

Media Information
11 December 2025

50 years of BMW 3 Series production – an international success story

+++ Over 18 million BMW 3 Series built worldwide +++ Manufactured at 18 plants in 13 countries since 1975 +++ A driving force for the production network and a trailblazer for the BMW iFACTORY +++

Munich. Built on four continents, the BMW 3 Series has been one of the most important products in the BMW Group's international production network for 50 years. Since manufacturing began in 1975, the BMW 3 Series has rolled off the assembly line more than 18 million times at 18 plants across 13 countries. Core themes of the BMW iFACTORY – such as efficiency, flexibility, digitalisation and resource-efficient production – thread consistently throughout the production history of the BMW 3 Series.

BMW Group Plant Munich: Origins and role as a technology pioneer

The main plant in Munich has been the centre of BMW 3 Series production since 1975. From an early stage, the BMW Group committed to flexible manufacturing at the site, enabled by modern technologies, such as overhead conveyor systems and freely programmable welding machines. A fully-automated body shop was introduced in Munich in 1982 for the second generation of the BMW 3 Series. Through the use of industrial robots, it was possible to achieve an automation rate of more than 90 percent for this technology. Supplemented by flexible shift systems and modified work-time models, capacity increased significantly. Continuous modernisation, from powder coating technologies to computer-controlled engine production, ensured that the facility always remained state-of-the-art. Today, the plant deploys numerous digitalisation applications and AI-supported quality systems. In this way, the BMW 3 Series has consistently been a major driving force for the technological development of BMW Group production.

BMW 3 Series as a driver of growth and internationalisation

Volume growth at the plants was also influenced by the BMW 3 Series. In 1980, 3 Series production expanded from the main plant in Munich to Plant Dingolfing, and later to Plant Regensburg in 1986. The BMW 3 Series also provided the momentum for the internationalisation of BMW production. In the 1980s, additional production lines were established at other sites, including Rosslyn, South Africa (from 1984) and Spartanburg in the United States (from 1994). These locations enabled local supply for their respective markets and laid the foundations for the company's global distribution of value creation – today, a key feature of the BMW Group production network.

The BMW 3 Series – an enabler for new plants

Since the opening of the Regensburg plant, the BMW 3 Series has served as the enabler for all new BMW plants – with the exception of the facility in Debrecen. The plants in Spartanburg, Leipzig and San Luis Potosí, as well as the BBA joint venture in China, all initially ramped up with the BMW 3 Series. Over the decades, various 3 Series derivatives – ranging from sedans and convertibles to Touring and M versions – have been produced at nearly all BMW Group plants with maximum flexibility. Multiple derivatives and different drive technologies – vehicles with internal combustion engines, plug-in hybrids and fully-electric drive trains – all come off the same assembly line.

Today, the seventh generation of the BMW 3 Series is produced in Munich, Shenyang (China), San Luis Potosí (Mexico) and at the company's own regional plants in Chennai (India), Rayong (Thailand) and Araquari (Brazil), as well as at partner plants in further countries.

Preparations for the eighth generation of the successful model series are proceeding in parallel: A fully-electric version of the BMW 3 Series will ramp up at Plant Munich from the second half of 2026 as the next vehicle of the NEUE

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KLASSE, with subsequent production in China and Mexico. A return of the BMW 3 Series to Plant Dingolfing is also planned.

Seven generations of the BMW 3 Series across the production network (full plants)

What	Plants	When
1st generation 3 Series Sedan	Munich, Dingolfing	1975-1983
2nd generation 3 Series Sedan, Convertible, Touring, M3 (Coupé and Convertible)	Munich, Dingolfing, Regensburg, Rosslyn (Südafrika)	1982-1994
3rd generation 3 Series Sedan, Coupé, Convertible, Touring, Compact, M3 (Sedan, Coupé, Convertible)	Munich, Dingolfing, Regensburg, Spartanburg (USA), Rosslyn (South Africa)	1990-2000
4th generation 3 Series Sedan, Coupé, Convertible, Touring, Compact, M3 (Coupé, Convertible)	Munich, Dingolfing, Regensburg, Rosslyn (South Africa)	1997-2006
5th generation 3 Series Sedan, Coupé, Convertible, Touring, M3 (Sedan, Coupé, Convertible)	Munich, Regensburg, Rosslyn (South Africa), Dadong (China), Leipzig	2004-2013
6th generation 3 Series Sedan, Touring, Gran Turismo, M3 (Sedan) The Sedan, Touring and Gran Turismo continued to be marketed as the BMW 3 Series, while the Convertible, Coupé and new Gran Coupé formed a separate family for the first time: the BMW 4 Series range.	Munich, Dingolfing, Regensburg, Rosslyn (South Africa), Tiexi (China)	2011-2021
7th generation 3 Series Sedan, Touring, M3 (Sedan, Touring), i3 (fully-electric, China only)	Munich, Tiexi (China), San Luis Potosí (Mexico)	since 2018

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The BMW Group

With its four brands, BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial services. The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2024, the BMW Group sold 2.45 million passenger vehicles and more than 210,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2024 was € 11.0 billion on revenues amounting to € 142.4 billion. As of 31 December 2024, the BMW Group had a workforce of 159,104 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. Sustainability is a key component of the BMW Group's corporate strategy – from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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