

# Stop China's Takeover of U.S. Agriculture

## The EATS Act: Good for China, Bad for American Farmers

Chinese interests are not solely focused on land rights; they are aggressively acquiring entire agricultural companies, posing a significant threat to our farming sovereignty. Enacting the Hinson/Marshall Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act via the Farm Bill would eliminate hundreds of state agricultural laws, effectively paving the way for a regulatory void. This absence of rules, particularly in areas where none currently exist, would create an environment in which large Chinese corporations like Smithfield Foods and others can easily expand across all 50 states without having to comply with state laws.

### Introduction

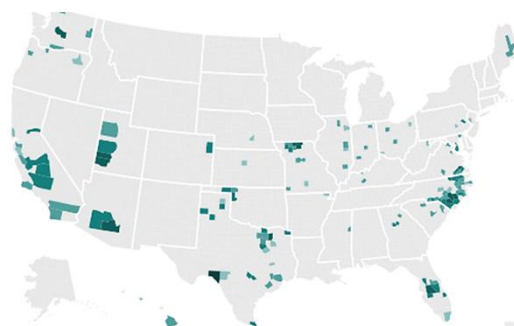
If the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (Act H.R.4417 / S.2019) were to pass via the Farm Bill, it would eliminate the need for big foreign companies to navigate and comply with various state laws, thereby streamlining the acquisition process and accelerate the pace of their purchases of America's means of agriculture production, which includes both land and companies.

While proponents claim the EATS Act would promote efficiency, this efficiency is what foreign companies crave when entering other nations' borders - the privilege of having only one standard. EATS would allow China to exploit this streamlined process to rapidly expand their land holdings and ownership of US animal agricultural companies.

By bypassing state-level regulations and oversight, these companies could gain significant control over crucial sectors such as agriculture and critical supply chain infrastructure, further diminishing American sovereignty and security.

The Hinson/Marshall EATS Act would strip individual states of their ability to enact laws tailored to their unique circumstances and needs. State-level regulations serve as important safeguards, ensuring that agricultural laws align with local interests, preserve natural resources, and protect

TOTAL ACRES OF FOREIGN ENTITY-OWNED FARMLAND PER COUNTY IN 2021  
 0 50 500 5,000 50,000  
 CHINESE-OWNED



Source: USDA AFIDA Annual Report  
 Credit: Connie Hanzhang Jin / NPR

local communities. By eradicating these protective measures, the act would open the floodgates for foreign companies to make sweeping acquisitions across the country without sufficient checks and balances.

## Limits States' Ability to Fight Growing Chinese Influence

If the EATS Act passes, states will forever lose the ability to prohibit the sale of food grown on Chinese owned farms outside their own state borders. In other words, any state-level lawmakers aspiring to counter the growing Chinese influence in American agriculture would lose the ability to pass a state-level law that prohibits the sale of items produced by Chinese-owned operations located on U.S. soil.

## China Is Acquiring More Than Just Land

In many US states, Chinese Corporations are fast acquiring both farm land *and farm operations themselves*. The value of land owned by Chinese interests increased by over 200 times from \$81 million in 2010 to \$1.8 billion in 2020. As of December 2021, foreign persons/entities held an interest in approximately 40 million acres of U.S. agricultural land. That represents 3% of American farmland, and that number is rising fast, due in part to China. Unfortunately, many federal lawmakers are so focused on the land acquisitions that they're missing China's equally devastating acquisition of America's animal agriculture assets.

## Acquiring Means of Production (Farms & Corporations Alike)

Prominent examples of Chinese acquisitions include Smithfield Foods, the largest pork processor in the United States, which is now majority-owned by Chinese conglomerate WH Group.

"Iowa Quality Meats", established in 1998, was also acquired by a Chinese holding

company despite it not making headlines. Continental Grain Company, a global agribusiness firm with operations in the United States, received significant investment from Chinese conglomerate COFCO Corporation, solidifying Chinese influence in the company.

Furthermore, Ingram Micro, an American leading technology and supply chain services company operating in multiple sectors, including agriculture, was acquired by Tianjin Tianhai Investment Company, a subsidiary of Chinese conglomerate HNA Group. (Ingram Micro) This trend underscores the growing presence of Chinese entities in the U.S. agriculture sector, raising questions about the long-term implications for American food production, supply chains, and national security.



## A Chinese Holding Company Fully Acquired Smithfield in 2013

China purchased the largest American pork producer (Smithfield) in 2013. "Smithfield Foods, headquartered in Smithfield, Va., was acquired 10 years ago by WH Group, a Chinese meat and food processing company." (Fox News)

## Chinese-Owned Smithfield Considers State Laws Inefficient

Smithfield's American Attorney who brokered the Chinese acquisition of Smithfield stated openly to a journalist that the acquisition would be followed by more of the same:

*"I definitely think that the Shunagh Smithfield deal was a litmus test for Chinese-US deals - very large Chinese US deals. I can tell you firsthand that this has paved the way for other deals. We are now looking at a few other very large transactions for Chinese clients looking at other iconic brands in the United States."*

- Carl Sanchez, PBS News Segment ([Link](#))

## Chinese-Owned Smithfield Considers State Laws Inefficient

The kinds of state laws that would be invalidated by the EATS Act are precisely those that Smithfield finds inconvenient, as they state openly:

*"This conversion [to group housing] was celebrated, but now the goal posts have been moved. Not only have the goal posts moved, but they're moving differently in different states. A patchwork of state-by-state regulations...is not conducive to an efficient food production system...[legislation is] needed to ensure the cost-efficiency of our food system."*

-Ray Atkinson, director of external communications at Smithfield, to Agri-Pulse. ([Link](#))

(Related Op-Ed)

OPINION

# Beware the Pork Perk for China in the 2023 Farm Bill



Christian Josi | Jul 11, 2023



*The opinions expressed by columnists are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of Townhall.com.*



*AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File*

## “Beware the Pork Perk for China in the 2023 Farm Bill”

By, Christian Josi, Jul 11, 2023, [Townhall.com](https://townhall.com)

An insidious incursion into American agriculture by an enemy State is stealthily unfolding, maneuvering through the corridors of Washington.

For baffling reasons, some politicians are pushing a radical and unprecedented carveout into the Farm Bill that would enable large foreign pork conglomerates operating on US soil to completely bypass state laws. Smithfield, a titan in the American pork industry—since 2013 a wholly Chinese-owned entity— would be the primary beneficiary of this. Yes, Smithfield, the

largest pork producer not just in the United States but the world, ceased being an American company in 2013.

Cloaked under the pretense of eradicating “cumbersome” food safety and animal husbandry regulations in California, Representative Ashley Hinson (R-IA) and Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS) [have recently introduced the EATS Act](#). This legislation erases state laws that contain standards for agricultural products sold within their boundaries. It would wipe out laws protecting baby and infant food safety, ensuring fire-safe cigarettes, preventing invasive pests, and hundreds more.

Simply put, it is far too radical and indeed dangerous to pass as written, evident by the notably low cosponsor count (only 15 out of 435 Representatives will even touch it). Likely seeing the backlash against the broad overreach of their EATS Act, Hinson/Marshall are now attempting to add a narrower version of it within the Farm Bill, one that solely eliminates food safety and animal husbandry laws in the pork industry.

An attempt to add a narrower version of EATS to the Farm Bill that solely benefits pork producers simply exacerbates the primary problem with it, which is that it eliminates the very state laws that Chinese-owned Smithfield has lobbied against. China wants no rules as it further takes over our pork industry—this carveout is as if China wrote it itself.

It is critical—as a nation—that we pay attention to the fact that Chinese conglomerates are buying up American farmland and agriculture companies, surreptitiously converting industries at the core of our national identity to their own. After gaining control of Smithfield, Chinese interests took a step further by acquiring a leading seed producer, Syngenta. China now has a firm hold on a significant portion of our pork supply chain, from the food that fattens the pigs to the companies that process them. They are coming for our food supply. This is much more concerning than TikTok (which should be banned but that’s another column).

The erosion of our farming sovereignty has reached its lowest point yet with the Hinson/Marshall Chinese pork provision. This is particularly disheartening because the Republican-controlled House, at least in their words, has pledged to be very tough on China. Granting preferential treatment to a sector prominently controlled by China, enabling it to circumvent state laws, represents a significant betrayal of the principles of Kevin McCarthy’s Republican conference.

Politics aside, a Chinese-dominated pork perk in the Farm Bill poses a grave threat to our agricultural sovereignty.

Over the last decade, foreign ownership—especially from China—in U.S. farmland has surged dramatically. According to USDA reports, foreign land holdings have increased by an average of 2.2 million acres per year since 2015, equivalent to an annual loss of an area larger than Delaware to foreign corporations, many from unfriendly or unreliable nations. As of 2021, foreign entities held a staggering 40 million acres of U.S. agricultural land, an area the size of Kansas. It's important to note that this trend extends beyond passive investment; China is acquiring entire American companies, exerting alarming control over our food production.

Despite the severe implications, Rep. Hinson and Sen. Marshall—Midwesterners with staggering amounts of American-owned farms, farmers and other American agricultural interests in their constituencies—persist in their attempt to include a carveout for the China-dominated US pork industry within the Farm Bill. Stunning.

If House Agriculture Chair G.T. Thompson and Senate Chair Debbie Stabenow allow this measure to be incorporated in the Farm Bill, it would grant WH Group, the Chinese company that owns Smithfield, the ability to bypass state-level laws, as previously mentioned. Such a provision represents an unprecedented assault on our longstanding tradition of states' rights, enabling foreign corporations to operate beyond the jurisdiction of our state laws. Again, stunning!

This encroachment, though silent, demands immediate attention. American farmers, the stalwarts of our nation's heritage, are already under siege from foreign corporations. They deserve legislation that safeguards their interests instead of prioritizing those of Chinese conglomerates. Allowing China and other nations to acquire vast amounts of our land is concerning enough, but rewriting the rules to permit them to disregard state laws is simply unconscionable.

The proposed carveout in the Farm Bill isn't just a concession — it's a blatant capitulation. A gift, if you will. I hope clearheaded legislators—especially those Republicans who claim concern over China's encroachment on American institutions and interests—will step up and lead the resistance to this silent invasion of American agriculture, fomenting a resounding rejection of the pork giveaway to China in our 2023 Farm Bill. The EATS Act—and its pork-focused version for the Farm Bill—is nothing but bad news.

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