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Farm Ownership & Corporate Farming Laws:

Minnesota



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Farm Ownership & Corporate Farming Laws: Minnesota

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Current with all legislation from the 2021 Regular Session and 1st Special Session of the 92nd Minnesota State Legislature. The statutes are subject to change as determined by the Minnesota Revisor of Statutes.

§ 500.24. Farming by business organizations

Subdivision 1. Purpose. The legislature finds that it is in the interests of the state to encourage and protect the family farm as a basic economic unit, to insure it as the most socially desirable mode of agricultural production, and to enhance and promote the stability and well-being of rural society in Minnesota and the nuclear family.

Subd. 2. Definitions. The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.

(a) “Farming” means the production of (1) agricultural products; (2) livestock or livestock products; (3) milk or milk products; or (4) fruit or other horticultural products. It does not include the processing, refining, or packaging of said products, nor the provision of spraying or harvesting services by a processor or distributor of farm products. It does not include the production of timber or forest products, the production of poultry or poultry products, or the feeding and caring for livestock that are delivered to a corporation for slaughter or processing for up to 20 days before slaughter or processing.

(b) “Family farm” means an unincorporated farming unit owned by one or more persons residing on the farm or actively engaging in farming.

(c) “Family farm corporation” means a corporation founded for the purpose of farming and the ownership of agricultural land in which the majority of the stock is held by and the majority of the stockholders are persons, the spouses of persons, or current beneficiaries of one or more family farm trusts in which the trustee holds stock in a family farm corporation, related to each other within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of the civil law, and at least one of the related persons is residing on or actively operating the farm, and none of whose stockholders are corporations; provided that a family farm corporation shall not cease to qualify as such hereunder by reason of any:



(1) transfer of shares of stock to a person or the spouse of a person related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to the person making the transfer, or to a family farm trust of which the shareholder, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary; or

(2) distribution from a family farm trust of shares of stock to a beneficiary related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to a majority of the current beneficiaries of the trust, or to a family farm trust of which the shareholder, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary.

For the purposes of this section, a transfer may be made with or without consideration, either directly or indirectly, during life or at death, whether or not in trust, of the shares in the family farm corporation, and stock owned by a family farm trust are considered to be owned in equal shares by the current beneficiaries.

(d) “Family farm trust” means:

(1) a trust in which:

(i) a majority of the current beneficiaries are persons or spouses of persons who are related to each other within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law;

(ii) all of the current beneficiaries are natural persons or nonprofit corporations or trusts described in the Internal Revenue Code, section 170(c), as amended [All text references to Internal Revenue Code sections are to Title 26 of U.S.C.A], and the regulations under that section; and

(iii) one of the family member current beneficiaries is residing on or actively operating the farm; or the trust leases the agricultural land to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm limited liability company, a family farm trust, an authorized farm limited liability company, a family farm partnership, or an authorized farm partnership; or

(2) a charitable remainder trust as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, section 664, as amended, and the regulations under that section, and a charitable lead trust as set forth in the Internal Revenue Code, section 170(f), and the regulations under that section.

(e) “Authorized farm corporation” means a corporation meeting the following standards:

(1) it has no more than five shareholders, provided that for the purposes of this section, a husband and wife are considered one shareholder;

(2) all its shareholders, other than any estate, are natural persons or a family farm trust;

(3) it does not have more than one class of shares;



(4) its revenue from rent, royalties, dividends, interest, and annuities does not exceed 20 percent of its gross receipts;

(5) shareholders holding 51 percent or more of the interest in the corporation reside on the farm or are actively engaging in farming;

(6) it does not, directly or indirectly, own or otherwise have an interest in any title to more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land; and

(7) none of its shareholders are shareholders in other authorized farm corporations that directly or indirectly in combination with the corporation own more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land.

(f) “Authorized livestock farm corporation” means a corporation formed for the production of livestock and meeting the following standards:

(1) it is engaged in the production of livestock other than dairy cattle;

(2) all its shareholders, other than any estate, are natural persons, family farm trusts, or family farm corporations;

(3) it does not have more than one class of shares;

(4) its revenue from rent, royalties, dividends, interest, and annuities does not exceed 20 percent of its gross receipts;

(5) shareholders holding 75 percent or more of the control, financial, and capital investment in the corporation are farmers, and at least 51 percent of the required percentage of farmers are actively engaged in livestock production;

(6) it does not, directly or indirectly, own or otherwise have an interest in any title to more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land; and

(7) none of its shareholders are shareholders in other authorized farm corporations that directly or indirectly in combination with the corporation own more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land.

(g) “Agricultural land” means real estate used for farming or capable of being used for farming in this state.

(h) “Pension or investment fund” means a pension or employee welfare benefit fund, however organized, a mutual fund, a life insurance company separate account, a common trust of a bank or other trustee established for the investment and reinvestment of money contributed to it, a real estate investment trust, or an investment company as defined in United States Code, title 15, section 80a-3.

(i) “Farm homestead” means a house including adjoining buildings that has been used as part of a farming operation or is part of the agricultural land used for a farming operation.

(j) “Family farm partnership” means a limited partnership formed for the purpose of farming and the ownership of agricultural land in which the majority of the interests in the partnership is held by and the majority of



the partners are natural persons or current beneficiaries of one or more family farm trusts in which the trustee holds an interest in a family farm partnership related to each other within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of the civil law, and at least one of the related persons is residing on the farm, actively operating the farm, or the agricultural land was owned by one or more of the related persons for a period of five years before its transfer to the limited partnership, and none of the partners is a corporation. A family farm partnership does not cease to qualify as a family farm partnership because of a:

- (1) transfer of a partnership interest to a person or spouse of a person related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to the person making the transfer or to a family farm trust of which the partner, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary; or
- (2) distribution from a family farm trust of a partnership interest to a beneficiary related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to a majority of the current beneficiaries of the trust, or to a family farm trust of which the partner, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary.

For the purposes of this section, a transfer may be made with or without consideration, either directly or indirectly, during life or at death, whether or not in trust, of a partnership interest in the family farm partnership, and interest owned by a family farm trust is considered to be owned in equal shares by the current beneficiaries.

(k) “Authorized farm partnership” means a limited partnership meeting the following standards:

- (1) it has been issued a certificate from the secretary of state or is registered with the county recorder and farming and ownership of agricultural land is stated as a purpose or character of the business;
- (2) it has no more than five partners;
- (3) all its partners, other than any estate, are natural persons or family farm trusts;
- (4) its revenue from rent, royalties, dividends, interest, and annuities does not exceed 20 percent of its gross receipts;
- (5) its general partners hold at least 51 percent of the interest in the land assets of the partnership and reside on the farm or are actively engaging in farming not more than 1,500 acres as a general partner in an authorized limited partnership;
- (6) its limited partners do not participate in the business of the limited partnership including operating, managing, or directing management of farming operations;
- (7) it does not, directly or indirectly, own or otherwise have an interest in any title to more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land; and



(8) none of its limited partners are limited partners in other authorized farm partnerships that directly or indirectly in combination with the partnership own more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land.

(l) “Family farm limited liability company” means a limited liability company founded for the purpose of farming and the ownership of agricultural land in which the majority of the membership interests is held by and the majority of the members are natural persons, or current beneficiaries of one or more family farm trusts in which the trustee holds an interest in a family farm limited liability company related to each other within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of the civil law, and at least one of the related persons is residing on the farm, actively operating the farm, or the agricultural land was owned by one or more of the related persons for a period of five years before its transfer to the limited liability company, and none of the members is a corporation or a limited liability company. A family farm limited liability company does not cease to qualify as a family farm limited liability company because of:

(1) a transfer of a membership interest to a person or spouse of a person related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to the person making the transfer or to a family farm trust of which the member, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary; or

(2) distribution from a family farm trust of a membership interest to a beneficiary related within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of civil law to a majority of the current beneficiaries of the trust, or to a family farm trust of which the member, spouse, or related person is a current beneficiary.

For the purposes of this section, a transfer may be made with or without consideration, either directly or indirectly, during life or at death, whether or not in trust, of a membership interest in the family farm limited liability company, and interest owned by a family farm trust is considered to be owned in equal shares by the current beneficiaries. Except for a state or federally chartered financial institution acquiring an encumbrance for the purpose of security or an interest under paragraph (x), a member of a family farm limited liability company may not transfer a membership interest, including a financial interest, to a person who is not otherwise eligible to be a member under this paragraph.

(m) “Authorized farm limited liability company” means a limited liability company meeting the following standards:

(1) it has no more than five members;

(2) all its members, other than any estate, are natural persons or family farm trusts;

(3) it does not have more than one class of membership interests;

(4) its revenue from rent, royalties, dividends, interest, and annuities does not exceed 20 percent of its gross receipts;



(5) members holding 51 percent or more of both the governance rights and financial rights in the limited liability company reside on the farm or are actively engaged in farming;

(6) it does not, directly or indirectly, own or otherwise have an interest in any title to more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land; and

(7) none of its members are members in other authorized farm limited liability companies that directly or indirectly in combination with the authorized farm limited liability company own more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land.

Except for a state or federally chartered financial institution acquiring an encumbrance for the purpose of security or an interest under paragraph (x), a member of an authorized farm limited liability company may not transfer a membership interest, including a financial interest, to a person who is not otherwise eligible to be a member under this paragraph.

(n) “Farmer” means a natural person who regularly participates in physical labor or operations management in the person's farming operation and files “Schedule F” as part of the person's annual Form 1040 filing with the United States Internal Revenue Service.

(o) “Actively engaged in livestock production” means performing day-to-day physical labor or day-to-day operations management that significantly contributes to livestock production and the functioning of a livestock operation.

(p) “Research or experimental farm” means a corporation, limited partnership, pension, investment fund, or limited liability company that owns or operates agricultural land for research or experimental purposes, provided that any commercial sales from the operation are incidental to the research or experimental objectives of the corporation. A corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund seeking initial approval by the commissioner to operate agricultural land for research or experimental purposes must first submit to the commissioner a prospectus or proposal of the intended method of operation containing information required by the commissioner including a copy of any operational contract with individual participants.

(q) “Breeding stock farm” means a corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company, that owns or operates agricultural land for the purpose of raising breeding stock, including embryos, for resale to farmers or for the purpose of growing seed, wild rice, nursery plants, or sod. An entity that is organized to raise livestock other than dairy cattle under this paragraph that does not qualify as an authorized farm corporation must:

(1) sell all castrated animals to be fed out or finished to farming operations that are neither directly nor indirectly owned by the business entity operating the breeding stock operation; and

(2) report its total production and sales annually to the commissioner.



(r) “Aquatic farm” means a corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company, that owns or leases agricultural land as a necessary part of an aquatic farm as defined in section 17.47, subdivision 3.

(s) “Religious farm” means a corporation formed primarily for religious purposes whose sole income is derived from agriculture.

(t) “Utility corporation” means a corporation regulated under Minnesota Statutes 1974, chapter 216B, that owns agricultural land for purposes described in that chapter, or an electric generation or transmission cooperative that owns agricultural land for use in its business if the land is not used for farming except under lease to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, a family farm trust, a family farm partnership, or a family farm limited liability company.

(u) “Development organization” means a corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund that has an interest in agricultural land for which the corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund has documented plans to use and subsequently uses the land within six years from the date of purchase for a specific nonfarming purpose, or if the land is zoned nonagricultural, or if the land is located within an incorporated area. A corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund may hold agricultural land in the amount necessary for its nonfarm business operation; provided, however, that pending the development of agricultural land for nonfarm purposes, the land may not be used for farming except under lease to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, a family farm trust, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm partnership, an authorized farm partnership, a family farm limited liability company, or an authorized farm limited liability company, or except when controlled through ownership, options, leaseholds, or other agreements by a corporation that has entered into an agreement with the United States under the New Community Act of 1968 (Title IV of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, United States Code, title 42, sections 3901 to 3914) as amended, or a subsidiary or assign of such a corporation.

(v) “Exempt land” means agricultural land owned or leased by a corporation as of May 20, 1973, agricultural land owned or leased by a pension or investment fund as of May 12, 1981, agricultural land owned or leased by a limited partnership as of May 1, 1988, or agricultural land owned or leased by a trust as of the effective date of Laws 2000, chapter 477, including the normal expansion of that ownership at a rate not to exceed 20 percent of the amount of land owned as of May 20, 1973, for a corporation; May 12, 1981, for a pension or investment fund; May 1, 1988, for a limited partnership, or the effective date of Laws 2000, chapter 477, for a trust, measured in acres, in any five-year period, and including additional ownership reasonably necessary to meet the requirements of pollution control rules. A corporation, limited partnership, or pension or investment fund that is eligible to own or lease agricultural land under this section prior to May 1997, or a corporation that is eligible to own or lease agricultural land as a benevolent trust under this section prior to the effective date of Laws 2000,



chapter 477, may continue to own or lease agricultural land subject to the same conditions and limitations as previously allowed.

(w) “Gifted land” means agricultural land acquired as a gift, either by grant or devise, by an educational, religious, or charitable nonprofit corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund if all land so acquired is disposed of within ten years after acquiring the title.

(x) “Repossessed land” means agricultural land acquired by a corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund by process of law in the collection of debts, or by any procedure for the enforcement of a lien or claim on the land, whether created by mortgage or otherwise if all land so acquired is disposed of within five years after acquiring the title. The five-year limitation is a covenant running with the title to the land against any grantee, assignee, or successor of the pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company. The land so acquired must not be used for farming during the five-year period, except under a lease to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, a family farm trust, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm partnership, an authorized farm partnership, a family farm limited liability company, or an authorized farm limited liability company. Notwithstanding the five-year divestiture requirement under this paragraph, a financial institution may continue to own the agricultural land if the agricultural land is leased to the immediately preceding former owner, but must dispose of the agricultural land within ten years of acquiring the title. Livestock acquired by a pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company in the collection of debts, or by a procedure for the enforcement of lien or claim on the livestock whether created by security agreement or otherwise after August 1, 1994, must be sold or disposed of within one full production cycle for the type of livestock acquired or 18 months after the livestock is acquired, whichever is earlier.

(y) “Commissioner” means the commissioner of agriculture.

(z) “Nonprofit corporation” means a nonprofit corporation organized under state nonprofit corporation or trust law or qualified for tax-exempt status under federal tax law that: (1) uses the land for a specific nonfarming purpose; (2) leases the agricultural land to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm limited liability company, a family farm trust, an authorized farm limited liability company, a family farm partnership, or an authorized farm partnership; or (3) actively farms less than 160 acres that were acquired by the nonprofit corporation prior to August 1, 2010, or actively farms less than 40 acres that were acquired by the nonprofit corporation after August 1, 2010, and the nonprofit corporation uses all profits from the agricultural land for educational purposes.

(aa) “Current beneficiary” means a person who at any time during a year is entitled to, or at the discretion of any person may, receive a distribution from the income or principal of the trust. It does not include a distributee



trust, other than a trust described in section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended, but does include the current beneficiaries of the distributee trust. It does not include a person in whose favor a power of appointment could be exercised until the holder of the power of appointment actually exercises the power of appointment in that person's favor. It does not include a person who is entitled to receive a distribution only after a specified time or upon the occurrence of a specified event until the time or occurrence of the event. For the purposes of this section, a distributee trust is a current beneficiary of a family farm trust.

(bb) “De minimis” means that any corporation, pension or investment fund, limited liability company, or limited partnership that directly or indirectly owns, acquires, or otherwise obtains any interest in 40 acres or less of agricultural land and annually receives less than \$150 per acre in gross revenue from rental or agricultural production.

Subd. 3. Farming and ownership of agricultural land by corporations restricted.

(a) No corporation, limited liability company, pension or investment fund, trust, or limited partnership shall engage in farming; nor shall any corporation, limited liability company, pension or investment fund, trust, or limited partnership, directly or indirectly, own, acquire, or otherwise obtain any interest, in agricultural land other than a bona fide encumbrance taken for purposes of security. This subdivision does not apply to general partnerships. This subdivision does not apply to any agricultural land, corporation, limited partnership, trust, limited liability company, or pension or investment fund that meet any of the definitions in subdivision 2, paragraphs (b) to (f), (j) to (m), (p) to (x), (z), and (bb), has a conservation plan prepared for the agricultural land, and reports as required under subdivision 4.

(b) A corporation, pension or investment fund, trust, limited liability company, or limited partnership that cannot meet any of the definitions in subdivision 2, paragraphs (b) to (f), (j) to (m), (p) to (x), (z), and (bb), may petition the commissioner for an exemption from this subdivision. The commissioner may issue an exemption if the entity meets the following criteria:

- (1) the exemption would not contradict the purpose of this section; and
- (2) the petitioning entity would not have a significant impact upon the agriculture industry and the economy.

The commissioner shall review annually each entity that is issued an exemption under this paragraph to ensure that the entity continues to meet the criteria in clauses (1) and (2). If an entity fails to meet the criteria, the commissioner shall withdraw the exemption and the entity is subject to enforcement proceedings under subdivision 5. The commissioner shall submit a report with a list of each entity that is issued an exemption under this paragraph to the chairs of the senate and house of representatives agricultural policy committees by October 1 of each year.



Subd. 3a. Lease agreement; conservation practice protection clause. A corporation, pension or investment fund, limited partnership, or limited liability company other than those meeting any of the definitions in subdivision 2, paragraphs (c) to (f) or (j) to (m), when leasing farm land to a family farm unit, a family farm corporation, a family farm trust, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm partnership, an authorized farm partnership, a family farm limited liability company, or an authorized farm limited liability company, under provisions of subdivision 2, paragraph (x), must include within the lease agreement a provision prohibiting intentional damage or destruction to a conservation practice on the agricultural land.

Subd. 3b. Protection of conservation practices. A corporation, pension or investment fund, or limited partnership, or limited liability company other than those meeting any of the definitions in subdivision 2, paragraphs (c) to (f) or (j) to (m), which, during the period of time it holds agricultural land under subdivision 2, paragraph (x), intentionally destroys a conservation practice as defined in section 103F.401, subdivision 3, to which the state has made a financial contribution, must pay the commissioner, for deposit in the general fund, an amount equal to the state's total contributions to that conservation practice plus interest from the time of investment in the conservation practice. Interest must be calculated at an annual percentage rate of 12 percent.

Subd. 4. Reports.

(a) The chief executive officer of every pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or entity that is seeking to qualify for an exemption from the commissioner, and the trustee of a family farm trust that holds any interest in agricultural land or land used for the breeding, feeding, pasturing, growing, or raising of livestock, dairy or poultry, or products thereof, or land used for the production of agricultural crops or fruit or other horticultural products, other than a bona fide encumbrance taken for purposes of security, or which is engaged in farming or proposing to commence farming in this state after May 20, 1973, shall file with the commissioner a report containing the following information and documents:

- (1) the name of the pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company and its place of incorporation, certification, or registration;
- (2) the address of the pension or investment plan headquarters or of the registered office of the corporation in this state, the name and address of its registered agent in this state and, in the case of a foreign corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company, the address of its principal office in its place of incorporation, certification, or registration;
- (3) the acreage and location listed by quarter-quarter section, township, and county of each lot or parcel of agricultural land or land used for the keeping or feeding of poultry in this state owned or leased



by the pension or investment fund, limited partnership, corporation, or limited liability company;

(4) the names and addresses of the officers, administrators, directors, or trustees of the pension or investment fund, or of the officers, shareholders owning more than ten percent of the stock, including the percent of stock owned by each such shareholder, the members of the board of directors of the corporation, and the members of the limited liability company, and the general and limited partners and the percentage of interest in the partnership by each partner;

(5) the farm products which the pension or investment fund, limited partnership, corporation, or limited liability company produces or intends to produce on its agricultural land;

(6) with the first report, a copy of the title to the property where the farming operations are or will occur indicating the particular exception claimed under subdivision 3; and

(7) with the first or second report, a copy of the conservation plan proposed by the soil and water conservation district, and with subsequent reports a statement of whether the conservation plan was implemented.

The report of a corporation, trust, limited liability company, or partnership seeking to qualify hereunder as a family farm corporation, an authorized farm corporation, an authorized livestock farm corporation, a family farm partnership, an authorized farm partnership, a family farm limited liability company, an authorized farm limited liability company, or a family farm trust or under an exemption from the commissioner shall contain the following additional information: the number of shares, partnership interests, or governance and financial rights owned by persons or current beneficiaries of a family farm trust residing on the farm or actively engaged in farming, or their relatives within the third degree of kindred according to the rules of the civil law or their spouses; the name, address, and number of shares owned by each shareholder, partnership interests owned by each partner or governance and financial rights owned by each member, and a statement as to percentage of gross receipts of the corporation derived from rent, royalties, dividends, interest, and annuities. No pension or investment fund, limited partnership, corporation, or limited liability company shall commence farming in this state until the commissioner has inspected the report and certified that its proposed operations comply with the provisions of this section.

(b) Every pension or investment fund, limited partnership, trust, corporation, or limited liability company as described in paragraph (a) shall, prior to April 15 of each year, file with the commissioner a report containing the information required in paragraph (a), based on its operations in the preceding calendar year and its status at the end of the year. A pension or investment fund, limited partnership, corporation, or limited liability company that does



not file the report by April 15 must pay a \$500 civil penalty. The penalty is a lien on the land being farmed under subdivision 3 until the penalty is paid.

(c) The commissioner may, for good cause shown, issue a written waiver or reduction of the civil penalty for failure to make a timely filing of the annual report required by this subdivision. The waiver or reduction is final and conclusive with respect to the civil penalty, and may not be reopened or modified by an officer, employee, or agent of the state, except upon a showing of fraud or malfeasance or misrepresentation of a material fact. The report required under paragraph (b) must be completed prior to a reduction or waiver under this paragraph. The commissioner may enter into an agreement under this paragraph only once for each corporation or partnership.

(d) A report required under paragraph (a) or (b) must be submitted with a filing fee of \$15. The fee must be deposited in the state treasury and credited to an account in the agricultural fund. Money in the account, including interest, is appropriated to the commissioner for the administrative expenses of this section.

(e) Failure to file a required report or the willful filing of false information is a gross misdemeanor.

(f) The trustee of a revocable trust with respect to which either the settlor, the settlor's spouse, or both, are the primary beneficiaries during the settlor's lifetime shall not be required to file with the commissioner a report under this section during any period that the trust is revocable.

Subd. 5. Enforcement. With reason to believe that a corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, trust, or pension or investment fund is violating subdivision 3, the attorney general shall commence an action in the district court in which any agricultural lands relative to such violation are situated, or if situated in two or more counties, in any county in which a substantial part of the lands are situated. The attorney general shall file for record with the county recorder or the registrar of titles of each county in which any portion of said lands are located a notice of the pendency of the action as provided in section 557.02. If the court finds that the lands in question are being held in violation of subdivision 3, it shall enter an order so declaring. The attorney general shall file for record any such order with the county recorder or the registrar of titles of each county in which any portion of said lands are located. Thereafter, the pension or investment fund, limited partnership, or corporation owning such land shall have a period of five years from the date of such order to divest itself of such lands. The aforementioned five-year limitation period shall be deemed a covenant running with the title to the land against any pension or investment fund, limited partnership, or corporate grantee or assignee or the successor of such pension or investment fund, limited partnership, or corporation. Any lands not so divested within the time prescribed shall be sold at public sale in the manner prescribed by law for the foreclosure of a mortgage by action. In addition, any prospective or threatened violation may be enjoined by an action brought by the attorney general in the manner provided by law.

Subds. 6 to 8. Renumbered § 500.245, subds. 1 to 3 in St.1997 Supp.



§ 500.221. Restrictions on acquisition of title

Subdivision 1. Definitions. For purposes of this section, “agricultural land” means land capable of use in the production of agricultural crops, livestock or livestock products, poultry or poultry products, milk or dairy products, or fruit and other horticultural products but does not include any land zoned by a local governmental unit for a use other than and nonconforming with agricultural use. For the purposes of this section, “interest in agricultural land” includes any leasehold interest. For the purposes of this section, a “permanent resident alien of the United States” is a natural person who:

- (1) has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence; or
- (2) is a holder of a nonimmigrant treaty investment visa pursuant to United States Code, title 8, section 1101(a)15(E)(ii).

A person who qualifies as a permanent resident alien of the United States under clause (1) must also maintain that person's principal, actual dwelling place within the United States for at least six months out of every consecutive 12-month period without regard to intent. A person who qualifies as a permanent resident alien of the United States under clause (2) must also maintain that person's principal actual dwelling place in Minnesota for at least ten months out of every 12-month period, and is limited to dairy farming and up to 1,500 acres of agricultural land. The eligibility of a person under clause (2) is limited to three years, unless the commissioner waives the three-year limitation upon finding that the person is actively pursuing the status under clause (1) or United States citizenship. For the purposes of this section, “commissioner” means the commissioner of agriculture.

Subd. 1a. Determination of alien status. An alien who qualifies under subdivision 1, clause (1), and has been physically absent from the United States for more than six months out of any 12-month period shall be presumed not to be a permanent resident alien. An alien who qualifies under subdivision 1, clause (2), and has been physically absent from Minnesota for more than two months out of any 12-month period shall be presumed not to be a permanent resident alien. Every permanent resident alien of the United States who purchases property subject to this section must:

- (1) file a report with the commissioner within 30 days of the date of purchase; and
- (2) annually, at some time during the month of January, file with the commissioner a statement setting forth the dates and places of that person's residence in the United States during the prior calendar year.

The statement required under clause (2) must include an explanation of absences totaling more than two months during the prior calendar year and any facts which support the continuation of permanent resident alien status. Upon receipt of the statement, the commissioner shall have 30 days to review the statement and notify the resident alien whether the facts support continuation of the permanent resident alien status.

Subd. 2. Aliens and non-American corporations. Except as hereinafter provided, no natural person shall acquire directly or indirectly any interest in agricultural land unless the person is a citizen of the United States or a



permanent resident alien of the United States. In addition to the restrictions in section 500.24, no corporation, partnership, limited partnership, trustee, or other business entity shall directly or indirectly, acquire or otherwise obtain any interest, whether legal, beneficial or otherwise, in any title to agricultural land unless at least 80 percent of each class of stock issued and outstanding or 80 percent of the ultimate beneficial interest of the entity is held directly or indirectly by citizens of the United States or permanent resident aliens. This section shall not apply:

(1) to agricultural land that may be acquired by devise, inheritance, as security for indebtedness, by process of law in the collection of debts, or by any procedure for the enforcement of a lien or claim thereon, whether created by mortgage or otherwise. All agricultural land acquired in the collection of debts or by the enforcement of a lien or claim shall be disposed of within three years after acquiring ownership;

(2) to citizens or subjects of a foreign country whose rights to hold land are secured by treaty;

(3) to lands used for transportation purposes by a common carrier, as defined in section 218.011, subdivision 10;

(4) to lands or interests in lands acquired for use in connection with (i) the production of timber and forestry products by a corporation organized under the laws of Minnesota, or (ii) mining and mineral processing operations. Pending the development of agricultural land for the production of timber and forestry products or mining purposes the land may not be used for farming except under lease to a family farm, a family farm corporation or an authorized farm corporation;

(5) to agricultural land operated for research or experimental purposes if the ownership of the agricultural land is incidental to the research or experimental objectives of the person or business entity and the total acreage owned by the person or business entity does not exceed the acreage owned on May 27, 1977;

(6) to the purchase of any tract of 40 acres or less for facilities incidental to pipeline operation by a company operating a pipeline as defined in section 216G.01, subdivision 3;

(7) to agricultural land and land capable of being used as farmland in vegetable processing operations that is reasonably necessary to meet the requirements of pollution control law or rules;

(8) to an interest in agricultural land held on the August 1, 2003, by a natural person with a nonimmigrant treaty investment visa, pursuant to United States Code, title 8, section 1101(a)15(E)(ii), if, within five years after August 1, 2003, the person:

(i) disposes of all agricultural land held; or

(ii) becomes a permanent resident alien of the United States or a United States citizen; or



(9) to an easement taken by an individual or entity for the installation and repair of transmission lines and for wind rights.

Subd. 2a. Loss of exempt status. If any person or business entity acquires an interest in agricultural land as permitted by subdivision 2 and thereafter ceases to be a person or entity qualified to acquire an interest in agricultural land as permitted by subdivision 2 by reason of the loss of citizenship or permanent residence status or the loss of citizenship or permanent residence status of its shareholders or the holders of ultimate beneficial interests, the person or entity shall:

(1) notify the commissioner within 30 days of the loss of qualification and file a report with the commissioner of agriculture giving a description of all agricultural land owned by the person or entity within the state, the date upon which the land was acquired, the date upon which the person or entity ceased to be qualified, and other information reasonably required by the commissioner;

(2) divest itself of any agricultural land acquired after May 27, 1981, within one year of the date upon which the person or entity ceased to be qualified;

(3) report the divestiture to the commissioner of agriculture within 90 days after it occurs;

(4) make other reports as the commissioner may reasonably require; and

(5) continue to file periodic reports as required by subdivision 4 with respect to any land acquired on or before May 27, 1977.

Subd. 2b. Investigation by commissioner. The commissioner, upon the request of any person or upon receipt of any information which leads the commissioner to believe that a violation of this section may exist, may issue subpoenas requiring the appearance of witnesses, the production of relevant records and the giving of relevant testimony. On concluding, as a result of the investigation, that a violation of this section may have occurred, the commissioner shall provide the landowner or the landowner's designee with the opportunity to meet with the commissioner or the commissioner's designee in the county where the land is located to exchange information relating to the compliance with this section and any necessity for divestiture. The commissioner shall have the power to issue additional subpoenas for the meeting. The landowner and any person subpoenaed by the commissioner may be represented by counsel. Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter 14, the preliminary investigation and the meeting do not constitute a contested case hearing.

Subd. 3. Enforcement. With reason to believe, after investigation, that any person is violating this section, the commissioner shall commence an action in the district court in which any agricultural land relative to the violation is situated, or if situated in two or more counties, in any county in which a substantial part of the land is situated.

The commissioner shall file for record with the county recorder or the registrar of titles of each county in which any portion of the land is located a notice of the pendency of the action as provided in section 557.02. If the court finds that the land in question is being held in violation of subdivision 2, it shall enter an order so declaring. The commissioner shall file for record any order with



the county recorder or the registrar of titles of each county in which any portion of the land is located. Thereafter, the natural person, corporation, partnership, limited partnership, trustee or other business entity, shall have a period of one year from the date of the order to divest itself of the lands. The aforementioned one year limitation period shall be deemed a covenant running with the title to the land against any grantee or assignee or successor corporation or any noncorporation entity acting as agent, assignee, or successor on behalf of a corporation. Any land not so divested within the time prescribed shall be sold at public sale in the manner prescribed by law for the foreclosure of a mortgage by action. No title to land shall be invalid or subject to forfeiture by reason of the alienage of any former owner or person having a former interest therein.

Subd. 3a. Injunction. The commissioner may seek injunctive relief whenever a violation of this section is threatened.

Subd. 3b. Agreement. The commissioner is authorized to enter into a written agreement in settlement of any alleged violation, whether or not a hearing is held on the violation. An agreement may provide for an extension of the time period for divestiture but shall not include a waiver of a divestiture required by this section. The agreement shall be construed as a “No Contest” pleading and may include any sanctions, penalties, or affirmative actions which are mutually satisfactory and are consistent with this section. The agreement shall be final and conclusive with respect to the action, except upon a showing of fraud, malfeasance, or misrepresentation of a material fact. The matter agreed upon shall not be reopened or modified by an officer, employee, or agent of the state. The agreement shall be filed in Ramsey County District Court and shall be enforceable by it or the district court of the county in which the person resides or principally does business. Any violator of an agreement may, after notice is given to the alleged violator and a hearing is held, be punished by the district court as for contempt, in addition to other remedies in this section.

Subd. 4. Reports.

(a) Any natural person, corporation, partnership, limited partnership, trustee, or other business entity prohibited from future acquisition of agricultural land may retain title to any agricultural land lawfully acquired within this state prior to June 1, 1981, but shall file a report with the commissioner of agriculture annually before January 31 containing a description of all agricultural land held within this state, the purchase price and market value of the land, the use to which it is put, the date of acquisition and any other reasonable information required by the commissioner.

(b) An individual or entity that qualifies for an exemption under subdivision 2, clause (2) or (9), and owns an interest in agricultural land shall file a report with the commissioner of agriculture by December 31 of each year in which the individual or entity acquires an interest in agricultural land. The report must contain a description of all interests in agricultural land held by the individual or entity within this state.

(c) The commissioner shall make the information available to the public.



(d) All required annual reports shall include a filing fee of \$50 plus \$10 for each additional quarter section of land.

Subd. 5. Penalty. Willful failure to properly file a report required under subdivision 1a or to properly register any parcel of land as required by subdivision 4 is a gross misdemeanor.

