

# Foreign Holdings of Kansas Agricultural Land

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May 2023

World events have brought to the forefront the issue of national food security. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted food chains, processing plants and grocery store supplies. Now for over a year, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has disrupted flows of wheat, corn, sunflower oil, and other essential products across the world. Political tensions with China have brought into question recent purchases of U.S. farmland and other agriculturally-related services. A Chinese-proposed corn milling plant near Grand Forks, ND, in close proximity to a U.S. Airforce Base, is an example of growing concerns for U.S. national and food security.

Current federal regulations place no restrictions on foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land, however reporting requirements have existed since the *Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA)*. All foreign persons who acquire or transfer an interest in agricultural land are required to report such transactions within 90 days of the date of acquisition or face a 25% penalty of the fair market value of the interest held (USDA, 2021). The [Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land](#) report is released annually and provides a summary of holdings of agricultural land by foreign individuals or companies.

AFIDA requires reporting "any interest" in the land other than a security interest. The regulations exempt leaseholds of less than 10 years' duration, contingent future interests, non-contingent future interests that do not become possessory upon termination of the present estate, non-agricultural easements and rights-of-way, and interests solely in mineral rights (USDA, 2021). What is not included on this list of exemptions are wind and solar energy leases, that make up the large majority of all foreign agricultural land "holdings" in the state of Kansas as their leases are usually greater than 10 years. Renewable energy leases are very similar to oil and gas leases where no ownership interest is constituted, but when AFIDA was enacted in 1978 it would be another twenty-five years before industrial-scale wind leasing would begin over most of the country, so it is not in the list of exceptions. Therefore, since these long-term leases are reported as foreign "holdings", it makes it very difficult to get a true picture of foreign agricultural land ownership across the United States.

The authors were able to obtain detailed foreign holdings data for Kansas through a *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) request to more accurately determine foreign holdings in Kansas by differentiating energy leases from land ownership. Results show that out of the 1,187,690 acres being reported in Kansas as having foreign interest, 94% of acres are wind energy company leases (Table 1). Only 67,716 acres across the state are reported as having foreign interest that are not related to energy production (0.14% of all privately held land in Kansas).

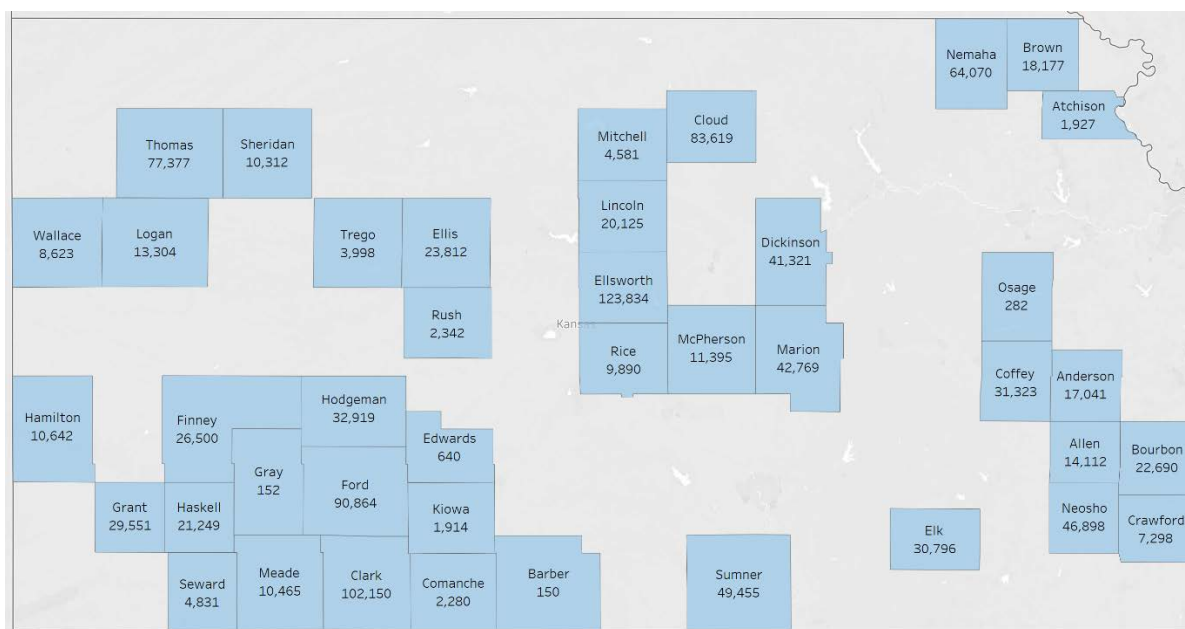


**Table 1: Summary of Foreign Interest in Kansas Agricultural Land**

	Acres	Percentage
Total Privately held Agricultural Land in Kansas	49,189,000	
Total Reported Agricultural Land in Kansas with a Foreign Interest	1,187,690	2.4% of All Ag. Acres in Kansas
Total Reported Agricultural Land leased by Foreign-held Wind Energy Companies	1,115,677	93.9% of all acres w/Foreign interest
Total Reported Agricultural Land leased by Foreign-held Solar Energy Companies	4,297	0.4% of all acres w/Foreign interest
Total Remaining Foreign-Held Agricultural Land	67,717	5.7% of all acres w/Foreign interest

Acres leased by wind energy companies in Kansas can be somewhat misleading as companies report their lease over the entire property acres, when in reality they only have the wind generation rights and their footprint is limited to turbine locations and access roads. The landowner or farming tenant maintains the ownership of the property and rights to farm around the turbines or graze livestock in the pastures. Wind energy companies currently have leases in 41 out of the 105 Kansas counties. Figure 1 shows each Kansas county and the acres that are reported as leased by a foreign-owned wind energy company. This map is available in interactive form here: <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/foreign-holdings-us-agricultural-land/foreign-holdings-kansas-ag-land-wind-energy-leases>

**Figure 1: Number of Acres leased by a Foreign-Held Wind Energy Company by County**



Wind energy companies in Kansas are owned by multiple foreign companies and U.S. companies with significant interest by foreign investors. AFIDA defines "significant interest or substantial control" to mean a 10-percent or more interest in the entity if held by a single foreign person or a group of foreign persons acting in concert, or a 50-percent or more interest if held by a group of foreign persons not acting in concert, none of whom individually holds a 10-percent or greater interest in that entity (USDA, 2021). Under this definition, theoretically one foreign person with 11% investment in a company would require all of that company’s holdings to be reported; indicating many wind energy leases are classified as foreign holdings, though they may be primarily U.S. companies. For the purposes of this paper, these are “foreign-owned”, which would either mean it is a foreign company or a U.S. company that meets the AFIDA definition above and is required to report any leased or purchased land.

Table 2 shows the number of leased acres reported by wind energy companies in Kansas by country of reportings. Italian and Canadian companies have the majority of foreign-owned wind energy leases in Kansas.

**Table 2: Acres leased by Foreign-owned Wind Energy Companies**

Wind Company Listed Country	Number of Acres
Italy	386,852
Canada	330,844
France	170,730
Portugal	118,130
Denmark	66,115
Spain	20,565
Germany	13,999
Ireland	8,442

Foreign-owned solar energy companies in Kansas are increasing, but are still minimal compared to wind energy leases. As Table 1 showed, only 4,297 acres in Kansas are reported as leased by foreign-owned solar energy companies, namely Canadian and Australian. These leases are reported in Barber, Sedgwick, Sumner, and Wilson counties.

The remaining 67,717 acres that are not leased by wind or solar energy companies are presumably agricultural land used primarily for farming and ranching. Countries holding these acres are listed by descending number of acres in Table 3. Unknown country of ownership acres in Kansas are listed at 1,420.



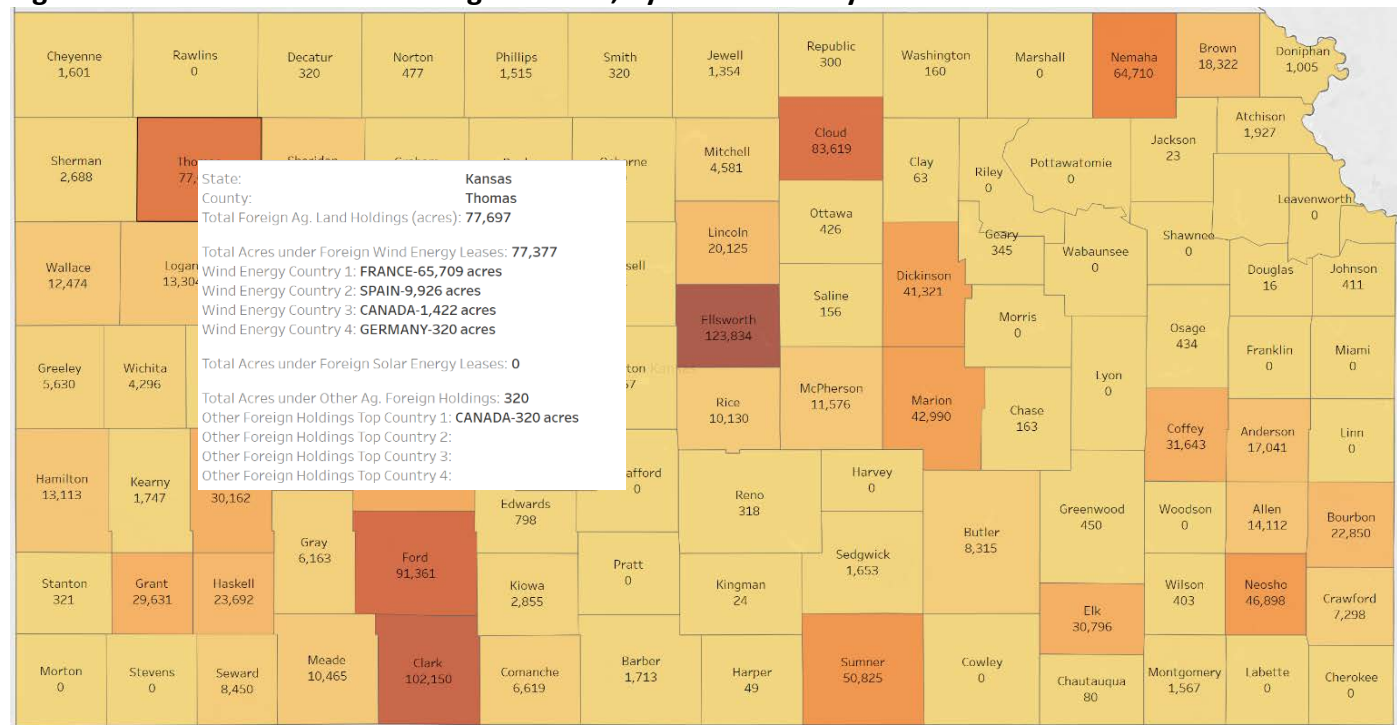
**Table 3: Foreign-held acres not Wind or Solar related, by listed Country**

Country	Number of Acres in Kansas
Germany	14,456
Netherlands	11,820
Canada	7,406
Kuwait	4,962
Saudi Arabia	4,339
Ireland	4,322
Mexico	4,233
Switzerland	3,299
Italy	1,881
Australia	1,758
United Kingdom	1,562
Austria	1,236
France	1,164

Country	Number of Acres in Kansas
Portugal	972
New Zealand	483
Bermuda	477
Denmark	450
Hong Kong	411
Japan	301
Sweden	300
Argentina	160
United Arab Emirates	150
Belgium	60
Spain	53
Columbia	40
China	1

All this information is summarized in map form at the county-level by visiting <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/foreign-holdings-us-agricultural-land/foreign-holdings-kansas-ag-land> . Figure 2 shows an example of this resource and the information it provides by hovering a cursor over each county.

**Figure 2: Detail of Acres with Foreign Interest, by Kansas County**

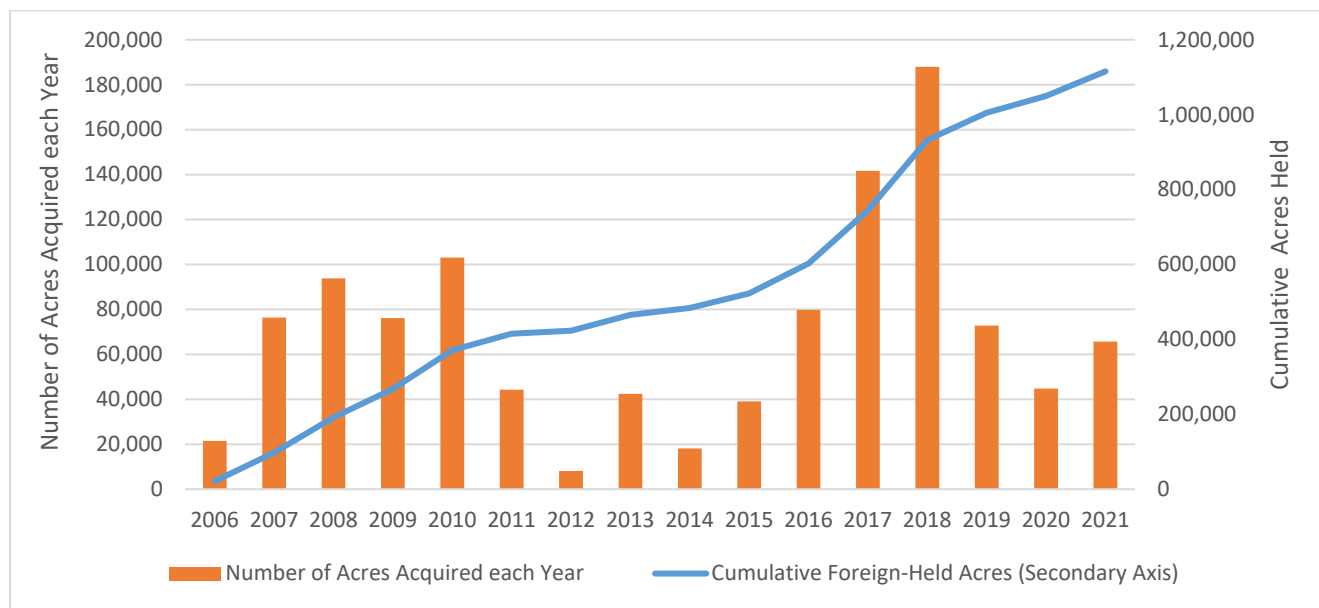


In this example of Thomas County, total reported foreign-held acres are 77,697, of which 77,377 acres are leases by wind energy companies. France, Spain, Canada, and Germany are listed as having ownership of these wind energy companies with their associated number of leased acreages. There are no foreign-owned solar company leases in Thomas County and the remaining 320 acres are held by an individual or company from Canada (or U.S. company with primarily Canadian shareholders).

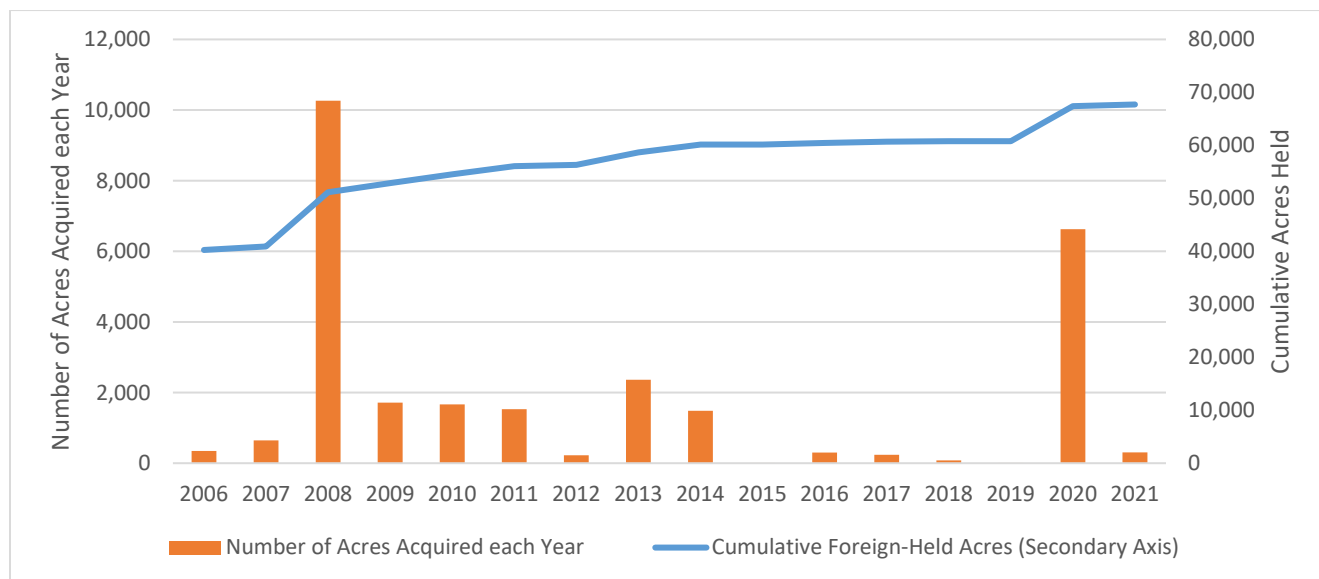
While the above data gives a picture of the situation in Kansas with the current agricultural land reportings (through Dec. 2021), the trend that these acres have been acquired is also of interest. Figures 3 and 4 show the number of acres acquired each year and the cumulative number of acres held for both foreign-owned wind energy companies leases and other agricultural purposes, respectively. The growth in acres leased by foreign-owned wind energy companies in Kansas has been large compared to non-energy related holdings. With the exceptions of 2008 and 2020, acquisitions of agricultural land in Kansas not related to energy production have been near 2,000 acres per year or less (Figure 4).

Holdings of agricultural land by foreign persons or entities have been reported back to 1947. When Figure 4 started showing yearly acquisitions in 2006, 40,253 total acres were already held. One piece of information not obtained was any disposals of foreign-held agricultural acres. Any parcels that were reported as acquired by a foreign-held company or individual, but later sold or transferred to a domestic individual or company, would not be in these data. Only holdings that are still currently in place as of Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, are included in this analysis.

**Figure 3: Growth in Foreign Wind Energy Leased Ag. Acres in Kansas (2006-2021)**



**Figure 4: Growth in Non-Energy related Foreign-held Ag. Acres in Kansas (2006-2021)**



In summary, while the issue of foreign procurement of U.S. agricultural land is an issue that garners attention, it appears in Kansas that the growth in foreign-held acreage is largely driven by wind energy leases that are required to report the same way as other land acquisitions. Although acreage may appear large in some counties (Ellsworth being a prime example), these long-term energy leases only take a small footprint of acres, allowing agricultural activities to continue.

**References:**

K-State Department of Agricultural Economics, AgManager.info, *Foreign Holdings of Kansas Ag. Land*, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/foreign-holdings-us-agricultural-land/foreign-holdings-kansas-ag-land>

K-State Department of Agricultural Economics, AgManager.info, *Foreign Holdings of Kansas Ag. Land – Wind Energy*, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/foreign-holdings-us-agricultural-land/foreign-holdings-kansas-ag-land-wind-energy-leases>

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