

The China experience

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People often tell me that testing the latest machinery for *Farm Trader* must be a dream job. Of course, they don't see the late nights spent typing articles trying to meet deadlines. However, this time I have to agree; an invite to tag along on the inaugural CFMoto trip to China with a group of dealers from around New Zealand was an amazing opportunity.



Quality assurance checks are performed during and after the assembly process



The trip was the chance of a firsthand look at CFMoto's impressive factory and headquarters in Hangzhou, where its machines are built. Ten of us assembled in Auckland for the flight to Shanghai; the start of an amazing and whirlwind four days in China.

I discovered that at around 9.7 million square kilometres, China is a pretty big country. In fact it's 36 times larger than the land mass of New Zealand. Interestingly though, its current population stands at just under 1.4 billion, 318 times larger than New Zealand's 4.4 million. And it is growing at a rate of 70 million people every year. I mention this because it helps describe what is happening on the ground in China; it is playing catch up to the rest of the Western world and modernising at a rate never seen before. Construction is everywhere; apartments, warehouses and factories are being built at incredible speeds; and new highways are being laid out to connect complete new cities. Fifteen-thousand kilometres of high speed rail lines are constructed each year, something we got to experience during a ride from the airport on a bullet train that cruised at a leisurely 430 km/hr.

First stop was Shanghai – an interesting cross section of China. Its impressive wealth is showcased on the streets with Ferraris and Lamborghinis being common sights. In contrast, those same streets are shared with people



UTVs being assembled in the overhead production line

pushing handcarts and trying to survive on little money. This city is also growing at an unprecedented rate and is now said to have over 5000 high-rise buildings with more than 30 levels.

The following day we travelled three hours out to Hangzhou, which is not only where the CFMoto headquarters and factory are, but is also home to the famous Westlake area which is considered one of the most scenic places in China – it receives almost 50 million tourists every year. The lake with surrounding gardens and forests is considered a place of great beauty and tranquillity.



The Factory

On the third day it was time to get down to business at the CFMoto factory and headquarters, which is spread over 15 hectares. This encompasses the head offices, engine and vehicle factories, research and development departments, cafeterias and several apartment blocks to house its workers, along with a short section of test track where we got to try out the latest machines later in the day.

Around 1300 people are employed to produce 300,000 engines and 200,000 power sports vehicles which are now exported to over 60 countries around the globe.

Engines

CFMoto has now been building engines for around 20 years. In my opinion, they have definitely got this part right. It is the key to the success of their machines. They control the design and construction right from the very start with their own aluminium foundry (at a different site) which casts the engine housings.

Our tour started with dozens of robotic CNC laser machines. These take care of precision cutting and tooling on the engine components. Although hand-loaded by factory staff, they are computer programmed and controlled to give the precise tolerances required in a finely tuned engine.

Further through the factory are two engine assembly lines where the in-house components



CForce 550cc quads assembled and lined up ready for shipping



Sunset over Hangzhou



Although the domestic ATV/UTV markets are very limited in China, the police force get to ride around in this smart-looking machine from CFMoto

are combined with reliable outsourced parts such as injectors and throttle bodies from reputable Bosch and Delphi suppliers. This workforce of precision engineers operates in a spotless, dust-free environment.

Every single engine built is run and tested before it leaves this area of the factory; underperforming engines are re-tuned, or stripped and reassembled at the slightest hint of any problem, with a zero tolerance policy for defects ensuring engines are of the highest quality.

Construction and assembly

Across at the vehicle construction and assembly side of the plant is the frame production area. The company has invested a serious amount of capital into five robotic welding units that are used to build frames for all the machines. This is a simply amazing area to watch. The robotic arm welders are positioned to work on a large vertical table, with a jig on each side. Required materials are loaded and clamped in the correct positions by

workers, while the robot is busy welding on the other side. When it finishes, the table is rotated and the welding continues on the next frame. In the meantime, the worker unloads the completed frame and reloads the jig for the next one. This system has an incredibly high output, but more importantly, maintains consistent quality, as a robot can make the same perfect weld all day every day.

A paint shop in the factory takes care of prepping and painting all components to a high standard. The plastic body work on most machines is outsourced to a nearby plastics



CFMOTO FACTORY TOUR

manufacturer and specified colours are injected during the moulding process.

All the components are finally brought together in a huge main assembly hall. With five separate moving assembly lines allowing five separate models to be in production at one time, it's an impressive sight. Work starts at one end, from the ground up with just the frame, and a fully built functional bike can be driven off the other end. Assembly is a hands-on process for the many factory workers, with quality assurance checks throughout the process once again demonstrating the company's dedication to providing a quality product. Once off the assembly line, machines are disassembled where required, and packed into crate for shipping.

I am fortunate to have been through some fairly big-named factories throughout Europe, all producing machinery for the agricultural sector. There is no doubt they are impressive. What I'm pleased to be able to say is that the CFMoto plant operates at an equally high standard and would match most in Europe.

It is exciting to be involved with something from the start and that is the unique opportunity here. Like many, I admit that I was initially somewhat sceptical of CFMoto machines. There are a massive amount of products coming out of China, and some are of appalling quality.

After my visit to China and the chance to see the factory in person, and speak to key people involved, I'm willing to put my reputation on the line and say that I'm confident the popularity of CFMoto products will only grow in New Zealand, and it will almost certainly become a major player in the market over coming years. I hope to be able to say that I wrote it here first. ■



Dealers

A reliable dealer network is key to the success of any brand. You want to know that there is someone there willing to help when the chips are down, so getting to spend some time with the dealers from around New Zealand was a great opportunity. On board so far with CFMoto is Northland Power Sports (Whangarei); Experience Motorcycles (Auckland); Northwest Motorcycles (New Plymouth); On Farm Agri Centre (Greymouth and Nelson); along with Ag and Auto Direct (Balclutha). Further dealers will be announced soon, giving coverage over most of the country. Many dealers reported increasing sales, with one struggling to keep a demo machine on the floor, thanks to most stock being sold before it arrives.

Mojo Motorcycles

Mojo Motorcycles Ltd is now the sole importer for CFMoto machines into New Zealand and Australia. It was established in 2003 in by Joshua Carter and Micheal Poynton, who took the time to join us on the ground in China for the factory tour. The company also distributes Sherco TGB and Daelim motorbikes and is one of the fastest growing motorcycle companies in Australia, with retail sale of around 5000 units per year through a network of around 80 dealers. They are committed to setting up the same reliable dealer network to service the requirements here in New Zealand. Testament to this is the recent investment in a purpose-built parts centre in Melbourne, to service Australia and New Zealand, with common parts in stock that can be shipped to dealers overnight.