

U.S. Sen. Baldwin, Grassley: Introduce legislation to scrutinize foreign-owned American farmland and protect rural communities

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 19, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced bipartisan legislation to increase transparency and oversight of foreign ownership in the American agricultural industry. The *Farmland Security Act of 2023* builds on the Senators' bipartisan [Farmland Security Act of 2022](#) by ensuring that all foreign investors, including “shell companies,” who buy American agriculture land report their holding, strengthening penalties for those who evade filing, and investing in research to better understand the impact foreign ownership of American farmland and agricultural production capacity has on our domestic food supply, family farms, and rural communities.

“Our agricultural economy is the beating heart of Wisconsin’s rural communities. But when foreign investors own farmland and agricultural processing capacity, it can put our national security, domestic food supply, and local communities at risk,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “The Farmland Security Act of 2023 will give the American public and Congress a clearer picture of who owns America’s heartland, while also investing in critical research to better understand how foreign ownership is impacting our rural communities, family farms, and national security.”

“The world’s best farmland is located in America,” **said Senator Grassley.** “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. I’ll always

fight to protect our farmland, preserve domestic agriculture and support local farmers.”

[Current reporting](#) shows that foreign-owned agricultural acreage has increased in recent years, however, the data that has been collected is incomplete or inaccurate. Senators Baldwin and Grassley previously led the [Farmland Security Act of 2022](#), signed into law as part of the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which required the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to address national security concerns surrounding foreign-owned farmland, including transitioning to digital filings of foreign purchases of domestic agricultural land; the creation of a publicly accessible database on foreign ownership data to enable research by outside entities into these ownership trends; and reporting by USDA to Congress on the impact of these investments.

The [Farmland Security Act of 2023](#) builds on their work by taking additional steps to support transparency, collect complete and accurate data on foreign ownership, and better understand the scale and impact of foreign ownership, including:

- Imposing new financial penalties on foreign owners or “shell companies” who fail to report or misreport their acreage;
- Requiring research into foreign ownership of agricultural production capacity and foreign participation in agricultural economic activity in the United States; and
- Directing USDA to conduct an annual compliance audit to ensure accuracy and provide annual training to state and county level USDA staff on identifying non-reporting foreign-owned agricultural land.

The *Farmland Security Act of 2023* is supported by Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and Wisconsin Farmers Union.

“Wisconsin Farmers Union members believe that our food system and agricultural lands belong in the hands of people rather than corporations and market institutions. We are concerned about foreign corporations buying up family farms and gaining the ability to control our domestic food supply. This bill is a step in the right direction. Knowing who is purchasing farmland is a form of national security,” **said Julie Keown-Bomar, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Farmers Union.**

“Foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land may be a threat to the U.S. food

industry but unfortunately our current reporting laws are insufficient to give us a complete picture,” **said Kevin Krentz, President of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau.** “That is why the Farmland Security Act is important. It builds on the changes that were made in 2022 and requires additional details to be reported. Who owns land in Wisconsin is important. Land purchases by foreign entities push beginning farmers out of the market and siphon money out of rural communities. Wisconsin Farm Bureau supports Sen. Baldwin’s efforts to increase reporting requirements for foreign ownership of agricultural land and the Farmland Security Act.”

A one-pager on this legislation is available [here](#). Full text of this legislation is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).