

# Who really owns the American farmland?

**By JERRY WEBB**  
**NEWARK, Del.** — How many foreigners own farms in this country? There's a lot of guessing on that topic going on right now. Officials are finding there isn't much solid information. For sure there's an influx of foreign money into the American countryside. How much and just where it's being spent in somewhat a mystery.

Concern is mounting in official Washington, D.C. and in the conference rooms of the many farm organizations stabled in the nation's capital. There's kind of a grass-roots feeling that the influx of foreign money into farming is bigger than most of us realize and along with that seems to be the attitude that any foreign ownership of this nation's food-producing capacity is bad. Maybe it's all right for foreigners to own hotels and

banks and factorials, but there's something downright un-American about them owning our farmland.

The major farm organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Grange are pushing for an investigation. They want to know the extent of the problem and then they want something done about it.

To give you some idea of how unprepared our government is to deal with this problem, the General Accounting Office did a study but its results were inconclusive due to the limited data on foreign ownership currently available. Congress held a hearing on the topic and was told that public debate on foreign ownership of American farmland is dominated by rumors and sensational stories of

wealthy foreigners gobbling up U.S. farmland.

The Congressional subcommittee heard a Farm Bureau spokesman say that foreign investors remain hidden in a maze of financial devices, including trusts, partnerships, and off-shore corporations.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) study found that although 25 states have legislation restricting alien farmland ownership, it doesn't seem to work. The agency said very little hard data on foreign land ownership now exists in federal, state, or local government agencies. A spot check by GAO in 25 Counties in five states did turn up information indicating foreigners owned almost 45,000 acres or .3 per cent of the total farmland in those counties. In one County in Georgia, GAO found that

foreigners owned more than six per cent of the farmland.

The agency did recommend to Congress that it consider legislation providing for a nationwide registration system for foreign landowners similar to the alien registration system now used by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The agency said this would place the reporting burden on the landowners and would require relatively little involvement by state and local governments.

Some action is already under way as per directives from the Congressional subcommittee. GAO is continuing its investigation seeking out land transfer data so reasonable projections of extent of foreign land ownership can be made. Extension agents in all 50 states have been asked to report any knowledge they have of farmland purchase by foreigners. The County ASCS offices are reviewing their records in an effort to identify foreign land ownership. The Department of Commerce has been asked to supply any information it has on the subject. And the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress has been asked to prepare an overview paper discussing constitutional, international treaty and other legal questions that would be involved in any federal or state legislation dealing with the purchase

and ownership of U.S. farmland by nonresident foreign aliens.

No doubt as the American dollar becomes worth less in foreign markets, American farmland will become a better buy to many foreign investors. Don't count on an immigration of foreign farmers as was so common in the early days of American agriculture. Those foreign buyers will probably be big-time investors who will merely own farmland and make it available to local farmers through rental arrangements or will hire local management. Most foreign investors are smart enough to know they lack the local knowledge so necessary to a successful farm business. They may have lots of money but they're short on farming experience. So they'll hire that experience or they'll make the land available to farmers who already have the experience.

To some local farmers

foreign land ownership may be a mixed blessing. For instance, a large parcel of land owned by a foreigner could be available for rent, allowing local farmers to expand without buying land. On the other hand, a foreign neighbor may be no more welcome in an agricultural community than a corporate neighbor. Traditional family farmers have resisted those big companies that occasionally want to buy large farming spreads. They'll probably be no warmer to foreign tycoons whose only interest is making money.

Don't be too surprised to see national legislation and a flurry of state activity aimed at controlling foreign ownership of farmland. Pressure is mounting and the answer is obvious—come up with a system that first measures the amount of foreign land ownership that already exists and second, control it. Otherwise, we could wake up some morning to find the Arabs own our farms.

## Livestock market and auction news

### Indiana Auction

(Continued from Page 12)

**CALVES** 120. Vealers grading Good & Choice, 2 to 5 lower, Standard & Good 3 to 8 lower. few Prime vealers 114.00-117.00, Choice 100.00-114.00; Good 90.00-106.00; 90-120 lbs. 82.00-101.00, 60-85 lbs. 60.00-82.00.

**FARM CALVES:** Hol. Bulls 90-120 lbs 89.00-110.00, few Hol. Heifers 85-95 lbs. 89.00-120.00, few 95-120 lbs. 140.00-195.00.

**HOGS** 80. Barrows and gilts mostly 7.00 lower. No. 1-4 3 215-240 lbs. 41.00-42.75, few 43.25, few No. 2-3 220-230 lbs. 39.00-41.00, few No. 1-3 170-195 lbs. 38.00-40.00. **SOWS** US No. 1-3 305-570 lbs. sows 38.00-42.00, few **BOARS** 32.50-42.00.

**SHEEP** 19. Woolled sl. lambs Good 75-105 lbs. 45.50-54.00, couple at 69.00.

**BULLS:** Yield grade 1 and 2 1000-2000 lbs. 61.00-70.00 few to 73.00.

**FEEDER CATTLE:** Steers choice and good 300-500 lbs. 63.00-75.00. Good and choice heifers 300-600 lbs. 65.00-86.00.

**CALVES:** Vealers steady to \$5 lower. Few prime 114.00-129.00, Choice 105.00-125.00, Good 85.00-110.00, Standard and good 90-120 lbs. 85.00-100.00, 70-90 lbs. 75.00-94.00. Utility 60-100 lbs. 60.00-80.00.

**FARM CALVES:** Holstein bulls 90-120 lbs. 95.00-129.00. Heifers 90-140 lbs. 40.00-180.00 few to 218.00.

**HOGS:** Barrows and gilts \$3 to \$6 lower, steady decline during the week. 1 and 2, 200-240 lbs. 43.50-48.50, 1 and 3 195-250 lbs. 41.00-47.00, 2 and 3 190-270 lbs. 39.00-45.00, 1 and 3 150-185 lbs.

38.00-45.00. Sows \$3 to \$5 lower. 1 and 3 300-550 lbs. 35.00-42.00 few to 45.00. 2 and 3 400-650 lbs. 32.00-38.00. Boars 32.00-40.00.

**FEEDER PIGS:** Weak to \$10 lower. 1-3 20-35 lbs. 20.00-35.00 per head; 1-3 35-50 lbs. 35.00-50.00 per head; few 1-3 50-65 lbs. 50.00-62.00 per head. Graded feeder pigs: 6.00-15.00 lower. 1-2, 25-40 lbs. 123.00-137.00 few to 145.00. 40-50 lbs 112.00-133.00, 50-60 lbs. 94.00-115.00. 60-85 lbs. 71.00-100.00. 2-3 25-40 lbs. 116.00-136.00; 40-50 lbs. 92.00-116.00; 50-70 lbs. 69.00-88.00.

**SHEEP:** Spring slaughter lambs \$3-\$9 higher. Choice 30-50 lbs. 100.00-130.00, 60-100 lbs. 75.00-93.00. Woolled choice 85-120 lbs. 62.00-70.00, Good-65-110 lbs. 54.00-62.00. Slaughter ewes \$22-\$39 few down to \$12.

### Pa. Auction Summary

Friday, March 30  
 16 Livestock  
 Auction Markets

This week: Cattle 6689, Calves 3680, Hogs 9767, Feeder Pigs 1150, Graded Feeder Pigs 2381, Sheep 803.

Last week: Cattle 7279, Calves 3737, Hogs 8136, Feeder Pigs 948, Graded Feeder Pigs 2997, Sheep 521.

Last year: Cattle 8272, Calves 4309, Hogs 8097, Feeder Pigs 1263, Graded Feeder pigs 3062, Sheep 274.

Compared with last week, slaughter steers \$1 to \$1.50 lower, heifers and bullocks \$1.00 to \$2.00 lower. Slaughter cows steady to \$1.00 higher, slaughter bulls steady to \$2.00 lower.

**SLAUGHTER STEERS:** High choice and prime 71.85-75.00. Choice 69.00-75.00, Good 62.00-70.00, Standard 60.00-66.00.

**SLAUGHTER HEIFERS:** Choice 64.00-71.00, Good 58.00-65.00, standard 53.00-63.00.

**COWS:** Utility and commercial cows 53.00-59.00, cutter 51.00-56.00, Canner and low cutter 46.75-53.00.

**BULLOCKS:** Choice 67.00-71.00, good 64.00-69.00, few standard 53.00-65.00.



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