
Editorial: We Can't Let China Buy Up New Jersey Farmland

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The following editorial by Senator Doug Steinhardt (R-23) on his legislation to ban foreign ownership of New Jersey farmland amid rising threats from China was [published by NJ.com](#) on January 29, 2023:

It may be China's intent to dominate the world and impose its will on other nations, but that doesn't mean we have to help them do it. Here in New Jersey, we should learn from what's happening in other states and stop the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from establishing strategic control over sprawling tracts of our farmland.



This editorial by Sen. Doug Steinhardt on his legislation to ban foreign ownership of New Jersey farms amid rising threats from China was [published by NJ.com](#) on January 29, 2023. (SenateNJ.com)

That's why [I've introduced a bill](#) in the state legislature, [S-3534](#), that would prohibit foreign ownership of New Jersey agricultural lands. When you recognize that food security is national security, it quickly becomes clear that we must protect our farms from falling under the control of foreign governments – especially ones that are hostile to our own national interests.

The Chinese have stated their goal of owning a wide variety of tangible assets worldwide, including agricultural land. And a look at the numbers indicates that they are making progress at America's expense.

As the [Wall Street Journal reported](#) last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated that in 2010, Chinese interests owned \$81 million worth of farmland in the United States. That figure multiplied more than 22 times — to \$1.8 billion — by 2020, a time frame of only 10 years. The USDA admits that these figures may not capture every land transaction, so there is little doubt that the totals are even higher now.

And in addition to land, the Chinese are also going after other agricultural properties.

WH Group, a massive meat and food processing company, is headquartered in Hong Kong and is closely aligned with the Chinese government. In 2013, the Bank of China, which is controlled by the CCP, loaned the firm \$4 billion to buy Smithfield Foods, the world's largest pork producer located in southeastern Virginia.

So today, if you sink your teeth into any Smithfield product, including a Nathan's hot dog or deli meat from Armour, you're biting into food supplied by the Chinese. And most Americans don't even know it's happening.

Naturally, the problem has been noticed at the federal level, particularly after a Chinese business interest bought a parcel of land very [close to a U.S. military base](#) in North Dakota. The Fufeng Group snapped up 300 acres of land near Grand Forks Air Force Base, which prompted a letter of alarm from over 50 members of Congress to several Biden Cabinet officials in September of last year.

“Acquisitions of this magnitude pose a threat not only to our national security but also to our food security,” the lawmakers wrote. “According to the [USDA,] at the beginning of 2021, foreign investors held a stake in approximately 37.6 million acres of U.S. agricultural land.”

A similar situation arose in Texas in 2020, when a Chinese billionaire bought \$110 million worth of land to build a wind turbine farm. It doesn't take much examination to conclude that it's a bad idea to provide access to the electrical grid to foreign interests, never mind the fact that the tract of land is close to another U.S. Air Force base.

The problem will continue to get worse until states begin to monitor who is buying our farmland and take steps to prevent foreign purchases.

I'm concerned enough about China's efforts to financially invade this country that I'm also writing additional legislation to require the State Investment Council (SIC) to perform an expedited review of its investments in Chinese companies.

This will be important because the SIC manages the investment of \$95 billion in assets for the public employee pension funds of hundreds of thousands of active and retired state and local government workers.

There are some who dismiss concerns about Chinese encroachment into our agricultural space, describing it as paranoid and xenophobic. But it's important to note that our federal government already has taken action against other non-agricultural Chinese companies as threats to national security.

Last November, the [Federal Communications Commission banned](#) the use of communications

equipment from five Chinese technology firms, including Huawei, over concerns China could gain backdoor access to surveil and control our nation's telecommunications networks.

Additionally, there are mounting concerns about the security implications of the Chinese-owned social media application TikTok, which can influence tens of millions of Americans and allow access to their phones and electronic devices.

I was elected to the New Jersey Senate to look out for the interests of the people of the 23rd District. Stopping the Chinese Communists from controlling our food supply fits right into that job description, and I pledge to see this fight to the end.