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KLM Royal Dutch Airlines has ordered four Boeing Next-Generation 737-800s, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group confirmed today. The planes will join four 737-800s KLM previously ordered to expand its European network.

The jetliners will be configured in a two-class, 150-seat arrangement that will feature five-abreast business-class seating. The first of the eight airplanes is scheduled to deliver in February 1999.

"This order is in line with KLM's strategy to increase European market share in cooperation with our partners, and further develop our system of connecting regional, European and intercontinental flights at our Amsterdam Schiphol hub. These airplanes will offer our customers the comfort of a modern fleet that does justice to our environmental responsibilities," said KLM Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer Peter Hartman.

The Next-Generation 737 models - the -600/ -700/ -800/ and -900 - are designed to fly faster, farther and quieter, yet with lower emissions than previous 737 models.

The 737-800 is powered by new CFM56-7 engines produced by CFMI, a 50/50 joint company between General Electric Co. of the U.S. and Snecma of France. The CFM56-7 has a 10-percent higher thrust capability than the CFM56-3C engines powering the classic 737-300/ -400/ -500 models.

The Next-Generation 737 family continues to be the fastest-selling jetliner model in history. To date, 40 customers have placed orders for 866 airplanes. The 737 family alone has won orders for 3,999 airplanes - more orders than the company's biggest competitor has secured for its entire product line since it began business.

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