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**Pittman: Foreign ownership of U.S. forestlands has wide-reaching implications**

By Will Clark

U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast facts:**

* 14 states have laws limiting foreign ownership of land
* Webinar playback available: <https://bit.ly/2Xx6Apt>.

(408 words)

(With art at <https://flic.kr/p/29YxzJ1>)

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — Forestland accounts for nearly half of the foreign-owned land in the U.S., which can have broad implications in multiple realms from policy to carbon markets, said Harrison Pittman, director of the National Agricultural Law Center.

Harrison offered an update on the topic as part of the center’s ongoing webinar series on agricultural, environmental and food laws.

Fourteen states have laws that limit or bar foreign ownership of agricultural land.

“According to the latest USDA data, 49 percent of foreign-owned U.S. land is forested,” Pittman said. “This absolutely has implications in the carbon market space. When the largest percentage of foreign owned land is in the forestry sector, that's a huge part of the carbon sequestration model and relevant to federal legislation, federal programs, and all matter of things.”

Foreign ownership of U.S. lands has been an issue dating back to the origins of the United States and before. English common law significantly limited the ability of “aliens” to hold or acquire real property. The Declaration of Independence addressed these concerns and influenced states’ laws addressing foreign ownership of land. This concern eventually focused on agricultural lands, and today, a patchwork of state laws is in place throughout the U.S. that are often quite different from one law to the other.

As of 2021, foreign individuals or entities reported holding an interest in about 35.2 million acres of U.S. farmland, accounting for 2.7 percent of all privately held agricultural land and 1.5 percent of all land in the U.S. Foreign-owned land in the U.S. more than doubled from 2004 to 2019 and the USDA reports that between 2018 and 2019, at least 40 percent of foreign ownership increases have occurred in Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado.

As Pittman said addressing foreign ownership of agricultural land requires dialogue because the issue pulls every political interest in and around the agriculture and numerous areas of law.

Past National Agricultural Law Center monthly webinar topics have included carbon markets, meat processing laws, water pollution, the impact of elections on agriculture, and several other topics.

“I highly encourage anyone with an interest in agricultural, food, and environmental law to register and attend webinars hosted by our center,” Pittman said. “Regardless of your occupation, these programs offer vast information that you can trust to be neutral, research-based, and non-partisan.”

Learn more about National Agricultural Law Center webinars here: <https://bit.ly/2URiF7N> .

Find a recording of Pittman’s webinar on foreign ownership of land here: <https://bit.ly/2Xx6Apt>.

For more information on the National Agricultural Law Center, visit <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/> or follow [@Nataglaw](https://twitter.com/nataglaw) on Twitter.

**About the National Agricultural Law Center**

**The National Agricultural Law Center**serves as the nation’s leading source of agricultural and food law research and information. The Center works with producers, state and federal policymakers, Congressional staffers, attorneys, land grant universities, and many others to provide objective, nonpartisan agricultural and food law research and information to the nation’s agricultural community.

The Center is a unit of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and works in close partnership with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, National Agricultural Library.

**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

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