

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 18, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are alarmed by the pace at which Chinese companies have been purchasing U.S. agricultural land in recent years. Given this trend, we want to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has the reporting tools necessary to provide Americans with the fullest possible picture of all foreign purchases of United States land.

A May report from the China Economic and Security Review Commission suggests that People's Republic of China (PRC) is committed to acquiring foreign farmland to meet growing food supply demands that cannot currently be met at home. While entities originating from the PRC currently hold slightly less than one percent of all foreign-held acres in the United States, the volume of their holdings surged significantly, from 13,720 acres to 352,140 acres, between 2010 and 2020.¹

We are alarmed by the rapid increase in the amount of United States land acquired by Chinese entities, because no major economic activity originating from the PRC is transacted without the direct or indirect participation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which does not share our nation's democratic and free market values. Additionally, the PRC is a major global rival, and the CCP frequently engages in malicious practices: CCP-initiated intellectual property theft cost the United States an estimated \$600 billion in 2019, and over the last decade, CCP nationals have been prosecuted on multiple occasions for attempting to steal U.S. seed DNA information.²

If we look beyond just China, all foreign holdings of U.S. agricultural land have increased by an average of 2.3 million acres per year between 2015 and 2020.³ Fortunately, at least 74 percent of these foreign holdings originate from countries with which the United States has friendly

¹ See U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *China's Interests in U.S. Agriculture: Augmenting Food Security through Investment Abroad*, May 26, 2022, 13, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency, *Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land through December 31, 2020*, 2021, 4, https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/EPAS/PDF/2020_afida_annual_report.pdf

² Ag Web, *While America Slept, China Stole the Farm*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.agweb.com/news/business/technology/while-america-slept-china-stole-farm>

³ *Foreign Holdings*, 2021, 4, and *Foreign Holdings*, 2011, 192.

relations.⁴ However, in all foreign holding cases – potentially concerning or otherwise – our information appears to be largely limited to the reporting companies required under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA). This legislation, enacted in 1978, only requires foreign persons who buy, sell, or gain interest in U.S. agricultural land to disclose their holdings and transactions to USDA directly or to the Farm Service Agency county office where the land is located; the bill does not require details related to a company’s ownership structure or investment intentions.

To learn more about USDA’s process for compiling data and reporting on foreign purchases of U.S. agricultural land, we request you provide us with detailed answers to the following questions:

- Under AFIDA, USDA has authority to ensure foreign entities are meeting AFIDA reporting requirements. To what extent are enforcement mechanisms successfully prompting compliance?
- What process is USDA following to monitor changes in land usage between AFIDA reporting periods? Where is that data recorded?
- Currently, AFIDA uses the following categories: “timber of forest,” “cropland,” “pastureland,” “non-agricultural land,” and “other land.” Would USDA be able to provide a clear definition of “other agricultural land” and provide examples of what could fall within this category?

During this time of high inflation and supply chain challenges, food-producing land is more important than ever, and our constituents deserve to know as much as possible about foreign acquisition of domestic farmland, regardless of whether we are concerned about the motives of the parties involved. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

⁴ *Foreign Holdings*, 2019, 217 – 222.



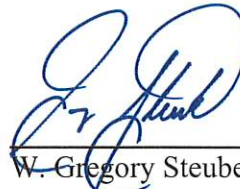
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



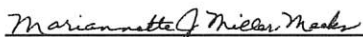
Mayra Flores
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
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Mariannette Miller-Meeks,
M.D.
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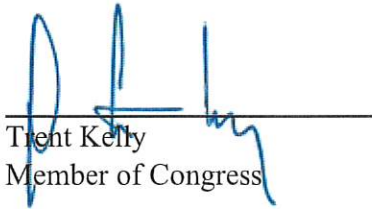
Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress



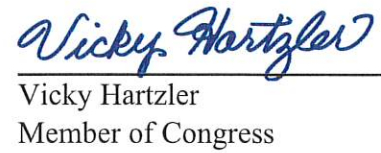
David G. Valadao
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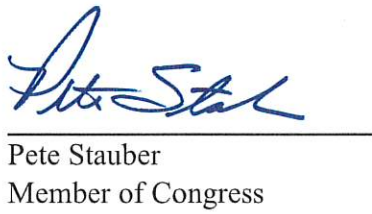
Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



Trent Kelly
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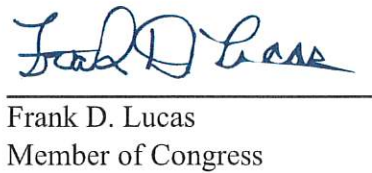
Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



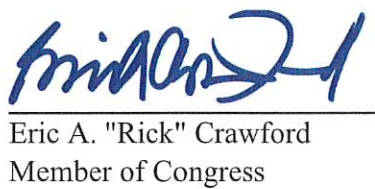
Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



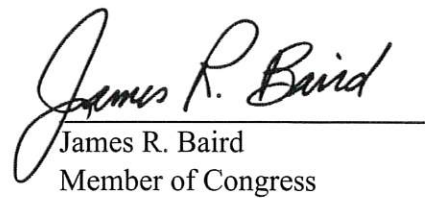
Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress



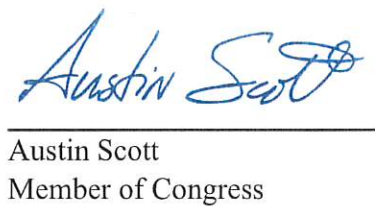
Dusty Johnson
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