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switchover process offers opportunities to reduce both fuel consumption and maintenance downtime. Elsewhere, the removable equipment box on the VRS can feature either a 1000- or 2000-litre fuel tank with a separate oil cooler, alongside electrical supply and electronic control elements.

Reaching new heights

Quizzing reachstacker manufacturers about their market always gleans plenty of detailed responses and updates. That's because it's a consistently intriguing, evolving area of maritime cargo handling. Tim Newbound gets the lowdown on the latest news and views...

Evolution by extension

The role of an extendable wheelbase in handling heavier loads is one of the star features of the CES VRS family of reachstackers. CES - which is headquartered in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, and runs its production from Domegliara, Italy - has developed these unique machines to have a lifting capacity of up to 250 tonnes, responding to operator demand. There are now a number of product variants: a standard series with a lifting capacity of between 42 and 50 tonnes; a Combi series with a heavy-load spreader capable of lifting between 57 and 90 tonnes, and finally the Heavy Duty series - which will be available from the middle of this year - with lifting capacities of 125, 150 and 250 tonnes. The first two Heavy Duty models are purportedly set for delivery in June. The acronymic 'VRS' element of the models' names stands for 'versatile reachstacker.'

This denotes the machines' manoeuvrability, adaptability to handle different cargoes, and of course the variable wheelbase that can be moved mechanically or hydraulically in five steps between 6.5 and 8.5 meters.

This wheelbase set-up allows the machines to adjust to shifting operating requirements. The 8.5-meter base on the VRS-F model in the standard series, for example, enables the reachstacker to handle containers and heavy goods of up to 32 tonnes from the third row, or 39 tonnes with additional hydraulic support. Alternatively, with a short wheelbase of 6.5 meters, it can handle loads of 27 tonnes, or 32 with hydraulic support. A range of counterweights and quick-change rims with 18.00-25 or 18.00-33 tyres can support these calibrations. Other VRS characteristics include a sliding and tiltable, ergonomically designed cab with air conditioning and an air-cushioned seat. The machines also feature a PowerPack that can be connected to the reachstacker by quick-release fasteners - containing the diesel engine, radiator, battery, hydraulic pumps, distributor and oil tank. This can be fitted with Cummins or Volvo diesel engines of between 250 and 320 bhp, and can be changed for a different box within just 30 minutes - for example if a machine is switching from laden to empty container handling. This quick