

Busy Socata is forced to delay Tangara

JULIAN MOXON/PARIS

PRODUCTION OF the Socata Tangara light twin is to be delayed by up to a year, as the French manufacturer meets increased demand for subcontracting work and its TBM700 single.

French certification of the Textron Lycoming O-360-A1G6 powered Tangara was obtained in December 1997, with production start-up originally planned for early this year. Socata now says that the Tangara will not begin rolling off its production line at Tarbes in southern France before the end of the year "at the earliest".

Socata commercial director Christophe Van den Broek says: "We remain committed to the Tangara. But we had to choose between remaining on schedule or meeting the demands of our main clients, Airbus, AI(R) and Eurocopter. They're all increasing production, and as major subcon-



Demand for TBM700s in the USA and Europe has slowed progress on the Tangara

tractors, we have to go with them." Socata supplies main belly fairings for the Airbus A330/A340 and several components for the A320 family, as well as components for Eurocopter helicopters.

Production of the six-seat TBM700 is also set to rise, from 11 aircraft last year to 15 in 1998 and

"at least 20" in 1999, says Van den Broek. The entire 1998 TBM700 production is already sold out, and so is some of the production for 1999. This is partly caused by the US Federal Aviation Administration decision to permit instrument flight rules operations of single engine aircraft.

Van den Broek admits that several Tangara orders have been cancelled, although he adds that "most of our customers are keeping their delivery positions". The four seat aircraft is developed from the original Grumman Cougar, for which Socata obtained the manufacturing rights in 1995. □

Orenda completes certification tests on Vee-8

ORENDA RECIP HAS completed certification tests on the OE-600 high-power Vee-8 piston engine. Transport Canada's approval was granted at the end of March, climaxing a prolonged development and certification effort, which began in 1994 when the Canadian company acquired the engine programme.

Certification allows OE-600 production to begin, initially for retrofit applications. Orenda has agreements in place to re-engine

Beech King Air 90s, de Havilland Beavers and Otters, and Rockwell Aero Commanders. Agreement is also near on a programme to re-engine Air Tractor agricultural aircraft, according to general manager Peter Jackson.

Engines will be produced in a new factory at Debert, Nova Scotia, which will also be the site for a supporting aircraft refurbishment and re-engineing operation. Initial market studies have focused on the Cessna 421 and Piper

Navajo piston twins, Jackson says. Other potential applications for the engine include the Mitsubishi Mu-2, he adds.

In the longer term, Orenda Recip wants to supply engines to manufacturers of new aircraft, "...but we won't pursue them until we have a type certificate", Jackson says. The company has already supplied an engine to Lancair for its Tigress high-performance kit-plane, which was scheduled to fly in late March. □

Second Sikorsky Skycrane is converted for use as firefighter

ERIKSON AIR-CRANE is remanufacturing a second Sikorsky S-64 and offering it to operators as a firefighting "Helitanker".

Oregon-based Erickson bought the S-64 Skycrane type certificate from Sikorsky in 1992. The company developed more than 100 modifications for the helicopter before producing its first Air-Crane in July 1997. The zero-time airframe was the first S-64 to be built since the 1970s. It has joined the Erickson fleet, which now

numbers 15, and is being followed by a second model, the S-64F.

"We have another one being built, and we think it's the most sophisticated firefighting system in the world," says Erickson. The 9,000litre capacity Helitanker is designed to deliver water, long term retardant or water which has been injected with foam. The helicopter can be refilled in around 45s by dipping a snorkel into a suitable body of water.

The Helitanker can also make

multiple drops, and the pilot can select the volume each time. A global positioning system receiver feeds airspeed information to the microprocessor that controls the tank doors. This automatically adjusts flow to one of eight coverage levels, delivering 4-33litres per 10m², depending on the intensity of the fire.

Erickson has also designed the system capable of delivering a salvo of 9,000 litres in about 3s to drown out hot spots. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ GULFSTREAM CHARTERS

Gulfstream has launched a programme to facilitate chartering of its business jets. Gulfstream Charter Services will act as a clearing house for charter requests, connecting customers with operators in Europe and North America.

■ VANTAGE PRICE HIKE

With orders for its Vantage single engine business jet now past the 100 aircraft mark, VisionAire has increased the price by almost 3%, to \$1.8 million, with a second hike, to \$1.85 million, planned for later this year.

■ TOYOTA PLANS

Toyota Motors is developing a four seat light aircraft and a diesel powerplant, according to Japanese press reports. A prototype is scheduled to fly at the end of 1999. Toyota has reportedly earmarked ¥100 billion (\$765 million) for the project.