



Wyoming Legislature 2025

By the time this paper hits your mailboxes, the 2025 Wyoming Legislature will have adjourned. Wyoming is a Citizens Legislature meaning the legislators have jobs, families and homes in Wyoming communities. The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) thanks the Citizen Legislators for the time they give to serve Wyoming.

WyFB proudly represented member policy during the 2025 session and looks forward to continued work in the next interim. The range of policies worked this session included, but was not limited to, property tax relief, eminent domain, predator control, foreign land ownership and water rights. WyFB will have a full legislative update in the next issue of *Wyoming Agriculture*. ■

Foreign footprints: Trends in U.S. agricultural land ownership

BY DANIEL MUNCH, AFBF ECONOMIST

Foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land, which includes timberland, remains a widely debated and often controversial topic, fueled by concerns about the implications of foreign investments — especially those from nations viewed as adversarial to the U.S. Since our previous analysis, *Foreign Investment in U.S. Ag Land – The Latest Numbers*, two additional years of data — 2022 and 2023 — have become available.

This article updates the trends in foreign ownership, revealing a 1.58-million-acre increase in foreign-held agricultural land between 2022 and 2023, driven primarily by investments linked to renewable energy projects. At the same time, the data shows a decrease in acreage owned by Chinese-based entities, reflecting shifting patterns in foreign land acquisition.

Background

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA) requires foreign entities to report purchases, sales and interests in U.S. agricultural land to USDA via Form-153 submitted to the Farm Service Agency. It defines foreign entities broadly,

including individuals, companies and even foreign governments, but excludes U.S. citizens and green card holders. Non-compliance can result in fines up to 25% of the land's market value, though USDA has largely depended on voluntary self-reporting for its data.

In 2024, under heightened congressional scrutiny, USDA imposed a record \$1.2 million in penalties, including \$13,374 for non-filings and the remainder for late filings. While these penalties remain modest relative to USDA's full enforcement authority, they mark progress in strengthening oversight and compliance under AFIDA.

Additionally, 2023 saw a record number of AFIDA reports filed since the program's inception, with filings increasing by 5% compared to 2022. Of the 2,095 additional reports, 1,686 were tied to unique 2023 acquisitions, while 409 detailed transactions from prior years that likely should have been reported earlier. This surge in reporting may reflect growing public and congressional focus on foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land.


For a deeper dive into the limitations of data collection and enforcement under AFIDA and policy considerations related to the foreign

ownership topic area, see our previous analysis. Additionally, to learn more about the second key mechanism for scrutinizing foreign investments in U.S. agriculture, explore *How it Works — Understanding the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States*. Links available at www.fb.org/market-intel

Summary of Data

According to USDA's latest AFIDA report, 45.85 million acres of U.S. agricultural land were held by foreign investors in 2023, which represents 3.61% of total privately held agricultural land in the United States. This marks a 1.58-million-acre (3.6%) increase from 2022 and a 5-million-acre (12.2%) rise since our prior analysis based on 2021 data. Canadian investors own the largest portion of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land with 33.5% (15.35 million acres) of the total and 1.21% of all U.S. agricultural land. Following Canada, investors from the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany own 0.41% (5.2 million acres), 0.22% (2.7 million acres), 0.11% (2.6 million acres) and 0.20% (2.5 million acres) of U.S. agricultural land, respectively.

FOREIGN FOOTPRINTS ... Page 11



A glimpse of spring Sunrise to Sunset


SUBMITTED BY DIXIE ROTH, GOSHEN COUNTY
FARM BUREAU FEDERATION MEMBER

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS

- March 2025**
18 National Agriculture Day
19 Recipe Swap: "Eyes on the Horizon" hosted by the Converse County Farm Bureau Federation at 10 a.m.-Douglas
28 "Ag Books for Kids" contests county deadline
- April 2025**
11 "Ag Books for Kids" contests district deadline
- May 2025**
30 WyFB Membership Committee Meeting-Hilton Garden Inn in Casper
- November 2025**
13-15 WyFB 106th Annual Meeting-Gillette

Visit wyfb.org
for event updates

MEMBERS: Stay in the Loop!
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FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

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Wyoming farmers and ranchers through
grassroots policy development while
focusing on protecting private property
rights, strengthening agriculture, and
supporting farm and ranch families
through advocacy, education, and
leadership development.

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Strong Leadership, Stronger Future

Zippy Duvall
American Farm Bureau Federation President



America's farmers and ranchers are no strangers to uncertainty, but the challenges they face today call for immediate attention and decisive leadership. With the confirmation of Brooke Rollins as Secretary of Agriculture, USDA has the opportunity to continue its long history of working with farmers and ranchers to prioritize stability, security and sustainability, and we look forward to coming to the table to continue this work in the days ahead.

Secretary Rollins steps into this role at a pivotal time as farm country is facing economic pressure, unpredictable markets and policy decisions that could have long-lasting consequences. While we have confidence in her ability to navigate these challenges, the urgency of the situation requires strong leadership.

One of the most pressing concerns is the impact of tariffs on agricultural trade. Farmers rely on global markets to sell their products, and uncertainty in trade relationships with key partners could lead to significant financial strain across the agriculture economy and the 42.6 million U.S. jobs it supports. If trade conflicts escalate, farm families will be left with low prices or a surplus of crops with no viable markets

– something we simply cannot afford right now. Secretary Rollins will have a critical role in working across the administration to ensure that agricultural trade remains a priority and that American farmers are not caught in the crossfire of broader geopolitical disputes.

At home, recent uncertainty over government program funding left many farmers in limbo, unsure whether previously signed contracts would be upheld. However, Secretary Rollins took action to provide clarity with the White House releasing \$20 million in Inflation Reduction Act money for contracts signed with farmers under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. We're thankful the administration recognized the importance of making good on the first tranche of agreements, and we look forward to Rollins' continued leadership to fulfill USDA's other previously signed contracts.

Another pressing issue we will work with the Secretary to address is the promised disaster and economic aid that was authorized at the end of last year. The delays in getting those funds have caused unnecessary hardships, and with planting season

quickly approaching, timely assistance is critical. Farmers need relief so that they can focus on what they do best, producing the food, fiber and renewable fuel we all rely on.

Additionally, we look forward to working with Secretary Rollins and her team as we continue to call on Congress for a new, modernized farm bill that provides a necessary safety net for farmers. We need her as a strong advocate to get this across the finish line and ensure new programs reflect the realities of modern farming.

We also need her leadership in addressing reforms to the Farm Labor Survey. Agriculture has reached a crisis point when it comes to accessing – and affording – a stable workforce. Farmers across the country tell me this is one of the greatest challenges they face, and for many, labor costs and shortages threaten to put them out of business.

The list of priorities for farm and ranch families is long, but Secretary Rollins is up to the challenge. Her experience in Washington and her ability to navigate complex policy issues make her well-equipped to tackle the tough issues facing agriculture. We stand ready to work alongside her and the administration to ensure that government serves as a partner in the success of America's farmers and ranchers. ■

Together we grow

Kerin Clark
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President



Together we grow. We grow food. We grow economies. We grow leaders. We grow communities. Agriculture: Together We Grow.

It takes all kinds of farmers and ranchers to grow the different commodities needed to keep our nation fed and secure. In Wyoming, a state where there are more cattle than people, cattle and calves are ranked as the largest livestock commodity raised. Wyoming is the number one state in the nation for wool production and number four in the nation for sheep and lambs. Hay is the leading crop raised in Wyoming. Our farmers also grow corn, sugarbeets, wheat, barley and dry edible

beans. In fact, Wyoming is ranked fifth in the nation for barley production and seventh in the nation for pinto beans. The value added to Wyoming's economy by agriculture in 2023 was \$2.43 billion, according to the Wyoming Agricultural Statistics 2024 Bulletin.

In agriculture, we have the grand responsibility of not only making it work while we are here on earth, but making it work for future generations. To be a good steward means implementing the kind of management that works. Making careful and responsible choices for the land that we have been entrusted to care for is important and necessary.

Another important component of farming and ranching is growing together as leaders in agriculture advocacy. Involvement in agriculture policy issues is a crucial element of the farm or ranch business. We are proud of the leaders in this organization and the investment we make in supporting farmers and ranchers on their leadership journey. It takes all kinds of individuals collaborating to make good decisions. Working together our members add their perspectives for the good of agriculture. Whether you raise cows, sheep, barley, corn or you name the commodity...agriculture is strongest together.

Along with volunteering for the Farm Bureau Federation, we are proud of the additional contributions our members make in their communities. Whether they serve on school boards, are volunteer firefighters, serve at their church, or any number of volunteer activities, Farm Bureau Federation members value giving back to their communities. A strong sense of community and patriotism runs deep in Wyoming. Together we grow.

National Ag Day is March 18, 2025. The theme of "Agriculture: Together We Grow" is a vivid reminder of the strength in working together to grow food and keep agriculture strong for generations to come. ■



WyFB welcomes Alexis Lake as Member Engagement Coordinator

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) is pleased to welcome Alexis Lake as the Member Engagement Coordinator. Lake began with the organization on March 5. This position will work on member engagement and leadership development support for designated county Farm Bureau Federations as well as coordinate the Young Farmer & Rancher program.

Lake is a proud Wyoming native, born and raised in Laramie. She pursued her passion for agriculture by studying Animal Science at Butler Community College and Oklahoma State University (OSU). She graduates from OSU with her bachelor's degree in animal science this May. She was an active member of the livestock judging teams at both institutions highlighted by her Senior College Academic All-American honors, as well as being a member of the 2023 National Champion Livestock Judging Team.



Alexis Lake

Beyond the judging arena, Lake was very involved in agricultural leadership and research, she served as a member of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Encounter, Kansas Collegiate Farm Bureau, participated in undergraduate research, and engaged in various competitive teams and student organizations. These experiences reinforced her dedication to the agriculture industry.

"I am thrilled to return to my home state and join the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation team," Lake said. "I look forward to advocating for farmers and ranchers across Wyoming and supporting the industry that shaped me."

"We are excited to have Alexis join our team here at the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation," said WyFB Executive Vice President Kerin Clark. "Alexis brings a unique array of experiences as a competitor and leader in college activities. Her energy, knowledge and background in agriculture will be an outstanding addition to the agricultural advocacy work we do for Wyoming farmers and ranchers."

National news updates

BY KELLY CARPENTER,
POLICY ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

Secretarial and federal agency nominations and confirmations

In February, former Wyoming Game and Fish Department Director Brian Nesvik was nominated to become the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If confirmed, he will undoubtedly maintain his longtime philosophy of state management of all species.

Brooke Rollins was confirmed as the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Preliminary reports indicate that she is very friendly to the agricultural industry based on her work in the previous Trump Administration.

Former North Dakota Governor, Doug Burgum, has been confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Interior. He brings with him vast knowledge of western land issues as a former member of the Western Governors Association.

Former congressman Lee Zeldin of New York has been confirmed as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. He brings with him a track record of striking the critical balance between domestic energy production and protecting the environment.

On Feb. 27, Tom Schulz, University of Wyoming alum, was nominated to lead the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). As Chief of the USFS, Schulz will oversee approximately 193 million acres of forest and public lands. The Wyoming Congressional delegation has publicly stated they are hopeful that Schulz will do well in the position and align the USFS with the priorities of Wyoming's forest users and managers.

CTA BOI deadline halted again

Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) announced on Feb. 27, 2025, that it will halt enforcement of the Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) reporting requirements under the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) of 2021. This halt is stated to be in place until an interim rule that contains new effective dates is implemented.

As background, this Feb. 27 update on BOI reporting comes after a February 18, 2025 decision from U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas (Court) reinstated the filing requirements under the CTA. This came on the heels of the Court's decision in January that was initially a stay against enforcing any of the regulations required to implement the BOI reporting scheme in the case. However, the government appealed the decision and requested a lift of the stay while its appeal was heard. The Court granted the government's requests. FinCEN plans to initiate a process this year to revise the BOI reporting rule to reduce burden for lower-risk entities, including many U.S. small businesses.

Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3418- Unleashing American Energy

On Feb. 3, 2025, Secretary Burgum of the Department of Interior released a sweeping secretarial order that outlines his department's intentions to revise the Rock Springs and Buffalo Resource Management Plans. This is critical for Wyoming's communities and economy. The work now begins to find a favorable replacement or revision to these plans.

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FRONT

THIS PROGRAM IS NOT INSURANCE.

BACK

Opening doors to a bigger picture

BY CODY ALPS, WYFB YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER STATE CHAIR

While I was in high school, I participated in many different extracurricular activities, but I found myself most actively engaged in FFA. Through FFA I was able to learn about many aspects of agriculture, develop personal and leadership skills, and attend multiple FFA events from the local level to the national level. Years later after graduating from college, and transitioning into the workforce full time, I found myself missing something. While I found purpose in my work, something just felt off. I felt like I needed to be a part of something bigger than my family farm and ranch. That is until a few years ago when a friend of mine invited me to a Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) Conference. At that conference I reconnected with old friends from many years in FFA, and I realized there are many opportunities as adults that are similar to the opportunities I had as a kid in high school through FFA. Later that year I became a Farm Bureau Federation member, and ran for a position on the State YF&R Committee.

Flash forward to today. Having served on the State YF&R Committee for almost four years now I feel like I have a strong grasp on what the Farm Bureau Federation has to offer. Throughout my involvement in Farm Bureau, I have been a part of planning state conferences, participated in multiple community service projects, attended national events, and much more. Being engaged in Farm Bureau has opened the door to opportunities within Farm Bureau and outside of the organization. Since September of 2024 I have been in the Wyoming L.E.A.D Program Class 18. I first learned about the Wyoming L.E.A.D. Program from former L.E.A.D Alumni that are active in the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Both the L.E.A.D. Program and WFBF YF&R Committee have provided me with chances to expand my knowledge about agriculture and other related matters, and the opportunity to hone my leadership skills. With the trainings I have gone through I felt confident in my abilities to step up and volunteer for a new FFA Alumni and Ag Program Supporters group for my local

high school. Even though I was nervous about it, I even felt confident in going the extra mile and volunteered to be the Chair for the new group.

Networking has proven to be another great opportunity through Farm Bureau. I have had the chance to observe the Wyoming Legislature in action twice during this year's legislative proceedings. On both occasions I spoke with elected officials, state department leaders, and other agriculturalists across the state. While meeting with the elected officials in the state government I noticed talking with them was no different than talking with a neighbor. My experience with speaking to our lobbyists, state legislators, and state officials made me fully realize how much of an impact we can have.

The transition from a member to a leader is not something I considered when I joined Farm Bureau a few years ago. I am fortunate to be attending the American Farm Bureau Federation Fusion Conference in March this year to represent Wyoming as our State YF&R Chair. With the Fusion Conference being in Denver, Colorado our committee encouraged as many members to attend as we could. Between the State YF&R Committee, the WFBF state staff, and the collegiate students from the University of Wyoming and Sheridan College we have nearly 30 people from Wyoming attending the conference. As the WyFB YF&R State Chair I have been thrilled to see the engagement in the YF&R Program grow so much in the past couple of years!

Before I became involved with Farm Bureau I never would have guessed where it could lead me. Attending that first Farm Bureau event wasn't just going to a conference. It was opening doors down the road I did not realize were in my future. It led me to finding a sense of purpose in a "bigger picture" setting that I was searching for since graduating from college. All it took was one moment of getting involved to lead me down the path. ■

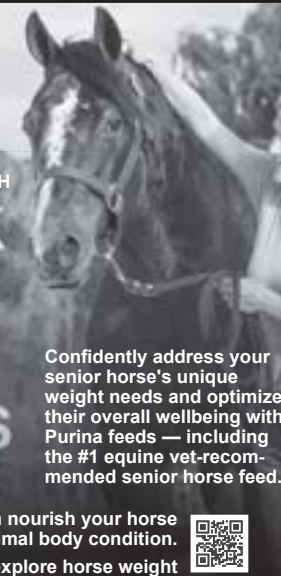
From Goshen County, Cody Alps has represented the Southeast District on the WyFB YF&R committee since 2021. He currently serves as the WyFB YF&R State Chair. Alps farms and ranches with his family near Yoder, Wyo.



Goshen County Farmer Cody Alps (center) with Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon (left) and WyFB President Todd Fornstrom (right) at the Wyoming Capitol. LILLY STEWART PHOTO.



Cody Alps (center) with his fellow Wyoming L.E.A.D. participants on the steps of the Wyoming Capitol. COURTESY PHOTO.




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Eyes on the Horizon Series

SUBMITTED BY CONNIE WERNER,
CONVERSE COUNTY FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION

This new creation coming out of Converse County Farm Bureau has the local board excited for the future. Looking around at other states it was clear that Wyoming could benefit from offering their farming and ranching community consistent relevant centered programs. This was the drive behind creating "Eyes on the Horizon." Our goal is to offer a variety of engaging, educational, and future driven opportunities to help our farms and ranches continue onto the next generations.

These informational offerings are open to everyone. We would like to see anyone attend that finds that topic of interest. It is not required that you are a Farm Bureau member or actively working in the farming and ranching industry. Converse County Farm Bureau is giving our Wyoming communities a place to meet, learn, and discuss topics facing our industry and communities. These programs will be held in regular in-person seminars, through zoom meetings, and informal gatherings.

Here is a look at what we have planned for 2025. Topics will include Women in Ag, legacy of farming and ranching, financial topics, transition planning, farm, ranch, & home issues, estate planning, health and mental health concerns, and many more. Make sure to follow our Facebook page for updated information as we finalize plans for each program. We hope that you will join us as we launch into the Eyes on the Horizon journey.

Please contact Connie Werner with any questions at 307-351-2148 or via email at conniewernerwy@gmail.com

March – Women's Gathering - cooking for a crowd recipe swap over coffee. Bring a recipe and receive a free coffee. March 19th 10am-12pm at Blend Coffee in Douglas

May – Jess Butler with the Converse County Weed and Pest-Presentation on current weed and pest issues, what to watch for over the summer, and programs being offered

June – Book Club- First 5 to register will get their book for free. Watch our Facebook page for book announcement and sign ups. We will meet in July via Zoom to discuss the book.

July – FireWire Safety -brought by a combination of Converse County Rural Fire, Douglas City Fire Personnel, and Forest Service personnel. Being prepared during fire season and tips for keeping your home safe.

August – Financial Help-QuickBooks Q&A for farms and ranches. What are you struggling with when doing your bookwork? – We will have a professional on hand to answer questions.

October – Book Club - Transition planning – "Best Practices" by Lisa Quist. First 5 to register get free books! Watch our Facebook page for information.

December – Insurance Q&A. Options and questions for insurance on farms and ranches. An insurance professional will be on hand to provide information. ■



Eyes on the Horizon

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ARROWQUIP

Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife
Stuffed Mushrooms

Recipe by Connie Werner

Ingredients

- 20 oz Baby Bella mushrooms, cleaned
- 1 1/2 tbsp butter
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 3/4 cup Chardonnay or dry white wine, divided
- 1/2 cup garlic and herb bread crumbs
- Gruyere cheese, thinly sliced

Directions

1. Remove stems and set aside. Place caps into a 9x13 inch pan.
2. Finely dice the stems.
3. In a non-stick skillet melt butter. Add the stems and sauté 2-3 minutes or until tender.
4. Add the salt, pepper, and minced garlic. Saute for 1 minute.
5. Next add the wine and bread crumbs. Stir until combined and the breadcrumbs have absorbed all the wine, about a minute.
6. Remove from heat.
7. Allow to cool for a few minutes. Stuff each mushroom with the breadcrumb mixture. Top each with the thinly sliced gruyere cheese.
8. Pour 1/4 cup of wine into the bottom of the pan.
9. Place into a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes or until mushrooms are tender and the cheese is melted. Enjoy!



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**Gov. Gordon
appoints Stacia
Berry director of
office of state lands
and investments**

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Gov. Mark Gordon has appointed Stacia Berry to serve as Director of the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments (OSLI), pending confirmation by the Wyoming Senate. She takes over from Interim Director Jason Crowder, who has led the agency since September following the departure of Jenifer Scoggin.

Berry has been a partner at Koch Law P.C. since 2022, where her practice included water, property law, land use and estate planning. She previously served as Deputy Director of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture from 2015-2022 and was an Attorney at Hageman Law P.C. She also served as the National FFA Secretary.

A fourth-generation Wyoming native whose great-grandparents homesteaded north of Cheyenne, Berry received her Bachelor's and Juris Doctorate degrees from the University of Wyoming. She also holds a Masters of Agricultural Science degree from Colorado State University.

"Stacia's extensive background in agriculture, her knowledge of Wyoming land issues and her willingness to listen and engage with stakeholders makes her an outstanding choice to lead the Office of State Lands," Governor Gordon said. "She is Wyoming through and through."

"I am honored and excited to serve the people of the State of Wyoming in this capacity," Berry said. ■



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Obituary



Eleanor Walters Hamilton

November 8, 1929 — February 24, 2025

Eleanor Walters Hamilton, a devoted ranch wife, mother, grandmother, and friend, peacefully passed away at the Central Wyoming Hospice and Transitions care facility on February 24, 2025 at the age of 95.

Eleanor Edith Walters was born on November 8, 1929 to Stanley and Helen Walters in Basin, Wyoming. She was raised on the family ranch in Hyattville, growing up with a deep appreciation for the land, hard work, and the simple joys of country life. This began her lifetime ranching pursuit.

Her mother moved to Basin with Eleanor and Ron so they could attend grade school. After attending 1st grade in Basin they then moved back to Hyattville and attended 2nd through 9th grades there.

When her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, Ron and Eleanor moved to Worland to finish high school. Eleanor’s mother lost her battle with cancer and passed away when she was 16.

She graduated in May of 1947 in Worland and was salutatorian of her graduating class. That fall Eleanor, along with her brother Ron, attended the University of Wyoming. During her junior year at the University, she met Merle Hamilton who was in his last quarter at the University. After Eleanor graduated with a degree in history, she and Merle were married on August 31, 1951 on the family ranch at Hyattville. They moved to the ranch shortly after they were married. Together they built a legacy on their beloved ranch, weathering the seasons with grit, faith, and an unwavering dedication to family and livestock. From early morning chores to home-cooked meals that nourished generations, she was the heart of the homestead, embodying resilience and grace in every task she undertook.

Merle and Eleanor raised two sons, Keith and Ken, instilling in them the values of hard work, honesty, and a deep respect for agriculture. Eleanor knew both the joys and hardships of ranch life. She experienced profound loss when her brother was tragically killed in a tractor accident on the family ranch in 1960. The tragedy left a lasting impact on her. Just a few years later, in 1964, she endured the heartbreak of losing her father, Stan, to cancer. Through these difficult times, Eleanor

remained a pillar of strength for her family, leaning on her faith and the support of community to carry on.

In 1968, Merle and Eleanor purchased her uncle and stepmother’s shares in Walters Brothers Ranch and took on the task of running the operation. Eleanor played a vital part in the ranch’s success. The ranch was later renamed Hamilton Ranch. A master of many skills, she could assist in the lambing barn, feed a baby calf, milk a cow, mend a torn seam, and prepare a feast—all in a single day. Eleanor would often be found on a Ford 8N tractor dragging the fields in the spring. She milked cows to be used to feed bum lambs and always raised chickens, ensuring a steady supply of eggs for the family breakfast.

Her hands were never idle, whether tending to the garden, canning fresh produce, or cleaning house. While doing ranch work she would raise a garden and canned hundreds of quarts of green beans and pickles and lots of frozen corn when she was able to beat out the skunks, coons and deer. In addition to raising a garden, she took great pride in caring for and maintaining the yard around the house her father built in the late 1930s.

Eleanor was a key contributor to the sheep operation, assisting with the newborns before breaking away to prepare the noon meal for all of the folks working on the lambing or shearing crew. Eleanor often claimed she wasn’t a great cook, but anyone that sat at her table knew otherwise, frequently asking for seconds if they were available, especially her mashed potatoes.

Eleanor rode thousands of miles alongside her husband, packing provisions and salt to the sheep camps in the “high country” each summer. She’d help with moving cattle from the lower elevations to the mountain and then help trail them home in the fall, always ensuring the crew had sandwiches and cookies to keep them going. Whenever there was work to be done in the sheep corrals, Eleanor was there. While she could hold her own working both cattle and sheep she would admit that her heart belonged to the sheep.

In addition to all of the ranch work and even though not an avid sports fan, she always made an effort to attend school

functions like the home football and basketball games her sons played. There were probably times she felt the referees weren’t the best but she would never think to “boo” their efforts - such behavior simply wasn’t in her nature.

Eleanor was active in the Hyattville Methodist Church and always joined the other community members in organizing the annual “church dinner” to help raise funds to support the church.

As she and her husband began to slow down, somewhere in their late 70’s they took the opportunity to travel to places around the United States and even to Canada and Australia. While Eleanor enjoyed seeing new places, she never liked to stay more than a day or so at any one place. When she set out to go someplace, she preferred to drive straight through and wasn’t prone to stop short of her destination. Her husband, on the other hand, liked to stop along the way, often striking up conversations with strangers, while Eleanor would gently remind him they needed to get going. With all of their travels however, coming back to the ranch was always her favorite part of the trip.


Eleanor, like many other ranch women, worked hard to ensure there were healthy calves and lambs to sell in the fall. She preserved food from her garden to help offset grocery costs and continued to pitch in wherever she was needed, even into her 80s. The work on a ranch never ends. Her legacy is one of love, faith, and the enduring strength of a ranch wife.

She is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Merle Hamilton, her parents and brother. She is survived by her sons Keith and Linda (Yeager) Hamilton of Hyattville, Ken and Kathy (Weirauch) Hamilton of Laramie, her grandchildren Diane (Hamilton) and Curt Cox of Casper, Doug and Michelle (Vigil) Hamilton of Worland, Ian Hamilton of Sheridan, and her great grandchildren Carter and Cooper Cox of Casper and Aspyn and Burgess Hamilton of Worland.

Eleanor wished to be cremated, and Newcomer Funeral Home in Casper honored her request. Her obituary and guest book can be found on their website. Services were held Tuesday March 4 at the Hyattville Community Center.

Those wishing to donate to the Hyattville Volunteer Fire Department or the Hyattville Community Center can do so in Eleanor’s name. ■

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Learn how energy and innovation are reshaping ranching. Learn to honor tradition while driving agricultural progress.

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Discover innovative opportunities in Wyoming's agricultural landscape. Explore the synergy of farming, tourism, and ranching.

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FOREIGN FOOTPRINTS... From Page 1

Since 2010, reported foreign-held agricultural land in the U.S. has grown by 21 million acres — an 85% increase — averaging an annual gain of 1.62 million acres. This expansion, equivalent to an area larger than the state of South Carolina, has raised foreign ownership from 2% to 3.6% of all privately held agricultural land in the country. In 2023, 48% (21.9 million acres) of reported foreign-held agricultural land was forestland, 29% (13.2 million acres) was cropland, 17% (7.7 million acres) was pastureland and 6% (2.9 million acres) was other agricultural land and non-ag land, which accounts for factors like owner or worker housing and rural roads. Over the past five years (between 2018 and 2023), foreign investments in U.S. agricultural land have seen growth across all categories: a 101% increase in cropland, 28% in forestland, 15% in pastureland and 38% in other agricultural land. This reveals heightened interest by foreign investors in cropland as opposed to other land categories.

By state, Texas has the largest quantity of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land at 5.7 million acres making up 3.6% of the state's 158 million acres of privately held agricultural land. Maine has the second-largest quantity of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land at 3.5 million acres but leads for highest proportion of foreign-held ag acreage with over 21% of the state's 16.5 million acres of ag land being held by foreign investors. In both Texas and Maine, foreign ownership is primarily driven by forest products and timber companies. Hawai'i also has a significant share of foreign-owned agricultural land, with 17% (283,000 of its 1.6 million agricultural acres) largely tied to renewable energy investments.

Change in foreign-held agricultural acreage by state from 2022-2023: Forty-two states saw increases in foreign-owned ag land, led by New Mexico (+358,149 acres), Texas (+223,165 acres), Arkansas (+182,955 acres), Oregon (+167,108 acres) and South Carolina (+84,708 acres). Growth in New Mexico and Texas is primarily tied to new or expanded wind energy investments, while increases in Arkansas, Oregon and South Carolina are largely linked to timber industry expansions. Hawai'i experienced the largest year-over-year percentage increase, with a 33% jump in foreign-held land, driven by wind energy projects.

Meanwhile, three states — Alaska, Connecticut and Rhode Island — along with Puerto Rico, had no change in foreign-owned acreage. Five states — Alabama, Michigan, Indiana, Montana and Iowa — experienced declines, with Alabama recording the largest numerical decrease (-158,068 acres) and percentage drop (-7%), primarily due to reduced holdings by foreign timber companies.

Renewable Energy Production Driving Foreign Investments

Under AFIDA, foreign investments in U.S. agricultural land include long-term leases of 10 years or more. This provision is particularly relevant for renewable energy companies, many of which, especially foreign entities, secure land through extended leases rather than outright purchases. This approach provides access to large tracts of land for projects like wind farms and solar arrays while minimizing the financial burden of ownership.

While AFIDA data does not specify the exact purpose of each foreign land acquisition, certain terms in the names of reporting entities — such as "wind," "solar," "energy" and "renewable" — can serve as proxies for

identifying renewable energy-focused companies. This analysis estimates the extent of foreign interest in U.S. agricultural land for renewable energy development over time by aggregating the acreage associated with these terms. Canadian investors accounted for the largest share at 5.5 million acres, followed by Italian investors with 2.57 million acres and Portuguese investors with 1.2 million acres. Notably, of the top 10 nations in this category, only one — Australia — is located outside Europe, reflecting the region's commitment to renewable energy development and compliance with government mandates for carbon emissions reductions, which likely drive these investments.

In 2023, over 70% of the acreage linked to renewable energy companies was cropland, with 22% classified as pastureland, 6% as other agricultural land, and the remaining 2% as forestland. Breaking it down by keyword associations in entity names, 11.21 million acres (84%) were linked to entities containing the term "wind"; 4.8 million acres (36%) to entities with "energy"; 1.47 million acres (11%) to those with "solar"; and 404,000 acres (3%) to entities

with "renewable." It is important to note that some entity names include multiple terms, leading to an overlap in these values.

Since 2010, foreign renewable energy investments in U.S. agricultural land have increased by at least 10.4 million acres — a 353% rise, accounting for nearly half of the 21-million-acre total increase in foreign-owned ag land during this period. In the past five years (2018–2023), this trend has intensified, with renewable energy entities driving 76% of the total growth in foreign-owned agricultural land, contributing 7.55 million acres out of the 9.96-million-acre increase. Between 2022 and 2023 alone, entities with renewable energy-related terms in their names accounted for 54% of the 1.58-million-acre increase. It's important to note that these figures represent minimum estimates, as not all renewable energy companies are captured through these specific terms.

These trends highlight renewable energy investment as a major driver of the increasing foreign interest in U.S. agricultural land. The use of agricultural land for wind and solar energy production is a contentious

topic, often sparking debates over whether it removes prime farmland from production or upholds landowners' rights to use, sell or lease their property as they choose. A recent analysis, Solar Energy Expansion and its Impacts on Rural Communities, explores these topics more in depth.

As corporations face mounting pressure to meet environmental goals, investments in land for renewable energy projects are likely to continue. Many European nations, which have some of the strictest carbon offset mandates, are constrained by limited available land, driving their investors toward stable countries like the U.S., where an abundance of open land provides potential for such projects.

The National Security Factor

Concerns about foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land often focus on nations considered adversarial to the U.S. The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) within the Department of Commerce plays a critical role in regulating sensitive technologies, telecommunications and supply chain security as part of national security efforts.

FOREIGN FOOTPRINTS ... Page 12



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FOREIGN FOOTPRINTS... From Page 11

In its most recent determination of foreign adversaries, the BIS identified the following governments or foreign non-governmental entities: The People's Republic of China, Republic of Cuba, Islamic Republic of Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Russian Federation and Venezuelan politician Nicolás Maduro.

Together, these investors own 370,727 acres, representing three hundredths of 1% (0.03%) of all privately held agricultural land in the U.S. — roughly the size of an average county in Ohio. From 2022 to 2023, acreage linked to Russian investors declined by 52 acres (-83%), Iranian investors by 1,325 acres (-30%), and Chinese investors by 34,272 acres (-11%), while acreage linked to Venezuelan and Cuban investors remained unchanged.

There has been significant interest in U.S. agricultural land owned by Chinese investors. In 2023, 277,336 acres were linked to Chinese investors — 0.02% of all privately held U.S. agricultural land. This marks a 106,599-acre (27%) decline from the 2021 peak of 383,935 acres.

The increase observed between 2012 and 2013 is primarily tied to the acquisition of a U.S.-based meat processing company, which now accounts for nearly half of all Chinese investor-held acreage. The subsequent decline between 2021 and 2023 stems from two key factors: a reduction in holdings by a Chinese billionaire who had invested in Southwest Texas for a renewable energy project, and the USDA's reclassification of acreage originally attributed to Chinese investors but later confirmed to be owned by a U.S. land asset

management company with operations in Chinese markets.

Between 2022 and 2023, Chinese investors held at least 1 acre of agricultural land in 147 counties across the U.S., out of 3,244 total counties and county equivalents. Of these, 38 counties experienced a decline in Chinese investor-owned acreage, with 29 counties seeing a 100% reduction in holdings. Conversely, 10 counties recorded an increase in Chinese investor-owned acreage, while the remaining 99 counties saw no change.

Conclusion

Foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land continues to be a complex and closely watched issue. The latest AFIDA data highlights an increase in foreign-held acreage, driven largely by renewable energy investments from European entities, while also reflecting declines in ownership by investors from nations like China, Iran and Russia. The data reaffirms the majority of land is owned by investors from nations considered friendly to the U.S., though previously discussed data reporting limitations prevent us from accessing a precise breakdown.

These trends underscore the importance of robust oversight mechanisms, such as AFIDA and the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., in maintaining transparency and safeguarding national interests. As foreign investment in U.S. agricultural land continues to grow and diversify, improving analysis and enforcement will remain critical to ensuring both economic and security considerations are effectively addressed. ■



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