

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

2023 Regular Session

To: Agriculture

By: Representatives Currie, Stamps, Hobgood-Wilkes, Crawford,
Scoggin, Brown (20th), Williamson, Arnold

House Bill 280

(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO CREATE A STUDY COMMITTEE FOR THE PURPOSE OF STUDYING THE PURCHASING, ACQUIRING, LEASING OR HOLDING AN INTEREST IN AGRICULTURAL LAND BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENT; TO PROVIDE THE NINE MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE; TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION THAT THE STUDY COMMITTEE SHALL STUDY, TO REQUIRE A REPORT TO BE PROVIDED TO THE LEGISLATURE BY DECEMBER 1, 2023; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF

MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) There is created a study committee for the purpose of studying the purchasing, acquiring, leasing or holding an interest in agricultural land by foreign government.

The committee shall be comprised of the following nine (9) members:

(a) The Commissioner of Department of Agriculture and Commerce, or his or her designee;

(b) The Attorney General, or his or her designee;

(c) The Chairman of the House Judiciary A Committee;

(d) The Chairman of the Senate Judiciary A Committee;

(e) The Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee;

(f) The Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee;

(g) One (1) person to be appointed by the Governor;

(h) One (1) person to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and

(i) One (1) person to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall be a representative of Farm Bureau.

(2) Appointments to the study committee shall be made within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this act. At the first meeting, the committee shall elect from among its membership a chairman, a vice chairman and any other officers determined to be necessary, and shall adopt rules for transacting business and keeping records. The study committee shall develop and report its findings to the Legislature on or before December 1, 2023.

(3) A majority of the members of the study committee shall constitute a quorum. In the adoption of rules, resolutions and reports, and in the election of a chairman, vice chairman and any other officers determined to be necessary, an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present shall be required.

(4) To effectuate the purposes of this act, any department, division, board, bureau, committee, institution or agency of the state, or any political subdivision thereof, shall, at the request of the chairman of the study committee, provide the facilities, assistance, information and data needed to enable the study committee to carry out its duties.

(5) The study committee shall study at least the following information:

(a) The total amount of agricultural land that is under foreign ownership;

(b) The percentage change in foreign ownership of agricultural land in Mississippi, by year, over the past ten (10) years;

(c) The purpose to which foreign-owned agricultural land in Mississippi is being put to use currently, including any significant recent changes or trends in the use to which foreign-owned agricultural land in Mississippi is being put to use;

(d) Information regarding the extent of, and any recent changes in, foreign ownership of water rights in Mississippi;

(e) Information regarding the extent of, and any recent changes in, foreign ownership of water desalination facilities in Mississippi;

(f) Information regarding the extent of, and any recent changes in, foreign ownership of energy production, storage or distribution facilities in Mississippi;

(g) The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce's assessment of the impact of any recent changes in foreign ownership of agricultural land in Mississippi, water rights and food security;

(h) Any current prohibitions on the foreign ownership of Mississippi land and why such prohibitions are not being enforced; and

(i) Any legislative, regulatory or administrative policy changes the department recommends in light of the information in the report.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2023.