

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 6, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Jen Easterly
Director
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Director Easterly:

We are writing to express concern regarding the dangers of the proliferation of Chinese-manufactured agriculture drones throughout the United States. Thanks to the ingenuity of American farmers, the U.S. has always been at the forefront of agricultural innovation. However, through unfair trade practices and massive government subsidies, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is weaponizing their monopoly of the global drone supply to gain leverage over our nations' food supply.¹

Food security is national security and the CCP is actively trying to undermine America's global agricultural dominance.² The People's Republic of China (PRC) has drastically increased their ownership of U.S. agricultural land³ and Chinese spies have stolen U.S.-developed genetically modified seeds directly out of the ground in Iowa.⁴ Dominating the supply of agriculture drones is another strategy that the PRC is pursuing to jeopardize America's food supply.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, "aerosol dispensing" drones have the potential to be used as weapons delivery platforms and therefore face rigorous export restrictions.⁵ However, the U.S. has imported thousands of aerosol dispensing drones manufactured by

¹ "Whitepaper: AUVSI Partnership for Drone Competitiveness." AUVSI. June 6, 2024.

<https://www.auvsi.org/sites/default/files/AUVSI-Partnership-for-Drone-Competitiveness-White-Paper.pdf>

² Rui, Guo. "China's Xi Jinping repeats call for food security as US rivalry and external uncertainties grow." South China Morning Post. December 25, 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3204539/chinas-xi-jinping-repeats-call-food-security-us-rivalry-and-external-uncertainties-grow>

³ "Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land, Through December 31, 2022." Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture. December 20, 2023.

https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/EPAS/PDF/2022_afida_annual_report_12_20_23.pdf

⁴ Phillips, Aleks. "Iowa Farmers Accuse China of Stealing American Seeds." Newsweek. August 4, 2023. <https://www.newsweek.com/iowa-farmers-china-stealing-american-seeds-agriculture-1817537>

⁵ "Category 9 – Aerospace and Propulsion, Commerce Control List." Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Department of Commerce. December 8, 2023.

<https://www.bis.doc.gov/index.php/documents/regulations-docs/2340-ccl9-4/file>

Chinese-drone behemoth Shenzhen DJI Innovation Technology Co., Ltd. (DJI). DJI is closely linked to the CCP⁶ and is a Chinese Military Company according to the U.S. Department of Defense.⁷ Ultimately, this means that in the U.S. there are thousands of weapons delivery platforms that contain software, firmware, and hardware manufactured by a Chinese Military Company. The risk of these DJI agricultural spray drones being manipulated to carry out an attack in the United States cannot be ignored.

Second, relying on our greatest strategic adversary for technology critical to the success of our agricultural production endangers the resiliency of our food supply. DJI's line of agriculture drones includes advanced surveillance drones which incorporate sophisticated LiDAR sensors and multispectral cameras which DJI states can collect and interpret crop data that is "impossible for the human eye to see."⁸ While this level of detail can assist farmers in effective crop management, it can also be weaponized by the CCP to gain access into granular level detail on the stability and condition of the U.S. agriculture sector.

The risk of DJI's transmission of data to the CCP is made clear in a recent industry cybersecurity guidance on Chinese-manufactured drones published by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). According to the guidance, using Chinese-manufactured drones, "risks exposing sensitive information to PRC authorities, jeopardizing U.S. national security, economic security, and public health and safety."⁹ Furthermore, China's 2017 National Intelligence Law obligates "all" Chinese organizations and citizens to collaborate with state intelligence operations.¹⁰ Meaning that DJI must support China's intelligence services and military by turning over data they collect in China and overseas.

Not only can the CCP leverage their access to this data to disrupt our agricultural production, but they also have control over the export of Chinese-manufactured drones. During Russia's war in Ukraine, the CCP has shown they are willing to impose export controls on Chinese drones when it advances their national interests.¹¹ If the success of the U.S. agricultural industry is dependent on American farmers' access to procuring and operating Chinese drones, then Communist China will have control over our nation's food supply.

⁶ Cadell, Cate. "Drone company DJI obscured ties to Chinese state funding, documents show." The Washington Post. February 1, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/02/01/china-funding-drones-dji-us-regulators/>

⁷ "Entities Identified as Chinese Military Companies Operating in the United States in accordance with Section 1260H of the William M. ("Mac") Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283)." U.S. Department of Defense. January 31, 2024. <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/31/2003384819/-1/-1/0/1260H-LIST.PDF>

⁸ "P4 Multispectral." DJI. <https://www.dji.com/p4-multispectral>

⁹ "Cybersecurity Guidance: Chinese-Manufactured UAS." CISA & FBI. January 17, 2024. <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/Cybersecurity%20Guidance%20Chinese-Manufactured%20UAS.pdf>

¹⁰ "PRC National Intelligence Law (as amended in 2018)." China Law Translate. June 27, 2017. <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/national-intelligencelaw-of-the-p-r-c-2017/>.

¹¹ McDonald, Joe. "China restricts civilian drone exports, citing Ukraine and concern about military use." The Associated Press. July 31, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/china-ukraine-russia-drone-export-dji-e6694b3209b4d8a93fd76cf29bd8a056>

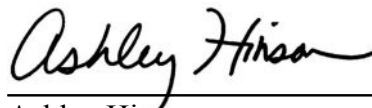
The Food and Agriculture Sector is one of CISA's sixteen critical infrastructure sectors because the disruption of it would have a detrimental impact on U.S. national security. USDA and CISA must do more to protect the U.S. agricultural industry from the catastrophic danger of relying on Chinese-manufactured drones. As the agencies in charge of safeguarding the agriculture sector, we are requesting a briefing on your efforts to mitigate the risks of Chinese-manufactured drones to our agriculture industry no later than September 30, 2024.

In December 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping gave a speech at the Central Rural Work Conference of the Communist Party of China stating that China must adhere to a national food security strategy that puts [China] first.”¹² America's food supply cannot rely on technology that is manufactured and controlled by China. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



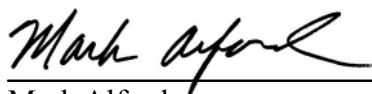
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¹² The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, “中央农村工作会议举行 习近平、李克强作重要讲话” [The Central Rural Work Conference was held, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang delivered important speeches], Xinhua News, December 24, 2013, https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-12/24/content_2553842.htm



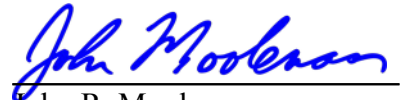
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