

PASSED

135-112022

RESOLUTION: Requesting the State of Wisconsin Review and Revise its Policy on Foreign Ownership of Farmland by Entities Party to Adversarial Governments

TO THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

WHEREAS, according to the USDA, foreign agricultural interests in Wisconsin, as of December 31st, 2020, own over 500,000 acres of land in the state with that number rising by over 25,000 acres from 2019 to 2020 alone; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin law currently allows for ownership of up to 640 acres of agricultural or forestry land per foreign company or foreign individual; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic shows the need to localize supply chains, especially for food and medicine, and to keep them out of the hands of adversarial governments or entities party to adversarial governments; and

WHEREAS, with the reality that supply chain disruption could happen again in the future, it is prudent to limit the exposure of these critical supply chains to entities party to governments who routinely abuse human rights, violate international trade law and labor standards and seek to upend fair markets through state owned enterprises, monopolization or means that otherwise threaten food security and the Wisconsin family farming tradition.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors request that the State of Wisconsin, in the next legislative biennium, review and revise its policy on foreign ownership of farmland.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution is sent to Governor Tony Evers, all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature representing Winnebago County, the Wisconsin Counties Association and all other Wisconsin Counties.

Fiscal Note: *No fiscal impact.*

Respectfully submitted by:

JACOB FLOAM, District 16

NATE GUSTAFSON, District 28

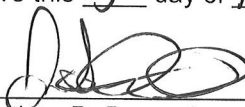
Respectfully submitted by:

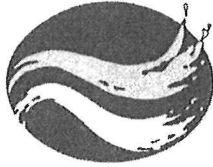
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Committee Vote: **10-1**

Vote Required for Passage: **Three-Quarters of those Members Present**

Approved by the Winnebago County Executive this 30th day of November, 2022.


Jonathan D. Doemel
Winnebago County Executive



Winnebago County
The Wave of the Future

Agenda Item Report

DATE: 9/6/2022

FROM: Supervisors Floam and Gustafson

RE: Resolution Concerning Foreign Ownership of Farmland by Entities Party to Adversarial Governments

General Description:

A resolution requesting that the state of Wisconsin, in its next legislative biennium, review and revise its policy on foreign ownership of farmland in order to secure our food supply chain and preclude bad international actors from owning farmland in Wisconsin.

Action Requested:

Motion to approve the attached resolution

Procedural Steps:

(Show each level of committee and board approval needed, with meeting dates.)

Committee of Jurisdiction: <u>Legislative</u>	Meeting date: <u>10/22</u>
Other Committee: _____	Meeting date: _____
Action taken: _____	Vote: _____
County Board: _____	Meeting date: _____

Background:

Family farming in Wisconsin is a tradition that we lose more and more of each day. Combined with an influx of foreign purchases of farmland and the subsequent supply chain disruptions in light of COVID-19, it has become clear that our food supply chain must be secured domestically and kept out of the hands of bad actors.

Currently, Wis. Stat. 710.02 prohibits one foreign individual or corporation from buying more than 640 acres for agriculture or forestry. While this law was enacted in 1887 and has been revised numerous times to lift the exemption on manufacturing, mining, railroads, and more (thanks in large part to the US being a signatory party to the GATS treaty), the 640 acre limit has held firm for these two aforementioned sectors. This is the only safeguard that exists in Wisconsin law as it stands. In 2014, then Attorney General Van Hollen released the attached AG's opinion which affirmed that the 640 acre limit

for agriculture and forestry is not superseded by GATS as the treaty primarily covers the service industry.

Fiscal Impact: \$0

Policy Discussion:

Winnebago County has the opportunity to lead Wisconsin's counties in having the state revisit this discussion. Foreign farmland purchases in the US and Wisconsin are on the rise. While most buyers are transparent, publicly traded firms from nations that follow the international rules of the road when it comes to trade and labor, not all are. It's been the policy of totalitarian foreign governments like the Communist Party of China and Russian Federation to purchase foreign assets in critical infrastructure and supply chains. This resolution encourages Madison to implement sensible reform to foreign purchases of farmland to keep the good actors involved, and the bad actors out.

Attachments:

Included with this memo is a short policy brief with charts and maps regarding foreign farmland ownership from USDA's 2020 AFIDA report, the draft board resolution, and a copy of Attorney General Van Hollen's 2014 opinion.

VOTE RESULTS

30 YES

5 NO

0 ABSTAIN

1 ABSENT

Resolution No. 135-112022

Foreign Ownership of Farmland

 Passed By 3/4 Vote

R. Dowling	AYE	S. Binder	AYE	K. Powers	AYE
R. Nichols	AYE	T. Swan	AYE	C. Hanson	AYE
T. Borchart	AYE	M. Robinson	AYE	M. Cox	AYE
P. Eisen	NAY	J. Floam	M AYE	N. Gustafson	AYE
K. Horan	AYE	J. Gordon	NAY	R. Youngquist	ABSENT
B. Defferding	AYE	J. Ponzer	NAY	C. Farrey	AYE
B. Ellenberger	AYE	J. Belville	AYE	R. Harrison	AYE
J. Wise	AYE	M. Norton	NAY	S. Zastera	AYE
D. Nussbaum	AYE	J. Hinz	AYE	T. Egan	AYE
B. Stafford	AYE	D. Zellmer	AYE	J. Beem	AYE
D. Albrecht	AYE	K. Schellenger	NAY	D. Nelson	AYE
M. Gabert	AYE	A. Buck	AYE	H. Miller	AYE



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 Winnipeg County November 15, 2022

