



Written by [David Kelly](#) on February 9, 2023

US, States Seek Farmland Restrictions for Foreign Nationals

Days after the suspected Chinese spy balloon crossed the nation, Americans are questioning how our government can keep us secure and protect us from any and all threats from countries like China. This includes asking why foreign countries currently own about [897 million acres](#) of American farm and forest land.

A Montana rancher, Michael Miller, who witnessed last week's Chinese balloon pass overhead questioned China's potential threat to our nation's economy. "Like many throughout the country, Miller wonders if stricter laws are needed to bar farmland sales to foreign nationals so power over agriculture and the food supply doesn't end up in the wrong hands," [reported](#) the Associated Press.



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"It's best not to have a foreign entity buying up land, especially one that's not really friendly to us," Miller told AP. "They are just going to take us over economically, instead of military-wise."

Many lawmakers across the nation feel the same way about foreign countries purchasing land, leading to at least 11 state legislatures considering measures to address their concerns. That includes Montana and North Dakota, where the "U.S. Air Force recently [warned](#) that a \$700 million corn mill proposed near a military base by the American subsidiary of a Chinese company would risk national security."

Last week, Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) [introduced](#) the Promoting Agriculture Safeguards and Security (PASS) Act "aimed at preventing China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from investing in, purchasing, leasing or otherwise acquiring U.S. farmland."

In their joint [press release](#), Tester and Rounds declared:

"As a third-generation Montana farmer, I'm not going to sit back and let our foreign adversaries weaken our national security by buying up American farmland," said Tester. "That's why I'm proud to be joining my friend Senator Rounds on this bipartisan effort to prevent foreign entities from acquiring U.S. farmland and ensure our farmers have a seat at the table when the government makes decisions impacting our national security."

"Protecting American farmland is critical to maintaining our national security," said Rounds. "In my travels around South Dakota, I have heard from many farmers and ranchers who are concerned about foreign adversaries owning American farmland. It is time to put a stop to this and take action. This legislation makes certain American interests are protected by blacklisting foreign adversaries from purchasing land or businesses involved in



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agriculture.”

Not only are lawmakers seeking to keep foreign adversaries from investing in American land and businesses, some are seeking to outright ban these countries’ citizens from buying land. *USA Today* [shared](#) that “lawmakers in Texas, Florida, Arkansas and in Congress have proposed laws banning citizens of China from buying land, homes or other buildings in the United States.”

A proposed bill ([SB-147](#)) in the Texas statehouse would bar purchases by people from North Korea, Russia, Iran, and China, including green-card holders, visa holders, and asylum seekers. The laws would not apply to U.S. citizens. Texas Governor Greg Abbott (R) earlier this year [said](#) he would sign it.

USA Today [reported](#) that “opponents of the proposals say backers are using familiar rhetoric to advance a racist agenda exploiting fear to attack outsiders”:

“It’s a resurrection of the ‘Yellow Peril’: We are outsiders who are threats,” said Russell Jeung, a professor of Asian American studies at San Francisco State University. “They are creating policies that aren’t grounded in evidence or sound economic analysis, but are really based on stereotypes and outsized fears. And it works.”

Manjusha Kulkarni, executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance and founder of Stop AAPI Hate [said](#), “It is scapegoating, it’s stigmatizing, and it plays into the view of Chinese Americans and Asian Americans as the perpetual foreigner: They can never be American enough, and when you put these policies into place, you perpetuate that stigma and the attacks on Asian Americans.”

Lawmakers seeking the restrictive legislation fear that the Chinese government is exploiting the openness of our society to spy, steal trade secrets, and otherwise undercut the United States by controlling critical supply chains. As of 2019, Smithfield Foods, a Chinese-owned company, held 76 percent of Chinese-owned farmland across the nation. They export pork products to China as the country seeks food resources around the world.

A recent [report](#) from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission warned that China’s need for food is driving its efforts to buy farmland abroad, along with buying or stealing the technology behind genetically modified crops, sophisticated livestock management systems, and advanced farming equipment.

“The United States is a global leader in all of these fields, making it a prime trading partner and often a target of China’s efforts to strengthen its agriculture sector and food security, sometimes through illicit means,” the report said. “These efforts present several risks to U.S. economic and national security.”

Foreign investment in the United States — especially from North Korea, Russia, Iran, and China — should be questioned and monitored as a potential threat. American lawmakers are on the right path to keeping our land secure while protecting our nation’s sovereignty.



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