

Preperations Sentinel-2B Launch in Full Swing



It's full steam ahead for the team readying Sentinel-2B. On 5 January, the satellite was shipped from ESA's site in The Netherlands - where it had been undergoing testing since June - and arrived safe and sound in French Guiana the following day.

The Sentinel-2 mission is designed as two satellites working in tandem – Sentinel-2A has been in orbit since June 2015. Offering 'colour vision' for Europe's Copernicus programme, the mission combines high-resolution and novel multispectral capabilities. Josef Aschbacher, ESA's director for Earth Observation Programmes, explained since both satellites have a 290 km-wide coverage path and they orbit 180° apart, the time it takes to image the globe will be cut in half to five days once Sentinel-2B is operational.

Agriculture and forestry

The mission mainly provides information for agriculture and forestry and for helping to manage food security. Satellite images are used to determine key information about plants, such as chlorophyll and water content. This is particularly important for predicting yields effectively and applications related to Earth's vegetation.

As well as monitoring plant growth, the mission maps change in land cover and monitors the world's forests. It also provides information on pollution in lakes and coastal waters.

Test and prepare

Now in the cleanroom at Europe's spaceport, Sentinel-2B is already on its stand for the start of a seven-week campaign to test and prepare it to be lofted into orbit on a Vega rocket. ESA's launch campaign manager, Paolo Laberinti, said it is good to see that the delicate cargo arrived safe and well. The team already has been able to set up all the technical equipment that they use to test the satellite and connect it to its electrical equipment – so that it is ready for testing.

Concurrently, the Sentinel-2 mission control team at ESA's operations centre in Germany has already begun intensive simulation training for the critical launch and early orbit phase. Sentinel-2B is scheduled for lift-off on 7 March at 01:49 GMT (02:49 CET; 22:49 local time on 6 March).

Source: ESA.