

# China regional jet certified to fly domestic routes

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A Chinese-developed passenger plane has been certified by the country's aviation regulator, clearing the way for the ARJ21 regional jet to fly domestic routes, the manufacturer and state media said.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) on Tuesday officially deemed the ARJ21 airworthy, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

A spokesman for Shanghai-based Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China (COMAC), the plane's builder, confirmed to AFP that the final domestic regulatory hurdle had been cleared.

But the ARJ21 still lacks crucial approval from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Potential sales and use of the ARJ21 outside China depend "on the CAAC and other countries' level of recognition of its certification", the spokesman said.

FAA certification would enable the plane to fly in US skies and assure passengers of its safety. Without it, the 78-90 seat plane will face a more limited market, industry officials say.

"There must be a period for improving the model's design, systems and operations before its entry into the market," COMAC vice president Luo Ronghuai was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

The first ARJ21 jet was designed and built between 2003 and 2007 with the inaugural flight in November, 2008, according to state media.

But deliveries to customers are years behind schedule, with an original deadline of 2009.

Even so, the plane already has 278 orders after COMAC announced a 20-[plane](#) purchase on the sidelines of China's premier Zhuhai airshow last month.

The manufacturer will begin small-scale production of the ARJ21 next year, Shanghai television reported.

China has bigger ambitions than a regional jet. COMAC has just started assembling the C919, a 158-168 seat narrow-body [jet](#) that would compete with Boeing's 737 and the A320 of European consortium Airbus.

The Chinese company is also developing a wide-body [passenger plane](#)—tentatively called the C929—in cooperation with Russia's United Aircraft Corp.

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