



## USDA Data on Foreign Ownership

USDA reports foreign persons and entities held an interest in 35.2 million acres of U.S. agricultural land in 2019, accounting for 2.7% of all privately owned agricultural land. USDA reports that foreign holdings of U.S. agricultural land have increased by an average of 2.3 million acres per year since 2015. Most acreage increases were in forestland, cropland, and pasture. These data cover both foreign-owned and U.S. subsidiary-owned land. Forestland accounted for 49% of all foreign-owned private land in 2019, cropland accounted for 25%, and pasture and other agricultural land for 24%. Nonagricultural land, such as homesteads and roads, accounted for 2%.

Individuals and entities in five countries accounted for more than 62% of all foreign-owned agricultural land in 2019 (**Table 1**). As a share of all foreign-owned acres, these were Canada (29%, mostly forestland), the Netherlands (14%), Italy (7%), the United Kingdom (6%), and Germany (6%). Other countries with foreign investments of more than 500,000 acres were Portugal, Denmark, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Cayman Islands, Switzerland, and Japan.

All 50 states report foreign investment/ownership in U.S. private agricultural land (**Figure 2**). In 2019, states with the highest number of foreign-owned acres were Texas (4.4 million acres), Maine (3.3 million acres), Alabama (1.8 million acres), and Washington and Colorado (1.5 million acres each). Other states with more than 1 million foreign-owned acres were Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

**Table 1. Foreign Holdings of Agricultural Land, 2019**

	Ag. Acres (millions)	Share Foreign- Owned Ag. Land	Share All U.S. Private Ag. Land
Canada	10.4	29.6%	0.81%
Netherlands	4.8	13.7%	0.37%
Italy	2.5	7.2%	0.20%
United Kingdom	2.1	6.1%	0.17%
Germany	2.0	5.7%	0.16%
Portugal	1.5	4.2%	0.11%
Denmark	0.8	2.3%	0.06%
Luxembourg	0.8	2.2%	0.06%
Mexico	0.7	1.9%	0.05%
Cayman Islands	0.6	1.8%	0.05%
Switzerland	0.6	1.7%	0.05%
Japan	0.5	1.5%	0.04%
China (excl. Hong Kong)	0.2	<0.7%	<0.02%
Russian Federation	<0.1	<0.01%	<0.02%
Iran	<0.1	<0.01%	<0.02%
<b>Top 5 Countries</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>62.3%</b>	<b>1.70%</b>
<b>Top 10 Countries</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>74.7%</b>	<b>2.04%</b>
<b>All Other Countries</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>16.55%</b>	<b>0.39%</b>
<b>Country Not Listed</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Total Foreign-Held</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2.72%</b>

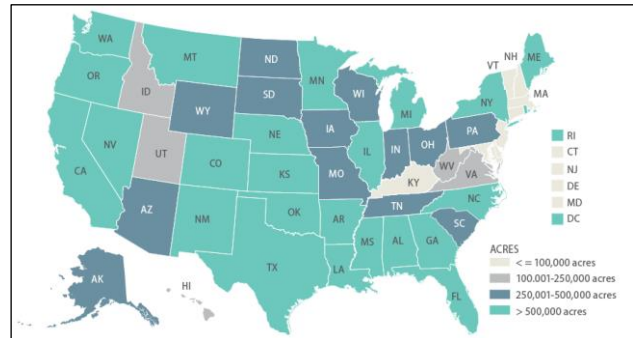
**Source:** CRS from USDA, *Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land through December 31, 2019*. Data are from Report 6, covering sole foreign and joint U.S. ownership (excluding nonagricultural land). “Country Not Listed” covers reporting codes 998 and 999. All private held agricultural land totaled 1,290.5 million acres in 2019.

**Note:** USDA’s data are self-reported and may include errors and omissions, as reported by the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting (<http://apps.investigatamidwest.org/afida/>).

## Introduced Legislation in Congress

Legislation before Congress seeks to increase oversight of foreign investment and ownership of U.S. agricultural land. Several bills would amend the Defense Production Act of 1950 (50 U.S.C. 4565(k)(2)) to include the Secretary of Agriculture as a member of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). USDA is not currently a member of CFIUS. CFIUS is an interagency committee authorized to review certain transactions involving foreign investment in the United States and real estate transactions by foreign persons, in order to determine the effect of such transactions on U.S. national security.

**Figure 2. Foreign Holdings of Agricultural Land, 2019**



**Source:** CRS from USDA data available at USDA, *Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land Through December 31, 2019*.

Bills that would include USDA as a member of CFIUS include H.R. 5490 (Foreign Adversary Risk Management Act); H.R. 3413/S. 1755 (Agricultural Security Risk Review Act); and S. 3089 (Food Security Is National Security Act of 2021). S. 3089 also would include the Secretary of Health and Human Services as a CFIUS member. None of these bills would otherwise modify CFIUS rules that might require under certain circumstances a CFIUS review of most agricultural land transactions. However, S. 3089 would require consideration of the “potential effects of the proposed or pending transaction on the security of the food and agriculture systems of the United States, including any effects on the availability of, access to, or safety and quality of food” in a CFIUS determination. H.R. 5490 also would require USDA and the Government Accountability Office to each conduct an analysis and report to Congress on the extent of foreign influence in the U.S. agriculture industry.

In addition, the House-passed FY2022 Agriculture appropriations bill would require USDA to take actions to “prohibit the purchase” of agricultural land by “companies owned, in full or in part, by China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea” (§777 of Division B in H.R. 4502). Similar provisions were not taken up in the Senate. USDA reports China, Russia, and Iran accounted for a combined total of 0.2 million acres in 2019, or less than 0.7% of all foreign-owned agricultural land (**Table 1**). China accounted for nearly all of this reported acreage (98%), most of which (about 60%) was attributable to the purchase of U.S. pork producer Smithfield Food by Chinese firm WH Group (formerly Shuanghui Int’l). USDA does not report any foreign-owned agricultural acres attributable to North Korea. The House Agriculture appropriations provision would further restrict such foreign-owned agricultural land

owned by China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea from being eligible to participate in programs administered by USDA.

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