



New Bill Would Create Public Database on Foreign Land Ownership

By Shelby Shank
Field Editor

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The issue of foreign ownership of agricultural land is becoming increasingly important with nearly 100 million acres of land expected to change hands in the next decade because of retirement.

A new bipartisan bill was introduced by U.S. Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) to further boost transparency in foreign ownership of U.S. farmland.

The Farmland Security Act of 2023 would require greater transparency of foreign purchases of U.S. agricultural land, impose stronger penalties for reporting non-compliance and mandate the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to audit a minimum of 10% of foreign agricultural land ownership reports annually.

“The world’s best farmland is located in America,” Grassley said. “Our foreign competitors recognize this and continue to invest in American agricultural land, increasing competition for young and beginning farmers and threatening our national security. Our bill gives Congress and the American people the resources to closely monitor these foreign sales in order to assess the risks they pose.”

The new legislation includes a transition to a digital filing system and a public database on foreign ownership for researching ownership trends. The bill would also require USDA to report on foreign investment impacts.

Under the bill, stricter penalties for non-compliant foreign owners or “shell companies” would remove the current fee cap of 25% of land valuation and instead impose a 100% land valuation fee for non-reporting shell companies, unless corrected within 60 days of notification.

The new bill also authorizes \$2 million annually for administration as amended in the 1978 Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act.

Other stipulations included in the bill require USDA to research foreign ownership of agricultural production capacity and foreign participation in U.S. agriculture. These stipulations also go along with investigations into the use of “shell companies.” State and county-level staff would be trained to identify non-reporting foreign-owned farmland.

Nearly 40 million acres of U.S. agricultural land are owned by foreign investors, according to USDA.

Texas has the largest amount of foreign-owned acreage at 4.7 million acres, mostly owned by Canadian investors.

Canadian investors also own the largest amount of acreage in the U.S., followed by the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany.