WAEA2007: Qest debuts new dual band antenna

Mary Kirby, Toronto (18Sep07, 15:26 GMT, 301 words)

A new airborne broadband antenna that can enable both Ku-band and L-band services is creating buzz at the World Airline Entertainment Association (WAEA) conference and exhibition in Toronto.

By combining Ku-band and L-band in one integrated system, a “hybrid data link can be established”, resulting in “unprecedented connectivity options and maximum flexibility for owners and operators”, says German designer and developer Qest.

Ku-band is used for a fast downlink of large data quantities to the aircraft, while L-band serves as uplink channel and supplementary or fallback downlink channel.

Different configuration options are available for various mount positions, including fuselage or tail mount.

“Compared to conventional airborne antennas, the novel Qest antenna technology provides an improvement in performance up to a factor of four,” says Qest chief technology officer Jörg Oppenländer.

The antenna’s debut comes as companies seek to offer broadband communication services and fill the void left by the closure of Connexion by Boeing.

Panasonic Avionics, for example, is offering new broadband customers its eXconnect service using Starling Advanced Communication’s Ku-band antenna system.

Asked by *ATI* if the firm is interested in the Qest offering, Panasonic director of strategic product marketing David Bruner says: “We love Starling but we will keep looking for antennas until doomsday.”

He notes that the performance of the antenna largely “drives the economics” of in-flight broadband.

Thales in June announced plans to offer broadband connectivity solution. The manufacturer is “looking to include Ku-band and Inmarsat products”, and is “exploring options and partners in both spectrums”, Thales VP and general manager for IFE Alan Pellegrini said at the time.

Founded in 2001 by three scientists working in the area of quantum electronics at Germany’s University of Tübingen, Qest is a unit of automotive systems supplier Dräxlmaier Group. The company says “several international patents” protect its technological achievements.

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