

Case IH History

A major global player in the farm equipment market, Case IH traces its history back to the 1842 founding in Wisconsin, USA, of the Racine Threshing Machine Works by Jerome Increase Case, and the 1847 creation in Chicago, USA, of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company by Cyrus McCormick, who had first demonstrated a successful reaper in 1831, patenting it three years later.

In 1901, McCormick merged his business with that of three fellow farm equipment firms, Plano, Milwaukee, and Wardner, Bushnell and Glessner, to form International Harvester (IH). In addition to developing interests in construction equipment and trucks, IH went to onto design extremely successful agricultural products such as the Farmall tractor and the Axial-Flow combine.

Meanwhile, the JI Case business also grew rapidly in the 20th century, developing a range of tractors and farm equipment and attracting the attention of the Kern County Land Company (KCLC), which purchased a majority stake in the business in 1964. Three years later, KCLC was bought by Tenneco, which made a further investment in farm equipment in 1972 by also purchasing British tractor maker David Brown.

On November 26, 1984, Tenneco purchased International Harvester's agricultural equipment division, following the latter's decision to dispose of key assets and refocus on its truck and engine businesses. JI Case remained the title of the Tenneco's farm machinery business unit, but the merged line of tractors plus combines and other equipment took on a new red-and-black livery and Case International branding.

Two years later, JI Case bought Steiger Tractor Inc, of Fargo, North Dakota, and its line of high-hp articulated tractors designed for high-output arable farming.

A change of business direction saw Tenneco decide in 1994 to exit the farm and construction equipment businesses by making a public offering of shares in the newly-named Case Corporation, which switched from branding its machines as 'Case International' to 'Case IH'. The now-independent business went on to expand further, in 1996 purchasing Steyr, an independent Austrian tractor maker with a strong reputation for the quality of its engineering, through which Case IH went on to lead the way in the development of a continuously-variable transmission, the CVX. In the same year it launched the Quadtrac, a revolutionary reworking of the high-horsepower wheeled articulated tractor design to incorporate four independent rubber track drive units.

In 1999, the Fiat Group, which was looking to grow its worldwide farm equipment business and build on the success of its offering under the New Holland brand, agreed to purchase Case Corporation. The transaction led to the formation of a CNH Global, a new company within the Fiat Group. The New Holland and Case IH brands were retained and, following the forced divestiture of certain factories and product lines to gain approval from competition authorities for the merger, it was decided to adopt a common platform manufacturing approach but retain distinct identities and features for each brand. Today, Case IH equipment is found on farms worldwide, with a full line of machines under names with legendary reputations, including Farmall, Magnum, Axial-Flow, Steiger and Quadtrac.