

USDA says foreign ownership of U.S. farmland limited

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Foreign groups and individuals have reported they owned 5.2 million acres of U.S. agricultural land, as of Oct. 31, 1979, according to a report released today by Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland.

The report, compiled from 6500 reports filed with USDA between February and October 1979 under the requirements of the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978, was sent last Friday to both President Carter and the Congress and released to the public. The 5.2 million acres includes land held as of Feb. 1, 1979 and land bought or sold between Feb. 1 and Oct. 31, 1979.

The report to Congress and the President is required under the Act to analyze in greater detail the reports of holdings (2,899,998 acres), purchases (154,432 acres) and sales (4991 acres) from Feb. 1 through Aug. 24. The study shows that of 2.9 million acres held on Feb. 1, 1979:

Foreign ownership is concentrated in the South, although foreign agricultural landholdings were reported in all stages except Rhode Island. Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee account for 25 percent of all foreign-owned acreage the study showed

A few countries account for the bulk of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land. Investors from the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, and West Germany hold 52 percent of all foreign-owned land reported.

U.S. corporations with at least five percent foreign ownership hold 76 percent of the 2.9 million acres of foreign-held agricultural land.

43 percent of the agricultural land held by foreigners is forest land.

Of foreign owners, 91 percent reported no change in use of land after buying although they tend to increase production and intensify the existing use.

The amount of foreign ownership is so small that it is unlikely to have significant impact except in a few communities.

Under the law, foreign persons who owned U.S. agricultural land as of February 1, 1979, were required to file a report with USDA by August 1. Anyone not having done so are now in penalty status. Those who acquired or disposed of U.S.

agricultural land after February 1 must file within 90 days.

They must file with USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office serving the county where the land is located. Failure to report, or filing late or misleading reports, can result in penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the owner's interest in the agricultural land.

All foreign individuals, governments, or legal entities created under the law of, or having their principal place of business in, a foreign country are required to file.

In addition, all U.S. legal entities in which foreigners hold 5 percent or more interest are required to report their agricultural landholdings.

The law defines agricultural land as all land used for agricultural, forestry, or timber production. This includes land in agricultural use when purchased as well as land later converted to agricultural use.

Tracts smaller than one acre, which produce less than \$1000 worth of gross agricultural sales a year, are exempt from the reporting requirement.

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Chemical firm again wins PBB verdict in court

CHICAGO, Ill. — The second claim to be tried as a result of the mixing of the flame retardant PBB with animal feed ended with another judgement in favor of Velsicol Chemical Corporation, an operating company of Northwest Industries, Inc.

As in the first trial, a circuit court judge again ruled the evidence did not show that PBB caused any damage to cattle and rejected the claim of Clyde and Michael Knisel, father and son, who operated a dairy farm in Ogden Township, Lenawee County, Michigan.

The Knisels sought damages of approximately \$900,000, alleging injury to their livestock from a farm cooperative, Farm Bureau

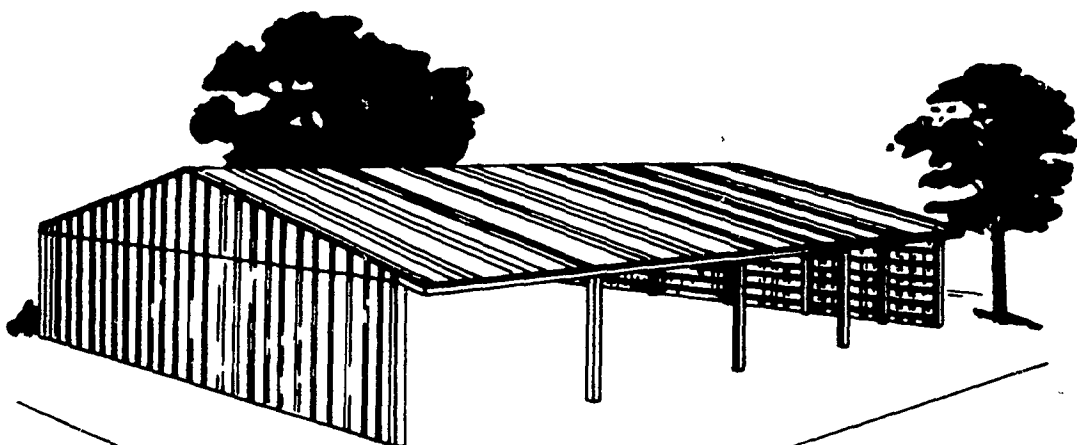
Services and Velsicol, which was merged in 1976 with the former Michigan Chemical Company, which produced PBB.

In October 1978, the first claim to be tried for PBB cattle damages ended with the same decision. In that case—the longest bench trial in the State of Michigan's history—dairy farmers Mr. and Mrs. Roy Tacoma of Falmouth, Michigan, unsuccessfully sought \$1 million damages.

Velsicol said that the latest decision again demonstrates the fact that low levels of PBB are not harmful to cattle.

The verdict in the second claim was handed down by Judge Rex Martin, Circuit Court for Lenawee County.

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