
INEOS Automotive plans 2022 Europe launch for off-road vehicle

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INEOS Automotive, a unit of chemicals and energy giant INEOS, will launch a rugged off-road vehicle in Europe in 2022 and North America in 2023 for farmers and other primarily rural uses, it said on Wednesday,

The company plans initially to launch with a utilitarian version of the Grenadier for business customers – which should make up the majority of sales of the four-wheel drive vehicle – and a more comfortable passenger version.

The vehicle will also launch in parts of Africa and the Middle East in 2022.

INEOS Automotive is also working on a pickup truck version of the Grenadier, which will be crucial for the North American market. In the U.S. market, pickup trucks make up a sizeable and a highly-profitable portion of total auto industry sales.

The boxy Grenadier will have petrol and diesel engines and drive trains built by BMW. Production of the vehicle will launch in late 2021 at a former Daimler AG passenger car plant in Hambach, in northeastern France, that INEOS Automotive acquired from the German carmaker last year.

Gary Pearson, who heads up INEOS Automotive's markets in the UK, Middle East and North Africa, said the combustion engine technology the company is using is right for today's market.

But with bans on fossil-fuel vehicles looming in Europe, the company is looking at hydrogen fuel-cell technology for future zero-emission versions of the Grenadier rather than going electric.

"As electric technology moves on, it may well become right for us," Pearson said. "But today in terms of range, the weight of batteries... in a vehicle that needs to pull things, lift things, carry things, that's not necessarily right for us at the moment."

An agreement between parent company INEOS and Hyundai to explore opportunities for hydrogen production and supply includes evaluating using the South Korean carmaker's fuel-cell system in the Grenadier.

(Reuters)