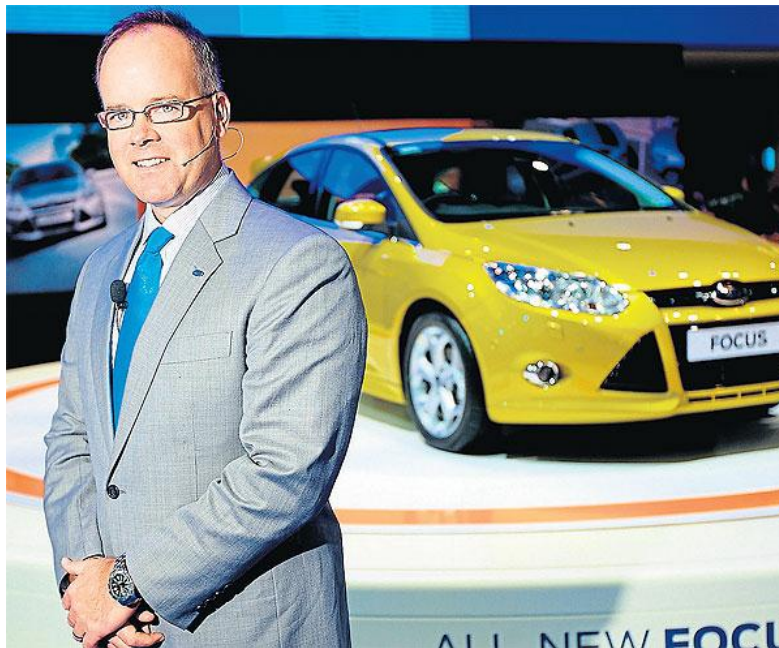


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Ford keen to increase Asean market share Strong regional sales of Thai-made vehicles

Despite the bearish Asean car market, notably in Thailand, Ford Motor Co is bullish on increasing its market share in the region from below 3% last year to 3.3% this year.



"Ford is doing quite well, particularly in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam," said Matt Bradley, Ford's president for Southeast Asia.

In Asean, Ford reported 2013 sales growth of 7% to 95,906 vehicles, 51,223 of which were sold in Thailand.

In the Philippines, Ford posted sales growth last year of 41% to 13,285 vehicles. In Vietnam, sales rose by 71% to 8,177 vehicles and in Malaysia by 50% to 10,660.

The company also does business in Cambodia, Laos and Brunei, with a respective 768, 680 and 565 vehicles sold.

Ford says sales in the region will fall by about 10% to 3.3 million vehicles this year.

Even so, the company remains optimistic about Asean and especially Thailand, where Ford's market share rose to 3.8% last year from 1.5% in 2010.

The company expects a 4.5% share this year in Thailand.

In the Thai market, Ford posted sales for the first 10 months of 31,711 vehicles, down 27% year-on-year.

Ford's passenger car sales fell by 66% to 6,508 units and commercial vehicle sales rose by 4% to 25,203 units in the 10-month period.

Thailand's domestic sales are forecast at 850,000 units this year, dropping from 1.33 million last year.

But Ford predicts a gradual recovery with 900,000-950,000 vehicles sold in 2015.

Mr Bradley said the country's economy was likely to grow by 4-5% in 2015 as consumer confidence rises.

Ford is one of 10 car makers to apply for the second phase of the state's eco-car scheme at the end of March, with a combined investment of 139 billion baht.

The companies are to produce 1.58 million eco-cars with an investment 100 billion baht greater than the combined outlay of the five eco-car makers that took part in the first phase.

The existing five will invest an additional 86.8 billion baht in production of 753,000 eco-cars, while the five newcomers will spend 52 billion baht to roll out 828,000 units.

Ford's application for the eco-car scheme won approval on Oct 3.

The company will spend 18.2 billion baht to make eco-friendly cars at Ford Thailand Manufacturing, a complex in Rayong province with an annual production capacity for 180,000 vehicles and 2,000 engines.

In Asean, Ford has production facilities in Thailand and Vietnam that make a respective 280,000 and 20,000 units a year.

The Michigan-based giant runs two plants in Rayong.

One, under Ford Thailand Manufacturing, was set up in 2012 at a cost of \$450 million with an annual production of 160,000 vehicles.

The other is worth \$1.66 billion and run by AutoAlliance (Thailand), a joint venture with Mazda formed in 1997.

