

# United States Senate

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Janet Yellen  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Yellen:

Recent reporting suggests that a billionaire foreign national purchased nearly 200,000 acres of American agricultural land in Oregon in 2015. While the purchase itself may have been legal, I am troubled that for nearly a decade, it appears that this landowner failed to report the transaction to relevant entities like the Department of Agriculture (USDA) as required by the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA). This specific example highlights the gaps in the vetting, tracking, and potential prevention of purchases of agricultural land by foreign entities.

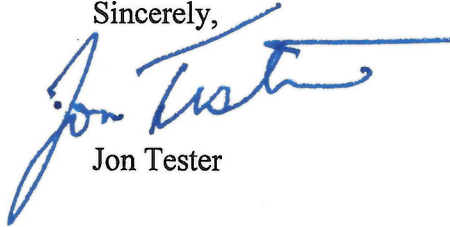
While we learn more about the specifics around this unfolding situation, it highlights the need for Congress to do more to protect American agricultural security and prevent our foreign adversaries from controlling our country's food supply while also gaining access to land near sensitive military sites. My bipartisan legislation with Senator Rounds that passed the Senate 91-7 would do just that. In the coming weeks, I urge you to work with Congress to finally pass this bill through the House of Representatives to address this urgent national security issue.

Congress had the opportunity to take an important step to protect American farmland from our foreign adversaries in last year's National Defense Authorization Act. Senator Rounds and I passed our amendment to combat involvement of our foreign adversaries in American agriculture by a wide bipartisan margin, but a small number of House Republican members stopped it from becoming law. Make no mistake, our food security is national security.

This significant purchase made the individual the second largest foreign owner of American agricultural land. I expect both of your departments to review this seeming lack of disclosure on the 2015 sale, and look forward to your findings and recommendations to strengthen AFIDA and the Committee on Foreign Investment (CFIUS) and any other systems at your disposal to vet and track these types of sales.

I will continue to hold Congress accountable to act now to pass my bipartisan legislation and protect American agriculture from our foreign adversaries. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester

CC: The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives