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## Airbus looks to innovate

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Cape Town – Attention has been focused on Airbus after the world's biggest passenger aircraft, the A380, arrived in Johannesburg on Thursday, heralding a new era in air travel in the country.

The massive plane will be used on Air France's Paris to Johannesburg route.

But the development of the A380 superjumbo is just one of the new innovations by the European manufacturer.

In a bid to increase passenger comfort and boost safety, Airbus is in the process of introducing new equipment to all of its aircraft.

"Safety underlines everything we do. It's not like the automobile business, it's omnipresent," Airbus's Bob Lange told News24.

### Exciting project

Lange said that the company works with an ergonomics team that tries to develop systems that can cope with the needs of passengers.

"Look, all models start with an evaluation of passenger size. People are getting larger - we see it. In countries with faster economic growth, there's faster physical growth. The whole world has an overweight problem - that's not my words, WHO (The World Health Organisation) says that."

The company, which has already delivered 6 000 planes to customers, wants to produce planes that are more fuel-efficient, while also meeting passenger demands for safety and comfort, particularly on long-haul flights. This fuel-efficiency will result in lower costs to the carrier.

One of the visible changes already taking place is the development of the "Sharklet" large wingtip devices for A320 aircraft. This is designed to reduce 3.5% of fuel burn, and will be delivered to Air New Zealand in 2012.

In the cabin, there are changes that may result in more seating for passengers.

"In the A320 we've made the fuselage wider and the whole interior is seven inches (17.7cm) wider and each seat is about an inch (2.5cm) wider," said Lange.

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The wider fuselage will also allow trolleys to move down the aisle without hindering passengers from going to the bathroom.

### **World standard**

Lange though, was most excited by an innovation Airbus calls "Spice" - an acronym for Space-Innovative Catering Equipment.

"Spice is our most exciting project," he said. "Food and catering hasn't changed in 40 years, except for uniform and hairstyles.

"The old trolleys are deadweight; they weigh between 80kg and 100kg when they're loaded. What we did is start with trays and put them in standard boxes, like sheets of paper. The result is a neater galley (food preparation area) and we can construct these like Lego."

Lange said that this meant the air craft used space more efficiently and could fit in extra seats, while saving weight.

"This way we need fewer galleys and we can save 600kg to 1.2 tonnes. We can fit in space for more seats."

Airbus hopes to create a world standard with its Spice system, but would require a buy-in from other manufacturers and suppliers.

The company has also developed a unique air flow system for its planes. Air enters the cabin at the top, so that it circulates without passengers feeling a breeze or stuffy.

"The air at 4000 feet (1 219 metres) isn't very fresh. It has to be treated and the air is recycled through filters - we call them High Efficiency Particle Arrestors - and they filter bacteria. They can be used in hospital operating theatres," Lange said.

He added that the company also researched crew rest and tried to balance "crew and the financial officer".

- News24