

# **AS THE TRACTOR TIRE TURNS VERSATILE DID YOU KNOW . . .**



**THE VERSATILE BRAND IS THE ONLY CANADIAN MANUFACTURER OF AGRICULTURAL TRACTORS. ACCORDING TO VERSATILE'S WEBSITE, THE FACTORY IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA COVERS ALMOST 700,000 SQUARE FEET COMPLETE WITH MANUFACTURING, ASSEMBLY AND FULL R&D PLUS A 40-ACRE TEST SITE.**

**VERSATILE WAS THE FIRST COMPANY TO MASS-PRODUCE ARTICULATING FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE TRACTORS; PRODUCTION STARTED IN 1966 WITH THESE BEASTLY MODELS.**

1987 brought Versatile into the conglomerate of the Ford New Holland brand but in 2000 was sold to Buhler Industries Inc. where it became one of multiple facets of the expanding Buhler family of agricultural implements and attachments. 2001 brought news headlines when Buhler and the Canadian Auto Workers Union came to a head regarding a nine month strike followed by a lock-out. After the threat of Buhler taking the remaining Canadian tractor factory to Fargo, North Dakota and the lock-out of union workers, Buhler was forced by the Manitoba Labour authorities to pay \$17 million in back wages, pension and severance to the returning and laid off employees. Though the cost was high, Buhler was successful in getting rid of the Union in their Versatile plant.

Controversy didn't end for the Versatile name there; seven years after being purchased by Russian company, Combine Factory Rostselmash Ltd. in 2007, Russia invaded the Crimean Peninsula in an attempt to annex Ukraine's territory by force. This created international news and unrest as the Cold-War tensions began to rise again. Where is the connection with Versatile you might be wondering? Well, Konstantine Babkin a director of Combine Factory Rostselmash Ltd. – is also co-founder and leader of the Action Party of Russia which supports Putin and the Kremlin. Babkin also went on record supporting and encouraging the invasion of Ukraine. With this connection, the provincial and federal governments in Canada were closely monitoring Babkin and his Canadian assets as talks of sanctions, freezing of assets and travel bans came to the table.

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# FAWCETT

TRACTOR SUPPLY LTD.

Now, back to Versatile in Canada; over the years, and under the umbrella of Buhler, Versatile has added more to the line-up with self-propelled sprayers, combines, implements and tillage through the partnerships and acquisition of other Canadian companies such as Ezee-On.

2013 brought the DeltaTrack to put Versatile in the track machine market that had started to gain fringe interest in the 70s with Caterpillar's attempt to dive into the agriculture sector. This was prompted by Cat's decline in steel tracked industrial units in the fields and the discovery of track speed over wheel speed. 2016 saw Versatile celebrating 50 years of manufacturing and still in Winnipeg. 2017 brought a brand new look for Versatile with their new paint job added to the new logo brought out in 2008.

Moving forward, "In a continuing effort to realize the vision of becoming a full-line equipment manufacturer, Versatile is committed to developing new and innovative products, as well as improving upon existing technologies. Further investment in production, engineering, research and development is part of an ongoing effort to maintain and improve the product offering and market share."

Information: [www.versatile-ag.com](http://www.versatile-ag.com), [www.buhlerindustries.com](http://www.buhlerindustries.com), [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)  
[www.thegloebandmail.com](http://www.thegloebandmail.com), [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), [www.grainnews.ca](http://www.grainnews.ca)

