

Powering West Africa's mining sector

Despite challenging environments and tough economics, JA Delmas continues to deliver the best possible solutions to its customers right across West Africa.



Innovative power solutions are essential for Africa's growth and development.

Image Credit: JA Delmas

A Cat dealer for 87 years now, JA Delmas delivers robust power solutions to some of West Africa's most isolated mines sometimes spread across large swathes of West Africa. With a history spanning over 165 years, the company and its Network enjoys a longstanding reputation throughout the region.

It provides state-of-the-art equipment and machinery for a range of industry sectors, not only mining and energy services, but also in construction and infrastructure.

But that is still only half the picture. No company in the world stays in business for more than a century without doing things a little special.

On the power and energy side, JA Delmas is now underpinning many

of the region's big mining projects, where dependability is everything.

Its success in this demanding environment, where power is required 24/7, highlights just how respected and trusted the Network has become with its robust, fuel-efficient Cat engines. Major partners include the likes of top international mining companies, all flagship names in the region's

mining industry. While gold has long been a feature of West Africa's economic landscape, it is only as robust as the power supplies that feed the mines, industrial belts and drives.

Close to customers

There is no real secret to this success, other than hard work, quality products and a never-ending

commitment to customers.

Christophe Jacquin, head of the Energy, Manufacturing & Services Business Unit at JA Delmas, says the company always wants to improve on its offer.

That means working closely with its customers and other local partners to provide the best outcome for any given project.

"You need to understand how to get things done; efficiently; you need to deliver quality at the right cost," he tells *African Review*. "We have the right people and we have the right product, but to be successful in Africa, to do business there well, you need to do it with the local actors."

Offering a world-class product is also essential, as is the prestige from the Caterpillar name.

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CHRISTOPHE JACQUIN, HEAD OF ENERGY, MANUFACTURING & SERVICES BUSINESS UNIT, JA DELMAS

While Caterpillar offers machinery for a multitude of uses, on the power side, this range spans from the small generators available for banks and telecom towers, to medium-speed HFO engines for utility companies or mines.

In these larger applications, the requirements for energy are simply huge, sometimes about up to 80 megawatts. “These products are rugged and tested to operate in harsh environments – and at best possible cost.”

A service company

This is one of the reasons why JA Delmas now has deep in-roads into so many of West Africa’s vibrant, growing and emerging markets, from Cote d’Ivoire to Senegal, from Guinea to Mali.

In the mining sector, Jacquin says the biggest markets for his company, in terms of power and energy, are Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Mauritania and Niger.

He mentions the emergence of other mining trends, such as an interest in graphite, which could yield future business.

And, of course, its impressive regional network is essential.

“At JA Delmas, we have the right people, the track record, the quality,

so we can really deliver to our customers because we are so close to them, we understand them and we know how to operate there. We are a service company – and service means having people close to the customers. That for me is really important.”

At the same time, there is support from all over the world via the Caterpillar network, a truly global brand. This brings with it top quality products, extensive support, technical excellence and an embrace for innovation.

Solar-thermal hybridisation

Sometimes this means taking a holistic approach to project development, not only selling engines, but active too in plant design, and other areas like operations and maintenance.

The aim, says Jacquin, is to deliver a complete power solution, allowing all our customers to focus on their project.

Right now, the biggest selling products, in terms of megawatts and revenue, are the medium-speed HFO engines that have long been the backbone of the region’s mining sector, where grid supplies remain a rarity. But West Africa is experiencing its own energy transition too, with increased

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appetite for renewable power.

“We are now moving into the hybridisation,” says Jacquin, a trend he expects more of in the future.

While this continues to draw on traditional thermal-based supplies – medium speed and high speed engines, plus operations and maintenance support – it is now rolling out 24 megawatts of solar PV panels to reduce the overall cost of energy at the site.

“So it is a good example of how we can follow the technology, follow the customer, and always come up with better solutions,” he adds.

It presents additional challenges, such as making sure the hybrid is optimised and adjusting the load of the generators, but it is big new forward development, “so we are adding more solutions for our customers.”

Financing support

Another important initiative for the company is the provision of financial services and solutions, again in coordination with customers, and working alongside the resources of the Caterpillar group.

“We are working on expanding this front,” says Jacquin. “So, for instance, we have a plant, where they wanted a finance solution. So what we managed to bring, with Caterpillar Finance, our partner, was a technical solution plus a financing solution. Ultimately, it’s a business solution and we are working on a number of other projects where we are combining group technology and efficient operations with finance.”

The end result is that it enables customers to manage their own costs and cash flow better.

These are innovations and additions that could help to secure the next wave of business, especially in a climate where project economics are tight.

Within the project pipeline, new leads are maturing in Guinea and Burkina Faso, among other territories, both in gold and other minerals, including graphite.

“We do have some exciting opportunities that we are working on.”

The goal is to help customers not only in delivering robust power solutions, as the company and its Network has always done, but by bringing down the cost of energy over the life of any project.

“Our objective for this year is definitely to work on the cost of energy, we always want to improve on this,” adds Jacquin. “Our objective is to remain the reference partner in West Africa.” ■



Solar solutions are boosting access to energy in economies that are seeking to go low-carbon.

Image Credit: Caterpillar