



UNITED TO GROW
FAMILY AGRICULTURE

Senate Natural Resources Committee

Re: SB191 AN ACT concerning agricultural corporations

February 21, 2013

Submitted by:

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Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 191.

Kansas Farmers Union is one of the state's oldest active general farm organizations, representing farmers and ranchers from across the state since 1907. Our primary goal is to sustain, strengthen, protect, and enhance the economic interests and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and their rural communities.

Senate Bill 191 is the Kansas Department of Agriculture pushing to repeal corporate farming laws in Kansas, laws which have worked well for Kansas farmers for 80 years. The primary goal of these laws is to protect family farms and ranches from the threats of unfair competition by corporate interests, and all-out repeal of these laws threatens the future of family agriculture across Kansas.

Kansas Farmers Union stands in opposition to SB191. Our 2013 policy states:

"We support legislation which would prohibit direct investment by corporations or private corporation-size entities and their stockholders in the business of farming,"

&

"We urge passage by the Kansas State Legislature of a law to prohibit entry into the business of farming and ranching or the ownership of agricultural land by alien investors, except those resident farm families or individuals seeking United States citizenship,"

& finally,

"We urge passage of legislation strengthening the reporting of Kansas agricultural land owned by aliens, corporations, and limited partnerships."

To quote KFU President Donn Teske, "Every time a 2,000-cow (corp dairy farmers out of a community. That is not economic development;

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Kansas family farming operations are important to the state for the jobs and products they produce. They literally feed Kansans and figuratively "feed" Kansas schools, churches, numerous businesses and their workers.

Bans on corporate farming are beneficial to the people of rural America. Research done in 2002 found that states with anti-corporate farming legislation have less poverty, higher employment, and a higher percentage of farms reporting cash gains in agriculturally-dependent counties.

Citizens of the entire U.S. are better off when those who work the nation's farms and ranches are individuals and families who have the opportunity to control their own land and labor, and a desire to create a future for family farming and ranching and for all of rural America that is socially just, economically equitable, and environmentally sound.

Governor Brownback has noted that successfully recruited businesses have only mentioned the current corporate agriculture law. He didn't say it prevented the businesses from relocating in Kansas. There is no evidence to support the governor's assertions, or KDA's, for that matter.

Everyone knows you will go ahead and eliminate any resistance to corporate agriculture flowing into Kansas. Secretary Rodman has already stated, "Kansas' door is open to corporate agriculture, and Kansas welcomes it with open arms." I just hope you all know in your hearts, when you cast a supporting vote, you are doing it for the benefit of a few and at a cost to the average citizen of Kansas.

Kansas' family farmers and ranchers should expect every protection the state can provide. For 80 years, Kansas has done just that - protected family farmers and ranchers. Family farms and ranches are the foundation that built the state of Kansas and they continue to drive and lead its economy. Last year, Kansas farm production totals were over \$14.4 billion. Why is this hugely successful model of entrepreneurship being abandoned now? There is no legitimate reason to change the game plan. As the old saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and will be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.