

Congress wants to ban sale of US farmland to foreign countries

By Julie Tomascik
TFB Editor

Congressional lawmakers are looking to crack down on foreign purchases of agricultural land in the U.S.

The House Appropriations Committee at the end of June voted to advance language that would ban companies from Russia, China, North Korea and Iran from purchasing U.S. agricultural land.

The provision, authored by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Washington), was included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Drug Administration funding bill. The bill was passed by members of the committee for floor debate in a 31-26 vote.

“More needs to be done to ensure the U.S. food supply chain is secure and independent,” Newhouse said.

House lawmakers warned that China’s presence in the American food system poses a national security risk, and this is the second year lawmakers have added language that would prevent China from acquiring more U.S. farmland.

“We’ve agreed to include additional adversaries to the base amendment this year given the horrific events in Ukraine at the hands of Russia and the Putin regime,” said Newhouse during the three-hour committee markup of the USDA-FDA bill. “As many members of this committee know, China, Russia, North

Korea, and Iran are not our allies.”

Who owns land in the U.S.?

According to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), foreign investors owned 37.6 million acres, which is 2.9% of U.S. agricultural land—both forest and farmland, at the end of 2020.

Of the 27.6 million acres, forests accounted for 46%. About 29% of the foreign-owned land was cropland, and pastures and other agricultural land accounted for 23%.

According to the report, Texas has the largest amount of foreign-held agricultural land with over 4.7 million acres. Maine has the second largest amount at just over 3.5 million acres, and Alabama comes in third with 1.8 million acres.

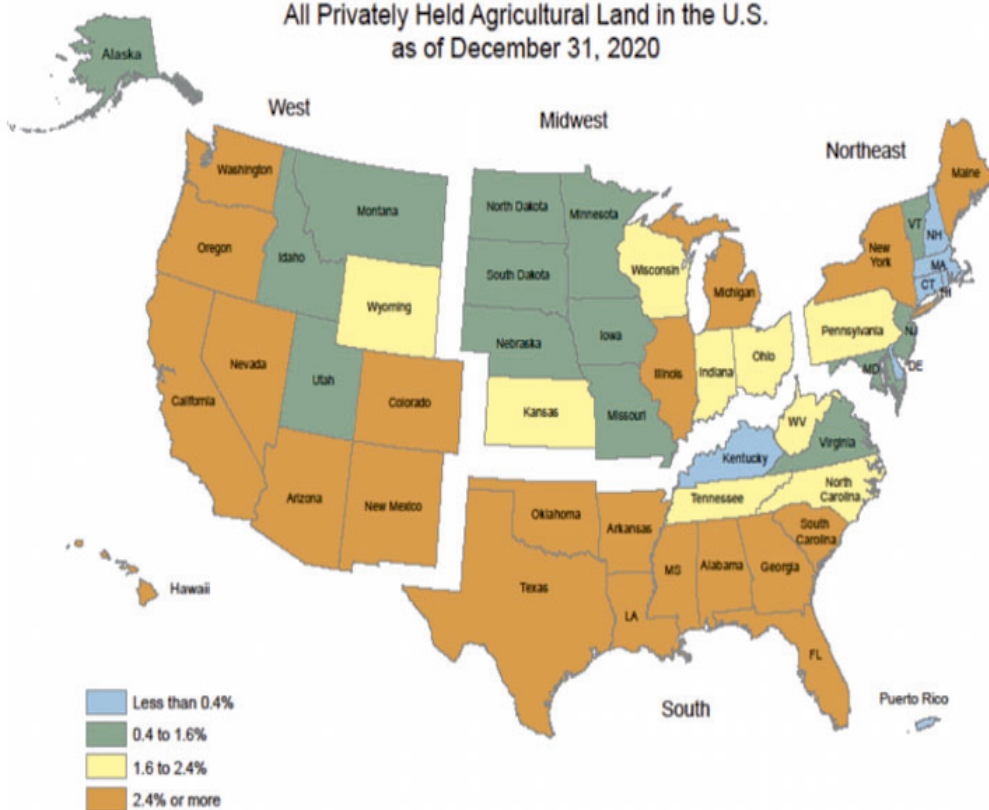
States showing the largest increases in foreign-held agricultural land acres in 2020 were Oklahoma with an increase of nearly 383,600 acres. Texas had an increase of about 287,000 acres, and Colorado had an increase of over 286,000 acres.

These three states combined had the 39% of the overall increase in acreage between 2019 and 2020.

To view the number of foreign-owned acres by county in Texas as of December 2020, view pages 97-103 in this report (https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/EPAS/PDF/2020_afida_annual_report.pdf).

Figure 1

Proportion of Foreign Held Agricultural Land to All Privately Held Agricultural Land in the U.S. as of December 31, 2020



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