

AUTOS

Nissan aims to ‘max out’ U.S. production plant amid Trump’s tariffs

PUBLISHED WED, APR 16 2025•2:50 PM EDT UPDATED WED, APR 16 2025•3:00 PM EDT



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KEY POINTS

Nissan Motor aims to “max out” production at its largest American production plant amid President Donald Trump’s 25% auto tariffs.

Christian Meunier, chairman of Nissan Americas, said the tariffs are accelerating already needed plans for the automaker to increase domestic production to assist in a turnaround of its embattled U.S. operations.

The automaker’s 6-million-square-foot facility in Smyrna, Tennessee, is capable of producing 640,000 vehicles a year on three shifts, Meunier said.

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FILE PHOTO: The American flag flutters at a Nissan automobile dealership in Irvine, California, U.S., March 27, 2025.

Mike Blake | Reuters

[Nissan Motor's](#) new Americas leader said the automaker is aiming to “max out” production at its largest American production plant amid [President Donald Trump's 25% auto tariffs](#).

Christian Meunier, who started as chairman of Nissan Americas [in January](#), said the tariffs are accelerating already needed plans for the automaker to increase domestic production to assist in a turnaround of its embattled U.S. operations.

“We have big facilities, big capacities and today we don’t have max capacity. We still have more room to improve our capacity,” Meunier told CNBC during a virtual interview Wednesday. “We’re looking into selling more of the U.S. products, and adjusting, along the way, vehicles that are coming from Mexico and from Japan.”

Meunier said his “ultimate goal” is to “max out” capacity at the automaker’s 6-million-square-foot facility [in Smyrna, Tennessee](#). The facility is capable of producing 640,000 vehicles a year on three shifts, he said. It produced more than 314,500 vehicles last year on two shifts with about 5,700 people.

“We’re looking at maxing out capacity and making Smyrna the powerhouse that it used to be,” he said. “That’s my ultimate goal ... to get the plant full and make a lot of money again.”

Meunier declined to speculate on a timeframe for hitting that maximum production at the plant, which currently makes four products, including the automaker's Nissan Rogue – its top-selling vehicle domestically. He said it takes time to change plans and move production.

“We can increase production, as I described on the existing models that we have in the U.S., and commit to a plan to bring a product the next two years ... or a couple products to the U.S. market. But it cannot happen overnight,” he said.

Meunier's comments come two days after Trump said he's looking to potentially “help” some automakers, [saying the companies need time](#) to alter production plans.



Christian Meunier, then-chief executive officer of the Jeep brand at Stellantis NV, during the 2023 New York International Auto Show (NYIAS) in New York, on Wednesday, April 5, 2023.

Stephanie Keith | Bloomberg | Getty Images

Nissan is looking at adding hybrid production to Smyrna as well as new products such as an Infiniti model, Meunier said. He also said the company is analyzing production increases for powertrain components such as engines and increasing domestic content.

“The good thing is, we have flexibility. We have an ability for us to to accelerate, to do things faster than we would have normally,” Meunier said. “I was already working on it before the tariff, because I, I’m convinced that localization is the way.”

Tariffs on imported vehicles into the U.S. have been [in effect since April 3](#), despite Trump's pullback last week on other country-based levies. [Additional 25% tariffs on auto parts](#) are scheduled to take effect by May 3.

Meunier said those potential parts tariffs would hurt the company and its plans.

“Hopefully there will be solutions that don’t hurt completely, to a full extent at 25% because that’s a lot,” he said. “Hopefully there will be a compromise in between.”

Nissan has two assembly plants in Mexico that produce a variety of vehicles, including imports such as the Nissan Kicks and Nissan Versa. In 2024, Nissan reportedly produced nearly 670,000 units in Mexico, with over 456,000 being exported, according to [UnoTV in Mexico](#).

Autoworkers at Nissan's Smyrna Vehicle Assembly Plant in Tennessee, June 6, 2022. The plant employs thousands of people and produces a variety of vehicles, including the Leaf EV and Rogue crossover.

Michael Wayland / CNBC

In the U.S., Nissan says it has assembly facilities capable of producing more than 1 million vehicles, 1.4 million engines, 1.4 million forgings and 456,000 castings annually. Of that full capacity, the automaker produced nearly 525,600 vehicles in the U.S. in 2024.

Other than Smyrna, the company has a large powertrain plant in Tennessee and another large vehicle assembly plant in Canton, Mississippi.

The Canton plant currently produces the Nissan Altima sedan and Nissan Frontier midsize pickup truck. It employs roughly 5,000 workers on a single shift for the Altima and two shifts for the Frontier.

The Rogue and the Pathfinder, as well as the Frontier, which has experienced significant market share declines in recent years to roughly 7% to 8% of its segment, are among the vehicles with the greatest growth potential for Nissan in the U.S., Meunier said.

[Nissan lowered pricing](#) of the Rogue and Pathfinder by between \$640 and nearly \$2,000, depending on the vehicle and model, in response to the tariffs. It also stopped taking new orders from the U.S. for two Mexican-built SUVs for its Infiniti luxury brand.

“Nissan has struggled a little bit lately, but we have a good plan,” he said. “We have good product in the pipeline. We’re launching super good product now that are successful, and we’re gonna turn it around despite the tariff.”

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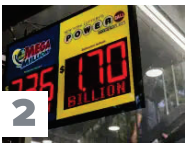
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