

Farmall

F-14

Rock Island, IL 1939



At first glance, the International Harvester logo is just a black-colored 'H' with a giant red dotted 'I' in the middle. To farmers and anyone well familiar with the tractor model, they know the 'H' symbolizes the back of the wheels and axle of a tractor, the lower part of the 'I' is the body of the tractor, and the dot of the 'I' is the driver's head.

In 1902, the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company and Deering Harvester Company, along with three smaller agricultural equipment firms, (Milwaukee; Plano; and Warder, Bushnell, and Glessner —manufacturers of Champion brand) merged to create the International Harvester Company.

Around 1920, as IHC's motor cultivator died, their team of engineers was experimenting with an all-purpose tractor that would replace the horse in every job, including cultivating. By 1923, they settled on a configuration, and their informal name for the project, the "Farmall," was selected as the product's official name. It was maneuverable and had enough ground clearance to cultivate row crops. The Farmall was tall and narrow, so the farmer could see around the engine and prevent the cultivator hoes from plowing plants rather than weeds. However, IHC management was concerned the new high-riding tricycle design, a rather spindly-looking thing to eyes of the early 1920s, might turn off customers. For this reason, the Farmall was initially released only in Texas in order to minimize potential embarrassment if the design proved to be unsuccessful. However, the

new tractor did its many jobs well and hence sold well, and by 1926, IHC was ready for large-scale production at its new Farmall Works plant in Rock Island, Illinois.

Although the Farmall never reached the per-year production numbers of the Fordson during the 1920s, it was the tractor that prevented the Fordson from completely owning the market on small, lightweight, mass-produced, affordable tractors for the small or medium family farm. Its narrow-front tricycle design, power takeoff (a feature on which IHC was an early leader), standard mounting points for cultivators, and other implements on the tractor's frame (a Farmall first) gave it some competitive advantages over the Fordson, especially for row crops. It became the favorite row-crop tractor of America, outselling all other competitors (such as John Deere's).

The IHC produced only 25 models of the Farmall F-12 in 1932. After this initial sample production, the numbers rose to a total of 123,407 pieces. Production ended in 1938 when the more powerful F-14 was introduced. Like all Farmall tractors, this little unit could turn on a dime. It had an adjustable rear tread, could pull a two-bottom plow, was easy to handle, and proved to be ideal for light farm chores. It was one of the most economical tractors ever made, and on an average load, it only used two quarts of gasoline per hour.

This tractor is almost identical to the F-12. The only difference one could see right

off was the steering-shaft angle. The main difference, though, was a more powerful engine, which was big enough to handle two plows instead of one. Over 27,400 of these tractors were built from 1938 to 1939.

The Farmall tractors in 1939 proved a huge success, and IHC enjoyed a sales lead that continued through much of the 1940s and 1950s, despite stiff competition. IHC produced many tractors during their reign and were ranked as one of the largest manufacturers of farm tractors.



IHC, following long negotiations, agreed to sell its agricultural products division, name, and symbol to Tenneco, Inc. on Nov. 26, 1984. Tenneco had a subsidiary, J.I. Case, which manufactured tractors, but lacked the full line of farm implements that IHC produced: combines, cotton pickers, tillage equipment, etc.

The truck and engine divisions remained, and, in 1986, Harvester changed the corporate name to Navistar International Corporation. Navistar International Corporation continues to manufacture medium- and heavy-duty trucks, school buses, and engines under the International brand name.