



Home > Future Product

May 13, 2019 12:00 AM

Mazda aims for upscale appeal with inline-6 engines

Engine move targets more upscale appeal

HANS GREIMEL



TWEET



SHARE



SHARE



EMAIL



BLOOMBERG

The 2016 Mazda CX-9 crossover at the 2015 L.A. auto show. Mazda plans new powerplants for a new "large architecture" that will also accommodate a longitudinal drivetrain layout that works with the company's all-wheel-drive system.

TOKYO – Mazda Motor Corp., a devotee of internal combustion in the age of electrification, is planning two inline, six-cylinder engines for a series of larger vehicles on a completely new platform that will arrive in the next six years.

The rollout, outlined last week by CEO Akira Marumoto during the company's fiscal year earnings announcement, is a strategic move to take the brand more upmarket.



Marumoto: More customer choice

Marumoto wants to expand the carmaker's offerings to bolster its brand appeal and widen the range of sticker prices its vehicles can command.

The goal is to keep Mazda's current entry-level price but extend the range upward with other offerings and variants reaching higher.

A slew of powertrains will flesh out the plan.

"This will allow us to give more choice to customers," Marumoto said. "We will keep the current entry price while broadening the price coverage."

Marumoto didn't give a concrete timeline for the arrival of the new products, but the Mazda boss spoke of them as part of a new midterm strategy running from 2020 to 2025.

One of the upcoming inline sixes, the first in Mazda's history, will use Mazda's new gasoline-powered Skyactiv-X spark-controlled compression ignition system. The other will be an inline six-cylinder diesel.

Also on tap is a new 48-volt mild-hybrid setup and a plug-in hybrid.

All of the new powerplants will be deployed on a new "large architecture" that will also accommodate a longitudinal drivetrain layout that works with the company's all-wheel-drive system.

Under the plan, Mazda will introduce two product architectures, instead of relying on one.

Rear wheel

The introduction of the large architecture signals a possible interest in rear-wheel drive. Mazda sells only one vehicle with a rear-wheel layout, the MX-5 Miata.

The other platform will underpin smaller vehicles. It will accommodate the already announced four-cylinder Skyactiv-X engine as well as upgrades of the existing Skyactiv-G gasoline and Skyactiv-D diesel powerplants.

Mazda will also use it as a base for mild hybrid vehicles as well as battery-electric and other electrified offerings.

But Mazda's challenge will be finding the funds to invest in all this development.

Slumping profit

A small carmaker among its global competitors, Mazda saw operating profit slump 43 percent in the latest fiscal year, with results broadsided by falling global sales, increased marketing expenses, foreign exchange losses and spiraling costs for increased investment in its U.S. retail network reforms.

Global retail sales declined 4 percent to 1.56 million units, and operating profit margin deteriorated to 2.3 percent from 4.2 percent the year before.

Marumoto outlined a new midterm business strategy that targets lifting operating profit margin to a sustainable 5 percent by the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. But the company also downgraded its long-term sales goal in line with tougher realities.

Mazda now targets global sales of 1.8 million vehicles in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. That is lower than the 2.0 million sales target it earlier pinned to the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

Letter — to the — Editor

Send us a letter

Have an opinion about this story? [Click here to submit a Letter to the Editor](#), and we may publish it in print.

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU



[F&I cheat sheet keeps critical info within customers' reach](#)

[Why the highest, lowest credit tiers gain auto origination share](#)



[First Shift: Dieter Zetsche signs off after 13 years at helm of Daimler](#)