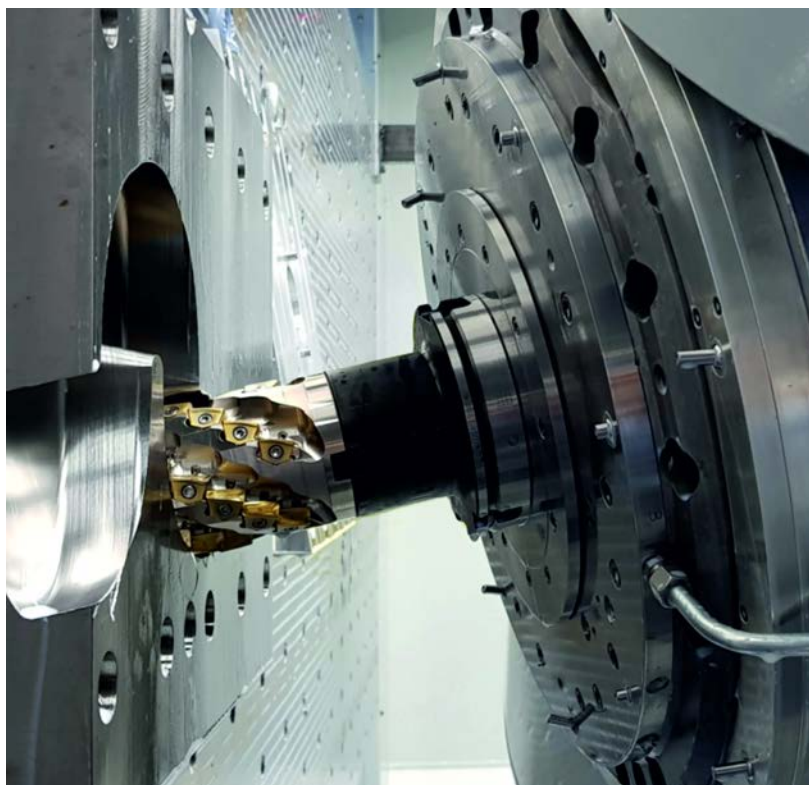
Italian multi-spindle machining center manufacturer Vigel has completed the acquisition of MCM

Vigel has completed the acquisition of MCM, bringing together two established Italian players in advanced machining technologies.

Italian machine engineering company Vigel has acquired MCM. Both companies are recognised as important players in the manufacturing technologies sector. According to Vigel, the acquisition is intended to support the long-term plan of building a strong and diversified organisation focused on advanced machining solutions for the global industry.

Vigel is a company founded in 1947 in Torino and still owned by the founder's family. It was one of the pioneers in the design and manufacture of multi-spindle machining centers and is now a multinational company with factories in Italy (Turin), India, and China, and branches in Europe, the United States, Mexico, India, China, and Korea. In addition to machining centers, Vigel's product range also includes vertical lathes and special machine tools for the automotive industry.

MCM is a company founded in 1978 in Piacenza, specialising in the design and manufacture of horizontal machining centers and flexible production systems that operate through supervision software developed by its own IT division. MCM's mechanical processing technologies are applied to a wide range of industrial sectors, with a focus on aerospace. ■



Hexagon to acquire Waygate Technologies, expanding into non-destructive testing



Hexagon AB announced that it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Waygate Technologies, a leading provider of non-destructive testing solutions, from Baker Hughes. Waygate Technologies serves customers across aerospace, automotive, energy, and industrial manufacturing sectors globally, and brings with it a portfolio of market-leading inspection technologies that integrate naturally with Hexagon's existing precision measurement hardware, CT analysis and visualisation software, and production quality and data management platforms.

The acquisition marks a significant expansion of Hexagon's Manufacturing Intelligence (MI) Business Area into the NDT market – a space Hexagon views as a natural evolution of its core precision measurement capabilities, extending quality assurance from the surface of a component to its interior geometry. Alongside the attractive expansionary market opportunity and the strategic fit, the transaction represents a compelling value creation opportunity, with a clear pathway to materially improve Waygate's margins through strategic actions, manufacturing optimisation, China localisation, and revenue synergies across the combined

customer base.

"This acquisition is a natural and exciting evolution of Hexagon Manufacturing Intelligence's strategy. Waygate Technologies brings world-class inspection technology and deeply loyal customer relationships in markets that are highly complementary to our own. By combining Waygate's NDT expertise with Hexagon's precision measurement portfolio, software capabilities, and global infrastructure, we will create a uniquely integrated offering that helps our customers achieve higher quality, greater efficiency, and improved confidence across the full product lifecycle. We also see a significant opportunity to create value by applying Hexagon's operating model, which is built on driving closeness to customers via accountability and strong performance management, to Waygate's businesses and driving meaningful margin improvement over the medium term. I look forward to welcoming the Waygate team to Hexagon and working together to drive future profitable growth," said Anders Svensson, President and CEO of Hexagon.

For more information contact Retecon Machine Tools on TEL: 011 976 8600 or visit www.retecon.co.za

75 years of workholding technology with Hainbuch

When Wilhelm Hainbuch laid the foundation for his company on March 1, 1951, with a lathe and an idea, no one could have guessed that it would one day become a leading global manufacturer of workholding technology. 75 years later, Hainbuch stands for inventive spirit, down-to-earth attitude, and the determination to do things better than before – shaped by people who not only develop technology, but live it with passion.

The small company received a decisive boost in the 1970s from Gerhard Rall, son-in-law of the company founder and long-standing managing director. With passion, inventive spirit, and a firm belief in his own ideas, he developed the Spanntop chuck in 1977 – an innovation that caught on worldwide and transformed Hainbuch from a small business to a leading manufacturer of workholding technology.



While Hainbuch has been known for decades primarily for high-precision manual workholding technology, its focus has consistently expanded in recent years. Today, workholding technology is understood as an integral part of automated manufacturing processes – from individual clamping devices to solutions for the automated change-over of complete clamping devices to entire automation cells.

“With our AC (automated change) portfolio and intelligent IQ clamping devices, we offer the basis for the consistent automation of clamping, change-over, and measuring processes,” explains Sylvia Rall, owner and CEO. “This is a decisive step towards the economical production of small batch sizes and truly autonomous production.”

Despite its international presence with around 800 employees worldwide, Hainbuch remains a family business – now in its third generation of owner management. ■

Sandvik acquires majority stake in diamond tools manufacturer K&Y Diamond

Sandvik has acquired 80% of the Canada-based K&Y Diamond, a leading manufacturer of monocrystalline diamond tools for ultra-precision applications, with a strong position in the optics segment.

K&Y Diamond will be operated under Sandvik Coromant, a division within the Machining business segment. Both parties have agreed not to disclose the purchase price.

K&Y Diamond’s tools are primarily used in the manufacturing of spectacle lenses, contact lenses, optical lenses and optronic components, while also used in other segments with demands for super-finishing, such as aerospace and medical.

“The acquisition of K&Y Diamond brings advanced technology and strong engineering capabilities and fits very well with our strategy to strengthen our position within the attractive growth area

of micro-precision tools,” says Stefan Widing, president and CEO of Sandvik.

The company, founded in 1976, is headquartered in Montreal, Canada and has 45 employees. In 2025, K&Y Diamond generated revenues of around SEK 120 million, with a strong EBITA margin. The impact on Sandvik’s EBITA margin and earnings per share will be slightly accretive.

Contact Sandvik Coromant on TEL: 010 500 2295 or visit www.sandvik.coromant.com for further details. ■





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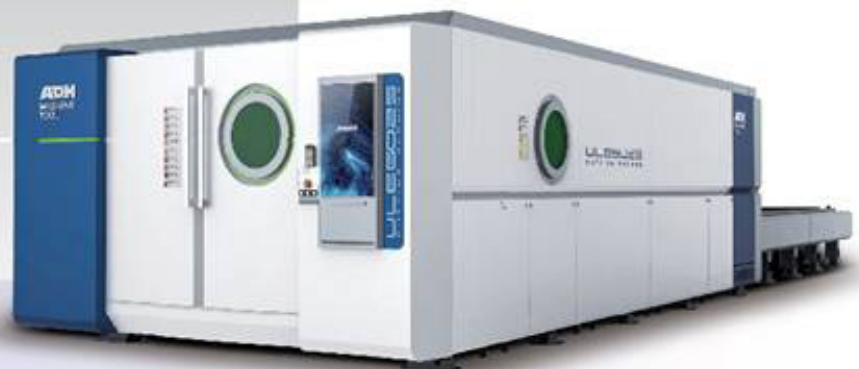
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FIBER LASER CUTTING MACHINE

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Accelerating operational readiness with laser powder-bed fusion additive manufacturing

Lockheed Martin grows metal 3D printing production.

In Lockheed Martin's commitment to drive supply chain resilience and accelerate design to flight timelines, the company has advanced the laser powder-bed fusion additive manufacturing process to enable faster operational readiness of next-generation aircraft, hypersonic systems and electric propulsion platforms.

Why it matters

High performance electronics and propulsion systems used in aerospace and defence manufacturing generate significant heat and require thermal management systems to maintain stability and regulate temperature levels. Thermal management system components rely on traditional methods of casting, forging and brazing that require metal fabrication and machining to meet aerospace-grade tolerances and reliability requirements. These traditional processes create a major supply chain choke point due to longer raw-material lead times and alloy shortages, surging aftermarket demand for parts and disruptions due to geopolitical events.

Laser powder-bed fusion additive manufacturing uses design-driven digital processes that enable enhanced design opportunities by building parts layer-by-layer using metal powder without expensive and time-intensive tooling. Components can be made in smaller quantities with precision, driving shorter development cycles and accelerated time-to-market deliveries.

Strategic perspectives

By maturing laser powder-bed fusion additive processes in collaboration with key industry partners, we're advancing toward qualification and production transition of high performance, thin-walled components that meet the requirements of aerospace, defence and high energy systems.

"Combining our laser powder-bed fusion expertise with the specialised capabilities of our partners – Sintavia, EOS, Nikon SLM, and nTop – has created an end-to-end ecosystem that accelerates design to flight timelines without compromising reliability,"

said David Tatro, vice president, Operations Transformation at Lockheed Martin. "This collaborative approach positions us to meet the escalating thermal management demands of next generation aircraft, hypersonic systems and electric propulsion platforms ensuring they meet rigorous certification standards and achieve operational readiness."

"nTop enables highly complex parametric models that optimise for performance and manufacturability, which reduces the time to make decisions and iterate from months to minutes," said Christopher Yakacki Ph.D., principal of Research Engineering, AMT, Lockheed Martin.

With nTop, Lockheed Martin's use of laser powder-bed fusion's generative design and optimisation solutions deliver a 15-20 per cent reduction in overall system weight while boosting heat dissipation efficiency by 10-15 per cent. The results include longer mission endurance, lower lifecycle costs and superior thermal performance for aerospace, defence and high-performance industrial applications.

In close collaboration with EOS and Sintavia, Lockheed Martin has co-developed a new laser powder-bed fusion processing window and bespoke tool path strategies that push the limits of feature resolution and producibility. Process controlled tool paths, coupled with real-time melt pool monitoring, have enabled tighter assembly tolerances and enhanced build efficiency. ■



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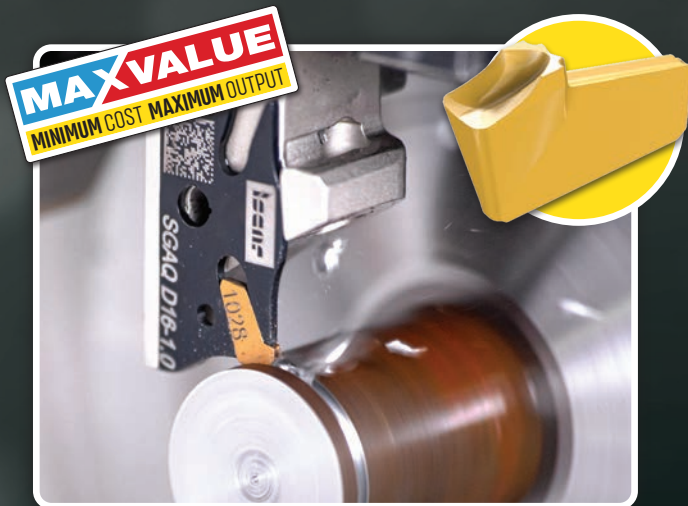
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This robust 2 cutting edges insert, tangentially clamped for **superior stability**, delivers longer tool life and allows narrow cutting widths for maximum raw material savings.



SLIMGRIP NARROW INSERTS

Maximize efficiency and minimize raw material waste with narrow-cut inserts designed for parting and slitting.

Renault to deploy 350 humanoid robots in industrial automation push



At its recent 'futuREady' strategy event, Renault Group announced plans to deploy 350 humanoid robots developed with Wandercraft across its manufacturing facilities within the next 18 months. The move represents one of the most ambitious large-scale implementations of humanoid robotics in automotive production and signals a decisive shift from experimentation to industrial deployment.

Unlike many humanoid robotics programmes that remain confined to controlled demonstrations, Renault's Calvin humanoid is already operating on the factory floor. At the company's Douai plant in France, the robot is performing tyre-handling operations, a physically demanding task long associated with ergonomic strain for human workers. This early deployment highlights a pragmatic approach, focusing on real-world applications where humanoid form factors can deliver immediate value rather than pursuing general-purpose capability.

The Calvin platform, particularly the Calvin-40 variant, has been engineered to function within existing production environments. Its ability to handle heavy components, navigate autonomously, and operate continuously within human-centric workflows reflects a design philosophy centred on practical industrial use. Rather than attempting to replicate the full dexterity of human labour, the system targets specific, repeatable processes where flexibility and mobility offer clear advantages over fixed automation.

Renault's plan to scale to 350 units within a relatively short timeframe marks a significant escalation. The deployment is expected to support broader operational goals, including reductions in production costs and improvements in manufacturing efficiency. By introducing humanoid systems into established production lines, the company is targeting so-called 'brownfield' applications – tasks that are repetitive, physically demanding, or difficult to automate using conventional robotic cells. In this context, humanoid

robots are not replacing existing automation but augmenting it, adding a layer of adaptability to environments that were not originally designed for robotics.

At the same time, the deployment reflects a broader convergence between artificial intelligence, robotics, and the digital thread. The Calvin robots rely on AI-driven perception and navigation, enabling them to function in less structured environments than traditional industrial robots. This capability aligns closely with the ongoing evolution of connected manufacturing systems, where digital twins, in-line sensing, and closed-loop quality control are becoming increasingly central. Within such environments, humanoid robots may serve not only as labour assets but also as mobile data nodes, contributing to the continuous flow of information across the production ecosystem.

The introduction of humanoid systems also points to a gradual shift in automation strategy. Automotive manufacturing has historically depended on fixed robotic installations, highly structured workflows, and dedicated tooling. By contrast, humanoid robots introduce a degree of flexibility that could simplify reconfiguration and reduce the cost and complexity of integrating automation into existing plants. For metrology, this may accelerate the need for more adaptable inspection solutions capable of operating effectively in dynamic, less predictable environments.

Renault's initiative builds on its 2025 partnership with Wandercraft, which included a minority investment and a joint development programme for the Calvin humanoid family. Wandercraft's background in self-balancing robotic systems, originally developed for medical exoskeletons, underpins the stability and mobility of the Calvin platform. This technological foundation enables the robots to operate safely and effectively in spaces designed for human workers, a key requirement for large-scale deployment. ■



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Nidec opens new Global Technical Centre

Nidec Machine Tool America, A Nidec Group company, has announced the official grand opening of Nidec Corporation's new Technical Centre in Ritto City, Shiga Prefecture, Japan. Established as a collaborative innovation hub, the centre brings together the technologies and expertise of the Nidec Machine Tool Business Unit under the "One Nidec" policy.

The facility serves as the flagship venue for demonstrating Nidec's comprehensive machine tool line-up and developing integrated manufacturing solutions. Following a successful opening ceremony, the centre is now fully operational and ready to serve as a global resource for Nidec Machine Tool America customers.

Located on the grounds of Nidec Machine Tool Corporation in Ritto City, the Technical Centre houses an extensive line-up from across the Nidec Group. These include lathes, gear machines, machining centers – horizontal, vertical and 5-axis, large machines and metal 3D printers.

This Technical Centre is a comprehensive facility featuring an extensive line up of 30 machine tools and related technologies from the four companies. Beyond simply showcasing state-of-the-art machinery, the centre is positioned as a "Co-creation Hub" dedicated to solving customer challenges. Its services



include machining verification using actual equipment, support for mass production startups, process optimisation, and human resource development, all aimed at delivering optimal solutions for the future of manufacturing.

Nidec Machine Tool Corporation comprises Nidec Machine Tool, Nidec OKK, Takisawa and PAMA S.p.A. ■

Europe's car sales for first quarter reveal some interesting figures

During the first quarter of 2026, and in March 2026, the Volkswagen Group was again the largest car producer in Europe (European Union, EFTA, and UK), followed by Stellantis and Renault. Despite weaker sales, VW remained the top-selling brand in Europe, while strong sales moved Skoda into the second place for the first time ever. The Renault Clio was the best-selling car model in Europe during 2026 Q1 while the Tesla Model Y was Europe's favourite car model in March 2026. The European new car market expanded by 4.1% to 3 521 110 cars in the first quarter of 2026, with all-electric car sales taking a record 20.6% market share.

Škoda Auto in second place

Škoda Auto has recorded a strong start to 2026, emerging

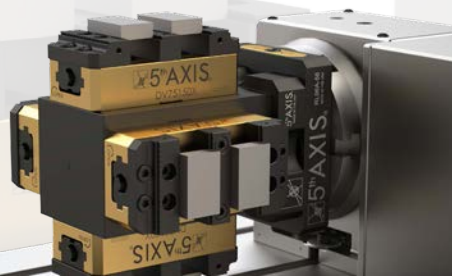


as Europe's second best-selling car brand during the first quarter, supported by robust demand, expanding electric vehicle adoption and solid financial performance. Between January and March 2026, the company delivered 271 900 vehicles worldwide, reflecting a 14 per cent year-on-year increase. In Europe, deliveries rose 17.1 per cent to 222 500 vehicles, significantly outpacing overall market growth. March marked the highest monthly delivery volume in the company's history in the region, with over 90 000 vehicles delivered.

The strong performance was driven in part by growing demand for electric vehicles. Models such as the Elroq and Enyaq featured prominently among Europe's top-selling battery electric vehicles, contributing to a near doubling of global BEV deliveries. Electrified vehicles accounted for more than a quarter of total deliveries in Europe during the quarter, underscoring the company's progress in its transition towards sustainable mobility.

The company also reported growth in key international markets. In India, deliveries increased to 17 400 vehicles, while North African markets such as Morocco and Egypt recorded strong gains.

Škoda Auto is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Volkswagen Group. The Czech automaker joined the Volkswagen family in 1991. ■



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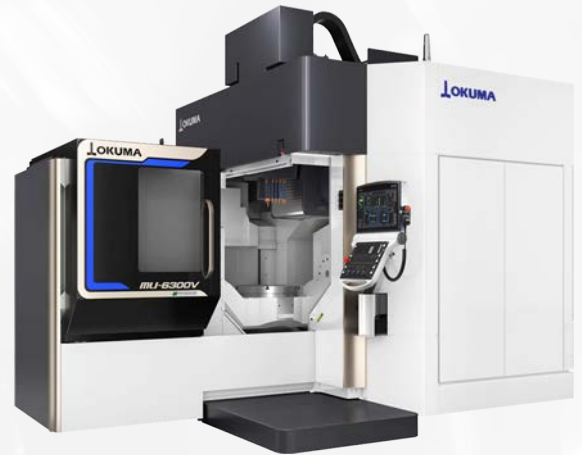
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Mitutoyo brings lab-level accuracy to the shop floor with temperature-compensated Crysta-Apex V Plus CMM

Mitutoyo's Crysta-Apex V Plus Series CNC coordinate measuring machine (CMM) is designed to deliver high-precision measurement directly on the shop floor without the need for a controlled inspection environment. Built as an evolution of the earlier V500, V700, and V900 models, the new series addresses one of the biggest challenges in production metrology – maintaining accuracy under fluctuating ambient conditions.

At the heart of the Crysta-Apex V Plus is its advanced temperature compensation technology, which enables consistent and reliable measurement even in variable shopfloor environments. Unlike traditional CMMs that require strictly controlled temperatures, this system operates effectively within an expanded guaranteed accuracy range of 15°C to 30°C. This capability allows manufacturers to move inspection processes closer to machining operations, improving efficiency and reducing delays associated with off-line quality checks.

The system's real-time temperature compensation continuously monitors environmental conditions and automatically adjusts measurement parameters to maintain accuracy. In addition, it incorporates temperature compensation for reference point setting, ensuring calibration stability and repeatability even as ambient conditions change. These features are critical for maintaining precision in modern manufacturing environments where temperature fluctuations are common.

Beyond accuracy, the Crysta-Apex V Plus Series is designed with sustainability and operational efficiency in mind. An integrated air reduction function minimises energy consumption by stopping air supply during standby periods, helping reduce both operational costs and environmental impact. This aligns with the growing focus on energy-efficient manufacturing solutions.

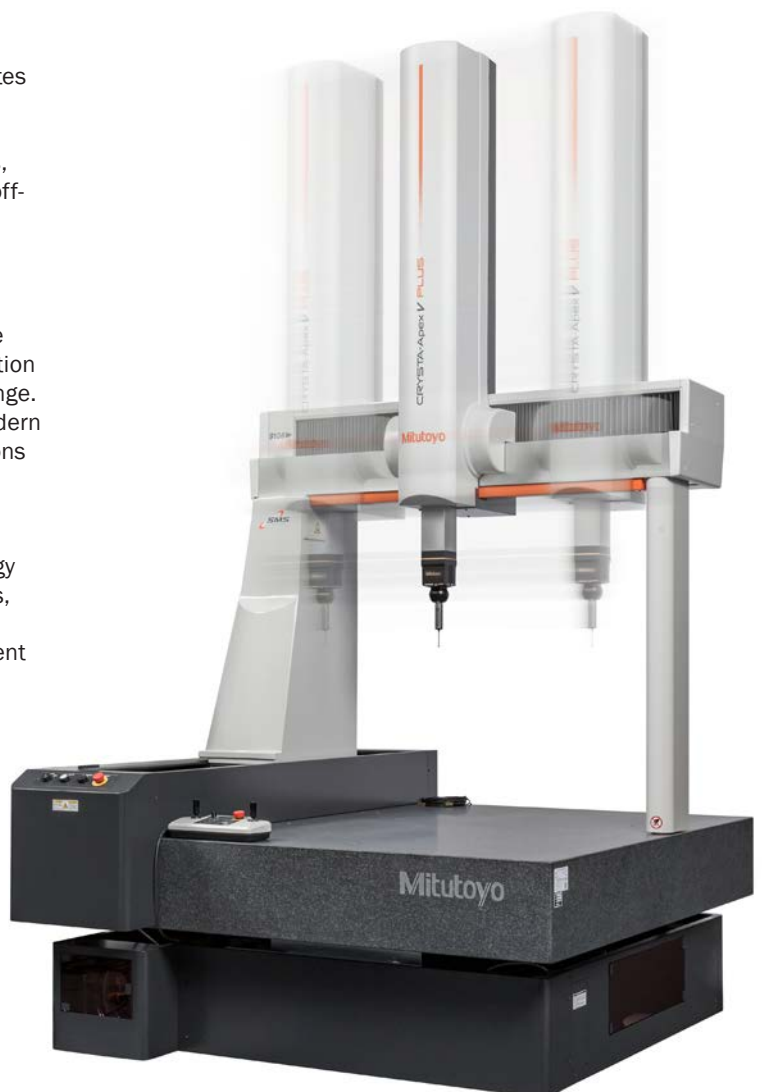
Another key advantage of the system is its near-line measurement capability. By enabling inspection to take place closer to production, manufacturers can achieve faster feedback loops, quickly identify deviations, and make real-time process adjustments. This leads to improved workflow efficiency, reduced scrap rates, and enhanced overall productivity.

The Crysta-Apex V Plus effectively bridges the gap between laboratory-grade precision and shop floor practicality. It allows manufacturers to maintain stringent quality standards without the constraints of a dedicated inspection room, making it particularly valuable for high-mix, high-precision production environments.

With its combination of advanced temperature

compensation, energy-efficient design, and flexible deployment, the Crysta-Apex V Plus Series reflects Mitutoyo's commitment to supporting modern manufacturing needs. It provides a robust solution for companies looking to enhance quality control, streamline operations, and adopt more sustainable production practices while maintaining the highest levels of measurement accuracy.

Contact RGC Engineering on TEL: 011 887 0800 or alternatively visit www.rgcengineering.co.za for more details. ■



Introducing Sandvik Coromant's CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350

Cutting tool specialist Sandvik Coromant has announced the launch of CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350 with the new diamond-coated grade O2AD, setting a new performance benchmark for milling operations in abrasive composite materials. Engineered for ISO 0 workpiece materials, this upgraded tool delivers significant gains in productivity, tool life and process security.

Composite machining has long presented challenges such as delamination, uncut fibres, vibration and rapid tool wear. CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350 directly addresses these issues through its patented dual-cutting mechanism, which provides a controlled, scissor-like cutting action for stable and predictable machining.

The new O2AD grade is engineered to withstand the abrasiveness of composite materials. The strong adhesion between the CVD diamond coating and the tailored substrate ensures best-in-class performance and consistency. Field tests show up to +100% longer tool life compared to the previous O12M grade.

"CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350 is designed to solve the most common challenges in composite machining, including rapid wear and unpredictable performance caused by abrasive and heat-sensitive materials. Component quality is critical, and



issues like delamination and uncut fibres can compromise the integrity and quality," says Liam Haglington, Product Manager for solid carbide end milling tools at Sandvik Coromant.

CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350 supports a wide range of demanding composite applications, including slotting, ramping and edging. Its large flute volume enables efficient chip evacuation and high material removal rates, while its low vibration cutting behaviour contributes to a more comfortable sound environment on the shop floor.

Aerospace manufacturers producing fuselage structures, wings, stabilisers, spars, ribs and frames can expect substantial improvements in both part quality and productivity. The tool also offers clear performance benefits for industries such as automotive, defence, space and shipping.

"One of the most consistent pieces of feedback we receive about this tool is that it just works, no matter the machining conditions, workpiece holding, or tool holding. If you're looking for safe, consistent, and high-performance composite machining, CoroMill® Plura composite 2P350 delivers at every level," said Haglington.

Contact Sandvik Coromant on TEL: 010 500 2295 or visit www.sandvik.coromant.com for further details.

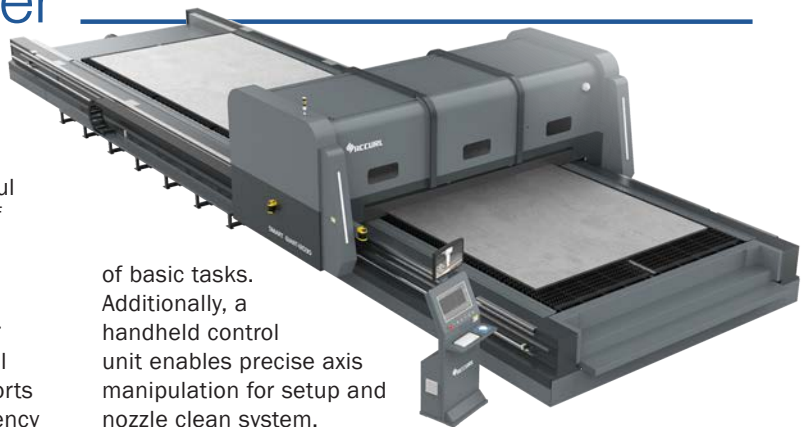
Accurl launches Smart Eco large-format fiber laser

With the modern trend in fiber laser cutting focussing on larger format machines with a large bed size and high kilowatt power, Accurl have launched the Smart Eco large-format fiber laser, a powerful fiber laser cutting machine designed to meet the needs of modern fabricators.

The Smart Eco fiber laser cutting machine provides enhanced output, unmatched stability, and expanded cutting capabilities – powered from 6kW up to 60kW – for ultra-precise cuts, including bevels up to 45° with minimal operator intervention. Its innovative modular design supports up to 26-metre processing areas for seamless, high-efficiency autonomous plate processing, perfect for large-scale projects.

With a modular table, the Smart Eco allows you to process ultra-large sheets without constant flipping or reloading. This modular design allows the table to be expanded up to 41 metres, thus saving on logistical costs.

From shipyards to steel structures and heavy equipment the Smart Eco prioritises operational accessibility by featuring an enclosed gantry for enhanced safety. Operators benefit from dual touch panels for seamless control access, a detachable front panel in the cutting zone for maintenance and parts management, and a side door for swift execution



of basic tasks. Additionally, a handheld control unit enables precise axis manipulation for setup and nozzle clean system.

The Smart Eco is built in a modern 65 000m² factory that incorporates constant temperature and constant humidity, is fully automated and has AI-driven production that runs 24/7.

Headquartered in Ma'anshan, Anhui, China Accurl was founded in 2014 and is now a global leader in the sheet metal machinery industry delivering customised automated cutting, welding, and bending systems.

Contact Francesco Tallarico of Talmac Machine Tools on 072 265 1323 or visit www.talmac.co.za for more information. ■

Trumpf's easy-to-use press brake – the TruBend 1000

Trumpf has introduced a press brake for companies entering the metal bending market. Featuring the new Right Angle (RA) control system, the TruBend 1000 is easy to programme. Operation is similarly straightforward due to the user-friendly interface. The TruBend 1000 is available with press forces ranging from 60 to 320 tons and bending edges from 2m to 4m. It can be used to produce a broad spectrum of parts.

Like all entry-level machines from Trumpf, the TruBend 1000 is precisely tailored to the needs of companies looking to break into metal bending. The machines are every bit as robust and reliable as Trumpf's high-end models, but at a much lower price tag. Trumpf can now provide even more solutions to help companies grow and manufacture competitively.

TruBend 1000 Series customers benefit from the latest digital technology and Trumpf services. If any questions or issues arise, Trumpf technicians can connect with the machine online and provide customers with remote support. The TruBend 1000 has features designed to meet the needs of companies getting started in metal bending. The press brake comes with the Trumpf tooling clamp and is compatible with Trumpf bending tools. In addition, users have access to a demo version of Trumpf's offline programming software TecZone Bend. This means the machine can be programmed from the office while in full operation to increase productivity even more.

The TruBend 1000 is suitable for all companies that manufacture simple and semi-complex parts in small to medium batch sizes. This model comes with the Trumpf tool system and is suitable for small batch sizes, as tool changes



can be done quickly. The press brake is suited for smaller companies or contract manufacturers operating in single shifts.

The TruBend 1000 has features designed to meet the needs of companies starting up in the metal-bending market. The Classic model, for example, is equipped with the clamping system widely used in this customer segment. This means that customers can readily use any bending tools they may already have. The Comfort model comes with the proven Trumpf clamp and is therefore compatible with Trumpf bending tools. In addition, users have access to a demo version of Trumpf's offline programming software TecZone Bend. This means the machine can be programmed from the office while in full operation, thereby increasing productivity even more.

For more information Contact Retecon on TEL: 011 976 8600 or visit www.retecon.co.za

Kennametal expands GOMill PRO range with new features

Kennametal has announced an expansion of its GOMill PRO product line, introducing new diameters and enhanced end face styles. The GOMill PRO end mills are engineered for optimal performance in the machining of steels, stainless steels, and cast iron.

The enhancements to the GOMill PRO include features designed to improve tool life and cutting efficiency. An



asymmetric divided flute enhances vibration control, leading to improved tool longevity and smoother cuts. The new design also incorporates a variable helix angle for added stability and vibration management.

To address the challenges of chip evacuation and bolster tool strength, the GOMill PRO end mills are equipped with a tapered core design. This ensures efficient chip removal and supports the structural integrity of the tool during intensive cutting processes. Additionally, a multilayer TiN/TiAlN coating is applied to the end mills, allowing high-performance results in medium to high cutting conditions.

The new GOMill PRO also features a special relief design, enhancing edge strength and maintaining flexibility across different workpiece materials. These advances are aimed at meeting the demands of industrial users looking for reliable and efficient cutting solutions that do not compromise on quality.

Kennametal continues its commitment to innovation in tooling technology, building upon its reputation in the manufacturing industry. The company's focus on developing products such as the GOMill PRO highlights its dedication to supporting modern machining needs.

Contact Kennametal South Africa on TEL: 011 748 9300 or visit www.kennametal.com for more information

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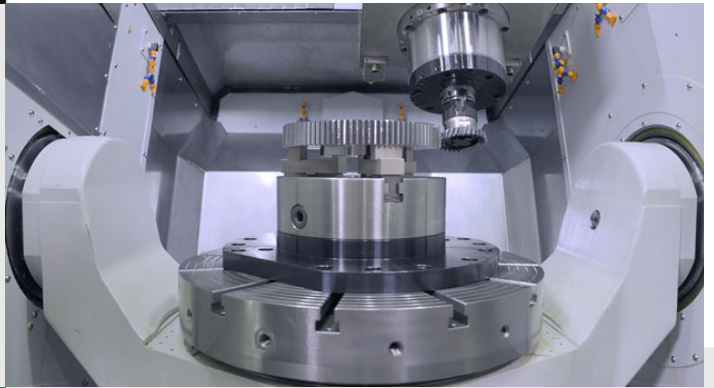


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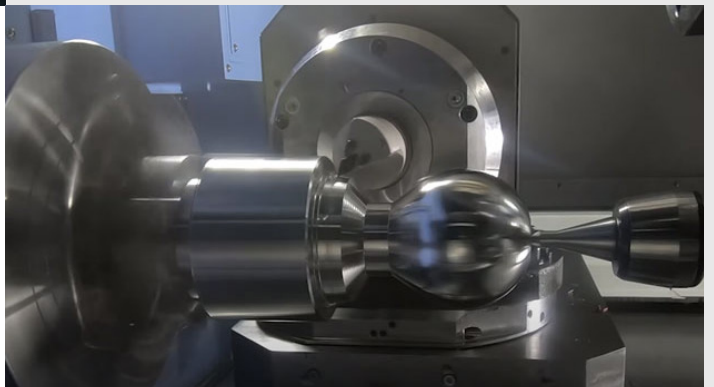


The ability to machine inclined surfaces on turn-mill machines

A solution that machines sloped surfaces by converting the machining coordinate system of TC equipment equipped with a milling function.

Free Turn Machining

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New grooving system from Gühring: System 208

With the new System 208, Gühring is launching a grooving system that has been specially developed for sliding headstock lathes. Its special geometry, high interchangeability and proven service life advantages specifically meet the requirements for machining complex micro-turned parts.

Compact design for confined spaces

Sliding headstock lathes often operate in extremely confined spaces. This is exactly where System 208 comes in. The rhombic, ground indexable insert with two cutting edges is designed so that it can be used precisely even in small machines with bar feeders. With a maximum grooving depth of 8mm, the system covers common machining operations from parting off to grooving and longitudinal turning.

For the user, this means a tool that covers a wide range of applications in a compact form without compromising on stability or accuracy. In field trials, the tools used in the 208 system showed increased tool life of up to 30 per cent compared to the competition. In addition to longer tool life, users benefited from shorter cycle times and more stable processes. For customers, this means fewer tool changes, lower part costs and stable series production.

High process reliability thanks to precise interface

A central feature of the System 208 is its high-precision interface with changeover accuracy of ± 0.015 mm. This precision ensures that the cutting edges are positioned exactly after each insert change. In practice, this reduces set-up times and minimises scrap.

The newly developed clamping screw with double-sided Torx-Plus enables quick changes directly in the machine. This saves time during the ongoing process and makes handling easier for the operator.

Focus on customer benefits

The System 208 offers advantages for various industries including the medical sector, electronics and robotics and connector technology where reliable machining of demanding materials is prerequisite.

In all these industries, the System 208 ensures higher machine availability, longer running times per tool and a reduction in the total cost per component.

Contact Gühring South Africa on TEL: 041 372 2047/46/43/38 or visit www.guhring.co.za for further details. ■



Hurco's expanded tool capacity enhances automation capability

Hurco's introduction of a 60-station tool-changer for the VMX42SRTi aligns with the company's MACH 2026 theme, "Smarter CNC for Smarter Shops," and reflects a broader engineering strategy to increase tool capacity to support higher levels of unattended machining and integrated automation.

The new configuration extends the automation-readiness of one of Hurco's most widely deployed 5-axis machining platforms.

While the standard 40-station carousel meets the requirements of many general 5-axis applications, more complex geometries frequently demand 20 or more tools for a single setup. When automation is introduced, particularly robot loading for extended unattended shifts, additional stations are required for sister tooling to complete multiple queued jobs. The 60-tool-pocket option addresses these

constraints, enabling longer continuous operation without manual intervention.

The SRTi machining center series employs a torque-motor, direct-drive configuration for both the B-axis (spindle swivel) and C-axis (rotary table). This architecture eliminates the mechanical complexity and inertia associated with traditional trunnion systems. As the workpiece rotates on a horizontal, 600mm rotary table, the machine only needs to support vertical loading. This improves dynamic response and allows the machine to accommodate heavier and larger components. The limiting factor becomes the internal working volume rather than the rotary mechanism.

A key engineering advantage of the SRTi configuration is its dual-mode capability. When simultaneous 5-axis machining is not required, the machine functions as a full-capacity, 3-axis, vertical machining center, utilising the ▶

entire work envelope. This flexibility is particularly valuable in mixed-production environments where machine utilisation must remain high across various job types.

The VMX42SRTi is a high-performance machining center, with a standard specification that reflects this: 12 000rpm,



36.5kW motor-spindle with integrated chiller, 20-bar through-spindle coolant, linear scales in all axes for thermally stable positioning accuracy, spindle coolant ring, full enclosure washdown system and swarf conveyor for continuous chip evacuation.

Certain applications, such as engine porting or specific oil-and-gas machining operations, benefit from an A-axis rotary configuration rather than a C-axis table. For these cases, Hurco offers the VMX42SWi and VMX60SWi models, which utilise a static table and allow integration of a user-selected rotary unit. This modularity enables shops to tailor the kinematics to their process requirements.

The 60-station tool-changer option is not limited to the SRTi series. Hurco has extended the capability to the larger DCX double-column machining centres and to the more compact VMX42Ui and VMX30Ui trunnion-style, 5-axis machines.

The expansion indicates a shift towards higher tool capacities across the product line, driven by the increasing prevalence of automation and multi-operation workflows.

For further details contact TH Machine Tools on TEL: 012 259 1375/0122 or visit www.thmachinetools.co.za or www.hurco.com ■

TaeguTec introduces the next-level high feed milling solution, the Chase Feed SRMT insert

TaeguTec has launched a new 4-corner, single-sided high feed milling solution: The SRMT insert line. This high-performance insert addresses the limitations of conventional designs by delivering a premium level solution for high-feed milling applications.

The Chase Feed SRMT line is redefining what machinists can expect from single-sided, four-corner, high-feed milling inserts. Unlike conventional designs that struggle to fully utilise all edges, the SRMT incorporates an optimised cutting-edge geometry that unlocks the full potential of all four corners with consistent tool life and performance. Its superior chip evacuation dramatically reduces jamming, breakage and surface scratches ensuring stable, trouble-free machining even in demanding conditions. Despite being a high-feed insert, SRMT achieves remarkably smooth surface finishes, making it ideal not only for roughing but also high-efficiency finishing.

The new SRMT inserts are available in I.C. 07, 10, 14 size and come in M, MM, ML and MR chip formers across a variety of grades. The line is offered as standard in 16 to 42mm end mills and 40 to 200mm face mills.

Features of the SRMT insert line include that it is a single-sided 4-corner, high-feed milling insert, with all four corners being usable with consistent tool life and performance. Other features include outstanding

machining performance in stainless steel and other difficult-to-cut materials and superior machined surface finish due to perfect chip evacuation.

Contact TaeguTec SA on TEL: 011 362 1500 or visit www.taegutec.com for more information. ■



Choosing the right Iscar insert geometry for difficult to cut materials



Fig. 1

Machining difficult to cut materials such as stainless steels, heat resistant superalloys (HRSA), titanium alloys, hardened steels, and abrasive cast irons requires more than selecting a tough carbide grade. Insert geometry plays a critical role in controlling cutting forces, heat generation, chip formation, tool life, and surface integrity. As a global leader in cutting tools, Iscar has developed a broad range of insert geometries specifically engineered to address the challenges presented by these demanding materials.

Many difficult to cut materials share common characteristics, including high strength at elevated temperatures, poor thermal conductivity, strong work hardening tendencies, abrasiveness, and the formation of long, stringy chips. Insert geometry directly affects how these characteristics are managed during machining. Cutting forces and heat generation, chip control and evacuation, the balance between edge sharpness and strength, and resistance to vibration and chatter are all influenced by geometry selection. Choosing the correct Iscar geometry allows manufacturers to strike the right balance between sharp cutting action and the edge robustness needed to prevent premature tool failure.

For materials such as titanium alloys and HRSA, reducing cutting forces is essential. Iscar's positive rake geometries are designed to minimise heat build-up and limit work hardening by using thin, sharp cutting edges that promote smooth chip flow and lower power consumption. These geometries are commonly applied in finishing and semi finishing operations, where controlled cutting action and surface quality are critical. At the other end of the spectrum, tougher applications such as hardened steels or abrasive cast irons require reinforced cutting edges. Moderately positive or neutral rake angles, combined with edge honing or chamfering, improve resistance to chipping and notch wear. Iscar achieves this balance through carefully engineered chipbreaker designs that maintain cutting efficiency while strengthening the cutting edge.

Material specific geometry selection is especially

important in stainless steel machining, where work hardening and long chips can quickly degrade tool life. Medium positive rake geometries with effective chipbreakers help prevent chip wrapping and maintain stable cutting conditions, even in interrupted cuts. Iscar solutions such as LOGIQ, TURN MF and MM geometries are widely used for finishing and medium machining, while HELI TURN inserts, featuring a helical cutting edge, reduce cutting pressure and improve surface finish. These geometries are often paired with grades like IC907 and IC908 to enhance wear resistance and reliability.

Heat resistant superalloys present even greater challenges due to their ability to retain strength at high temperatures and generate extreme heat at the cutting zone. Very sharp cutting edges, high positive rake angles, and smooth chip evacuation are essential to reduce heat concentration. Iscar's HELI TURN geometry helps lower radial forces, while

LOGIQ-6-TURN M3M and F3M geometries provide multiple cutting edges with optimised chip control. These solutions (Fig. 1) are frequently combined with advanced grades such as IC806 or IC907 to achieve stable performance in HRSA applications.

Titanium alloys demand a similar emphasis on sharpness and low cutting forces, as their poor thermal conductivity and notch sensitivity can quickly lead to tool failure. Highly positive rake geometries with a narrow contact area at the cutting edge help control chip thinning and heat build-up. Iscar's positive LOGIQTURN geometries are well suited for these conditions, and WHISPERLINE turning tools (Fig. 2) further enhance performance by suppressing vibration, a common issue in titanium machining. Optimised edge preparation also helps prevent built up edge and extend tool life.

In hardened steel machining, edge strength and stability are paramount. Strong cutting edges with controlled rake angles help avoid edge collapse while ensuring consistent chip breaking at high hardness levels. Robust LOGIQTURN RM geometries, combined with reinforced inserts and wear ▶



Fig. 2

resistant grades, enable reliable hard turning operations that can often replace grinding, improving productivity and flexibility.

Grooving and parting operations in difficult materials place additional stress on the cutting edge due to full width engagement. Iscar addresses these demands with the CUT GRIP system (Fig. 3), which offers dedicated F, M, and R geometries optimised for different materials and cutting conditions. Narrow inserts with high rigidity and efficient chip evacuation are particularly effective in stainless steel and HRSA applications, where chip control is critical.

Ultimately, selecting the right Iscar insert geometry requires careful consideration of the operation type, machine stability, depth of cut, feed rate, and coolant strategy. Lighter or less rigid machines benefit from more positive geometries, while heavier cuts demand stronger edges. High-pressure



Fig. 3

preparation, and chipbreaker design interact with material behaviour, manufacturers can significantly improve tool life, productivity, and part quality. Iscar solutions such as LOGIQ-6-TURN, LOGIQ-3-TURN, HELI TURN, CUT GRIP, and WHISPERLINE provide proven geometry options for stainless steels, superalloys, titanium, and hardened materials, enabling reliable and efficient machining even in the most demanding applications.

Contact Iscar South Africa on TEL: 011 997 2700 or visit www.iscar.com for further details. ■

coolant can further enhance chip control and tool life. Iscar's application specific geometries are designed to operate within defined cutting windows, delivering predictable and repeatable results.

Choosing the right Iscar insert geometry is therefore a key factor in successfully machining difficult to cut materials. By understanding how rake angle, edge

Mazak's Integrex j-200S NEO horizontal multi-tasking machine

The Mazak Integrex j-200S NEO is a high performance horizontal multi-tasking machine with high productivity and environmental performance.

Ideally suited to high mix / low volume manufacturing, Mazak's new Integrex j-200 NEO offers a productivity upgrade for turreted lathe users looking to move beyond turning to integrated milling, drilling, and multi-faced machining operations.

The Mazak Integrex j-200S NEO is equipped with an enhanced milling spindle to shorten cycle times and deliver higher productivity. Enhanced heat displacement compensation ensures stable and high machining accuracy. The "Energy Saver" function in the CNC system allows for visualisation of energy consumption and regenerative power, and energy-efficient control of the machine.

The milling spindle unit can be indexed in 1 degree increments, allowing outer diameter, end face, and diagonal machining with a single tool. Similarly, the second spindle performs various machining with a single tool, reducing cycle times. The high-performance specification with 0.0001° indexing offers enhanced versatility for a variety of workpieces.

The high-power, high-torque built-in motor spindle provides excellent machining capabilities. The main turning spindle, fitted with an 8" chuck, features a powerful 18.5 kW, 326 Nm built-in motor, with an integrated cooling circuit in the headstock,

to deliver high material removal rates whilst achieving stable machining accuracy. With a 65mm bar capacity and a 480mm maximum swing, the machine can be easily configured for both automated bar work and robot-fed components.

The Mazak Integrex j-200S NEO features the next generation of Mazatrol Smooth CNC technology, the Mazatrol SmoothAi control and associated software packages, which deliver powerful digital enhancements that add efficiency and value throughout the machining process with the power of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and advanced data management technology.

The machine benefits from a 36-tool magazine – with an option of increasing to 72 tools – which significantly reduces setups while offering three times the tool capacity of a turreted lathe, in addition to significantly lower tooling costs compared to driven-tool holders.

Many subcontractors are seeing their batch sizes

come down while their mix of components is increasing. This presents a very different challenge to high volume work and needs a different machining strategy to stay competitive. Helping subcontractors meet the demands of a high mix / low volume production schedule was one of the key drivers for the development of the Integrex j-200 NEO.

Contact Hi-Tech Machine Tools on TEL: 011 608 0088 or visit www.hitech.co.za for further details.



InnovMetric releases PolyWorks 2026 with cloud, AI updates

The release includes tools for standardised inspection and easier collaboration across sites and suppliers.



InnovMetric has announced the release of its latest version of its PolyWorks platform during a global digital event that took place on April 28, 2026. The live broadcast provided manufacturers, quality engineers, and metrology professionals with an in-depth look at the company's newest innovations centred on advancing the digital thread for 3D measurement-based inspection.

Advancing the digital thread vision

PolyWorks 2026 strengthens the integration of inspection data across the enterprise, enabling organisations to better connect measurement workflows with engineering and manufacturing processes. By expanding its digital thread capabilities, InnovMetric aims to help users:

Streamline inspection operations

- Improve cross-functional collaboration
- Ensure full traceability of dimensional data
- Transform measurement results into actionable insights

This approach reflects the growing importance of connected quality ecosystems, where inspection data plays a central role in driving decision-making throughout the product lifecycle.

Universal 3D metrology platform

The latest version of PolyWorks introduces new tools to improve measurement planning, execution, and analysis within a unified environment. Attendees were shown how increased workflow automation and real-time operator guidance can boost productivity on the shop floor.

PolyWorks 2026 is intended to help metrology engineers and quality control managers standardise dimensional inspection processes and support collaboration across multiple sites, including coordination with external suppliers.

Data management with PolyWorks|DataLoop

Updates to the DataLoop infrastructure will focus on strengthening data governance and standardisation. Features such as reusable inspection templates, secure data handling, and web-based collaboration tools are designed to support distributed teams and enterprise-wide consistency.

Enterprise digital connectivity

The event highlighted expanded digital connectors that allow inspection data to be shared more effectively across enterprise systems. These integrations will enable broader access to 3D measurement results, supporting faster and more informed decision-making.

Industry insights and live demonstrations

A keynote presentation from Marc Soucy, President of InnovMetric, outlined the company's vision for digital thread technologies and their role in eliminating workflow silos. The live event also featured demonstrations of new functionalities within the PolyWorks|Inspector environment, offering attendees a first look at tools designed to enhance dimensional analysis and quality control processes.

Supporting the future of smart manufacturing

As manufacturers continue their transition toward smart factory environments, the ability to connect and leverage 3D measurement data is becoming increasingly critical. InnovMetric's launch positions PolyWorks 2026 as a key enabler of this transformation.

By delivering a more integrated and accessible inspection ecosystem, the platform aims to bridge the gap between measurement, engineering, and production – ensuring that quality data is not only captured, but fully utilised across the organisation.

For further details contact PolyWorks South Africa on 079 754 4578 or visit www.polyworkssouthafrica.co.za ■

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