

reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Now, there are a lot of reasons why that's bunk and that's not the point of today's writing, but one significant reason why it is illogical and unscientific is that grasslands evolved biologically in symbiosis with grazing animals. The plants themselves are wired to thrive when grazed and when subjected to further animal disturbance. In the absence of millions of bison, we have to use cattle and sheep wisely.

I think if anyone has a halfway belief in good and sound science, they understand that all of God's creation has similar development in its system, be it a plant, an animal, a fungi, an entire ecosystem...or a human. And that includes living within seasonal cycles. All that DNA and instinct of our ancestors? It's still here with us, designed for us to utilize to live in the best manner for which we were designed, just like those livestock and grasslands.

As I started thinking about my resolutions for the spring, I could not help but thinking about embracing life within the seasonal cycles in full. There's a lot that goes into this and a lot that we can still do in 2024, beyond just procrastinating for a few months in making our resolutions. There are a lot of things I've learned as we've expanded our garden and focused on that as a source of food, exercise, and recreation. Among other things, it brings into focus the seasonal availability of fresh food. Like many of you, I enjoy having availability of different fruits and vegetables 12 months out of the year, but in many cases, that availability defies the course of human history and the development of food systems. Even dating back just one or two generations, our ancestors ate fresh fruits and vegetables when they were available in season. They canned the surplus for use out of the season. When they were out of fresh and canned options of a certain food? They didn't fly it across the ocean to make it available. They simply ate other things and waited until the seasons cycled back around.

I'm not trying to tell anyone they should change their diet wholesale to fit the seasons. I think it would be a challenge for me to successfully do that and it might require an adjustment period over time. But there are many things that we can do to incrementally live more in tune with the seasonal cycles. We can embrace our natural rhythms and sleep cycles, instead of pushing ourselves to stay up late and "get things done." We can spend more time outdoors in the long daylight hours. We can use the short winter days for rest and repair of our tools.

There are many small and meaningful steps that we can take that, frankly, will be healthy for us in ways that we probably don't even realize.

If you lived more in tune with the seasons, how would you

start? And how do you think it would impact you.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

Lawmakers consider Chinese communist threats to agriculture

By Jessica Domel
TFB Multimedia Reporter

Chinese purchases of U.S. agricultural lands, threats to cybersecurity and the theft of intellectual property were the focus of a recent U.S. House Agriculture Committee hearing on the danger the Chinese communist party reportedly poses to American agriculture.

Glenn "GT" Thompson, chairman of the ag committee, said it is the Chinese communist party, not individuals, who pose the threat.

"The Chinese communist party has gone out of its way to reduce its reliance on American agriculture while aggressively pursuing tactics that threaten our nation's ability to feed itself," he said.

Thompson noted the threats are multifaceted, strategic, incendiary and require a

coordinated and proactive response.

"These last few years have seen China steal U.S. intellectual property, hack critical cybersecurity and related infrastructure, weaponize agriculture, trade and acquire American farmland at an alarming rate," Thompson said. "Each of these disrupt our national security, rural communities and our resiliency."

Land purchases

Kristi Noem, governor of South Dakota and former member of the U.S. House Ag Committee, said she has witnessed first-hand the communist party of China work to systematically take over the U.S. food supply chain.

"They, decades ago, started buying our fertilizer companies, controlling our ability to access fertilizer. Then, I watched them buy up our chemical companies as I worked on implementation of programs and policies at our state and federal level," Noem said. "I watched as we sold citizenship to the Chinese communist party members for investment in our processing systems, and now most of our processing facilities are owned by the communist party or Chinese government. Now, they're coming for our land. When they buy up our land, they will complete their chain of control on our food supply."

Noem said between 2010 and 2020, the Chinese communist party's holdings of agricultural land in the U.S. increased by 5,300%.

"Reports now show that China owns about 384,000 acres of U.S. ag land valued at over \$2 billion," Noem said. "That should be alarming to all of us."

The actual number may be higher than that, according to Noem, because there's very little tracking of foreign interests at the state and federal levels.

South Dakota worked for two years to implement a bill that Noem said allows them to know who is buying land in the state.

Raja Krishnamoorthi, ranking member of the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, told the committee it is important that these types of legislation don't hurt innocent people.

He pointed to a law in Florida that prohibits Chinese nationals from purchasing real property in the state, saying it has a negative impact on the Asian-American community.

Theft

The committee and Gallagher also discussed the theft of U.S. seeds and other agricultural technology.

"China has long used its legal and regulatory system to steal intellectual property, and we have seen this in everything from semiconductors to seeds, not to

mention the scale and sophistication by which China can manipulate critical infrastructure as exposed vulnerabilities in American technologies," Thompson said. "This interference has ranged from data breaches and theft of agricultural research to ramping up disruptions of irrigation and transportation systems."

Krishnamoorthi told a story about a farmer in Iowa who found a man digging in his corn in 2023.

He said after some investigation, authorities found that the man was looking for proprietary corn seeds to send back to his employer, a Chinese seed company.

Gallagher suggested Congress can do better to protect agricultural intellectual property.

Trade

Taking action on a federal level is tricky, lawmakers said, because China is one of the U.S.' largest trading partners.

David Scott, ranking member for the House Ag Committee, said the committee does not want the conversation to contribute to violence against Asian-Americans.

"This is about agriculture policy, not people policy," he said.

Scott said China alone accounted for \$33.7 billion in U.S. agricultural exports last year.

Water Weekly

For the week of **04/29/24**

Water conditions

Conditions can, and often do, vary widely across Texas. The latest drought map for conditions as of April 23 shows the seventh consecutive week of drought expansion. In the past week, drought expanded in south-central Texas and the northeast Panhandle. Meanwhile, heavy rains caused flooding in parts of East Texas.

Drought conditions

- 28%** now
- 27%** a week ago
- 27%** three months ago
- 55%** a year ago

Intensity

- **D0** abnormally dry
- **D1** moderate drought
- **D2** severe drought
- **D3** extreme drought
- **D4** exceptional drought

Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

Drought change in the last six months

In early November 2023, 65 percent of the state was in drought. Hardest hit areas included parts of East and Central Texas. Since that time, drought conditions have improved dramatically in the east but degraded in parts of the Panhandle and south-central Texas.

Key

- 5 Class Degradation
- 4 Class Degradation
- 3 Class Degradation
- 2 Class Degradation
- 1 Class Degradation
- No Change
- 1 Class Improvement
- 2 Class Improvement
- 3 Class Improvement
- 4 Class Improvement
- 5 Class Improvement

Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

By Dr. Mark Wentzel, Hydrologist, Office of Water Science and Conservation
 Kellen McMurry, Government Relations | Kellen.McMurry@twdb.texas.gov | 512-475-1589
 Media Relations | MediaRelations@twdb.texas.gov | 512-463-5129

www.twdb.texas.gov