

New Holland Agriculture History

New Holland traces its roots back to 1895, when Abram Zimmerman founded a blacksmith shop in the Pennsylvania, USA, town of that name. In order to expand his business, he began retailing stationary engines to power farm machines such as animal feed mills, but his customers often found that the units froze during harsh winters. This led him to develop a freeze-proof engine of his own design. Although it underwent changes of ownership and management, the New Holland Machine Company grew to later develop a number of successful farm implements, notably the first self-tying pick-up baler. In 1947, New Holland was acquired by Sperry Rand Corporation.



Meanwhile, in 1906, Belgian engineer Leon Claeys founded a threshing machine manufacturing business in the town of Zedelgem, building machines to remove the grain from pre-cut crops. His firm went on to develop Europe's first self-propelled combine harvester, a machine with its own engine that combined the cutting and threshing processes. In 1964, Sperry Rand acquired Claeys, and rebranded its products with the anglicised Clayson name.

Automotive pioneer Henry Ford manufactured the first Fordson tractor, the Model F, in 1917 in the United States. His firm went on to develop legendary tractor names such as the Dexta and Major, and factories including one at Basildon, close to London.

Just a year later, in 1918, Fiat demonstrated its first tractor, the 20hp petrol engine 702. Fiat (Fabbrica Italiana di Automobili Torino) had been founded in Turin, Italy, in 1899 by a group of engineers and investors including Giovanni Agnelli. The first vehicles it built were cars, but the firm soon diversified into heavier goods, such as trucks, buses and tractors. Later, Fiat created an agricultural division, Fiat Trattori, which in 1974 became Fiatagri, when it branched into other areas of farm machinery. At this time Fiat also created a joint construction machinery venture, FiatAllis. The Fiatagri and FiatAllis business units were later merged to create Fiat Geotech.

The decision in 1986 by Sperry Corporation to exit the farm equipment business resulted in Ford, previously a manufacturer only of tractors in terms of agricultural machines, choosing to purchase New Holland, giving it a full line of harvesting machinery. It retained the Ford name and blue colour for its tractors, and the yellow and red liveries and New Holland name for the harvesting equipment, within a new business unit, Ford New Holland, operating as part of the Ford parent company.

In 1990, Ford decided to sell its farm and construction equipment interests, and in 1991 reached agreement with Fiat Group for the sale of Ford New Holland to Fiat Geotech. The merger created a new entity, N.H. Geotech, and it was decided to group the Ford, Fiat and other products under a neutral, globally-recognisable brand, New Holland, with the former Ford and Fiatagri names gradually phased out but the familiar former Fiatagri leaf logo retained.

Today, as part of CNH Industrial, New Holland retains a leading position in farm equipment, at the cutting edge of developments in tractors, harvesters, materials handling equipment and other machinery. Among its sites, it still manufactures in the town of New Holland. But it also recognises the need for farmers and farm equipment makers to be seen as leading the fight against climate change, and New Holland is a leader in clean energy, developing prototype hydrogen and methane power for tractors and actively participates in an energy-neutral farm.