

Fiat Ducato put on sale

Severstal-Auto started sales of Fiat Ducato to be produced at the Tatarstan-based Alabuga special economic zone. The plant is hoping to turn out 10,000 units in 2008 ramping up production further to 75,000 per year. Ducato will be available in several body styles (including a coach, an ambulance vehicle and a mini-bus) – hopefully encouraging the demand.

But two drawbacks may cause sales to slow down and impede the planned growth in output.

All Ducato modifications will be supplied with 2.3 liter 110 HP diesel engines. Fiat will cost considerably higher than as was announced in summer 2007. The present price stands at \$21,000 – against the previous estimate of \$18,000. Fiat says the price surge has been caused by FX appreciation and adds that, according to the August 2007 rate, Ducato's present value is equitable to the initial one.

With only one motor option, tough competition in the mini-bus and ambulance vehicle market and a marked increase in prices, Ducato's commercial success will be doubtful.

By Kirill Lebedev