

HB 1296 -- FOREIGN OWNERSHIP AGRICULTURAL LAND

SPONSOR: Andrews

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 17 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 0 with 2 voting Present.

This bill prohibits a nonresident alien who is a citizen of or an entity with majority ownership by citizens of a country that has a policy that prohibits foreign ownership of land by Americans from acquiring any agricultural land in the state. The prohibition does not apply to any person or entity owning agricultural land on August 28, 2021, or their direct descendants.

If the Attorney General determines agricultural land is held in violation of this prohibition, he or she must file a notice of pendency of action with the Recorder of Deeds or each county in which the land is located. If the court finds that the land in question has been acquired in violation of the provisions, it must enter an order declaring so and file a copy with the Recorder of Deeds, and the order the owner to divest his or her interest in the land. Any property not divested within the time set in the order, will be sold by the court at a public sale.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the security of the nation's food supply is extremely important and that this bill helps protect food security by keeping the farmland of the state in control of those who act in the resident's best interest.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Andrews and Missouri Farm Bureau.

Additional written testimony was submitted in support of the bill.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that Missouri has a long history of immigration and this bill would prohibit certain people from being able to own agricultural land. Foreign investment is what built this country and what keeps the country going especially in times of domestic economic downturn. This bill would discourage foreign investment in Missouri.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Pork Association and Smithfield Foods.

Additional written testimony was submitted in opposition of the bill.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say there are currently 27.6 million acres in the state that are classified as agricultural land. According to the Department, 0.36% is held in foreign ownership and 0.16% counts toward the current 1% cap on foreign ownership.

Testifying on the bill was Missouri Department of Agriculture.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.