



Farmer Bill and his wife, the private owners of more farmland than anyone else in America

## Description

**USA: Bill Gates has quietly become the United States' largest farmland owner. And he's not the only one who's been on a farmland shopping spree. Why are the rich buying up large swathes of land?**

Philanthrocapitalist Bill also has his eye on farming in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In January 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced it was creating a non-profit entity called [Gates Ag One](#) that aims to “speed up efforts to provide smallholder farmers in developing countries ... with access to the affordable tools and innovations they need to sustainably improve crop productivity and adapt to the effects of climate change.”

The announcement came shortly before the [failure of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (“AGRA”) – founded in 2006 by The Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation – and the ensuing debt trap for both African farmers and governments was becoming apparent. So, why is Gates investing in Sub-Saharan Africa farming? And will Africans trust him?

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Henry Kissinger, 1970

## United States

There are over two million individual farms in the US. That is the equivalent of almost 900 million acres of arable land used for industry. The average size of a farm is about 444 acres.

Around 97% of American farms are small and medium-sized family-owned operations. Corporations own 3% and rent land or buy many of the crops owned by the 97%. In addition, over 250,000 farms are so-called factory farms owned, rented, or co-opted by corporations.

Starting in the mid-1990s, Bill and Melinda Gates wanted to diversify their investment portfolio to be less reliant on their stake in Microsoft. Over the past decades, the Gates have been buying up a lot of farmland, as well as a range of other asset classes, [Farmfolio wrote](#).

In January 2021 [The Land Report ranked Bill Gates as America's top farmland owner](#). *The Land Report* tracks major land transactions and produces an annual list of the 100 biggest US landowners. Eric O'Keefe wrote, "Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, has an alter ego: Farmer Bill, the guy who owns more farmland than anyone else in America."

Much of the Gates' fortune is invested through a company called Cascade Investment LLC, so that would be the entity that now owns all that farmland. One of the many entities within those investments is Cottonwood Ag Management.

This subsidiary is an inaugural member of the 13-member Sustainable Agriculture Working Group of [Leading Harvest](#), a sustainable agriculture organisation. It has launched a new Farmland Management Standard "...created by and for all stakeholders across the agricultural value chain – from farmland

owners to companies to communities” to advance agriculture from the ground up, sustainably.

Bill and Melinda Gates divorced in 2021. The divorce has brought to light landholdings that they own, the most extensive holdings specifically in Louisiana, Arkansas, Nebraska and Arizona.

The Gates own over 268,000 acres of farmland diversified in over 19 states. Gates’ private American farmlands are worth an estimated \$690 million.

Technically speaking, Bill Gates ranks 49<sup>th</sup> on the list of individuals, families, and corporations who own the most farmland. However, Bill Gates is the largest **private owner** of American farmland.

Bill Malone, an American billionaire businessman, owns over 2.2 million acres of farms, ranches, and forests in the US and is No. 1 when it comes to owning the most corporate farmland in the US. CNN founder Ted Turner ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with 2 million acres of ranch land, while Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is in the 25<sup>th</sup> spot with ownership of 420,000 acres, mainly in west Texas.

Some of the wealthiest landowners are buying up forests and ranches as well as farmland across the US. Why? CNBC concluded it was merely for investment purposes.

CNBC: Why Bill Gates Is Buying Up US Farmland, 21 August 2021 (13 mins)

During an interview with CNBC, [Bill Gates said](#) that he bought the farmland because he was interested in its potential to produce large quantities of food. He added that he doesn't have any specific plans for the farmland yet, but is open to all possibilities.

Corporations and the rich are investing in farmland to deal with climate change and supply products to a hungry world with changing tastes, [Land Income proposed](#) as one of the reasons.

However, [according to DW](#), when asked during a discussion on Reddit why he's buying up so much farmland, Gates said it wasn't connected to climate change, adding that seed science and biofuel development were the major drivers of the acquisitions.

“The agriculture sector is important. With more productive seeds we can avoid deforestation and help Africa deal with the climate difficulty they already face. It is unclear how cheap biofuels can be, but if they are cheap it can solve the aviation and truck emissions,” Gates wrote.

The Bill Gates farmland purchases could also mean that Gates will be getting into food production, specifically plant-based meat products, [Century 21 suggested](#). This new food production area is something that Gates is interested in and has invested in.

Gates’ hefty investment in American farmland may also be tied to his interests in developing super-crops, [Land Income suggested](#). [Super-crops](#) are genetically modified seeds, crops and livestock to maximise as much yield as possible, or so they claim. For example, cows may be given miracle vaccines to help them produce higher quality milk and meat. Future crops may be genetically designed to grow better in droughts, heatwaves and withstand disease.

Read more: [Why Is Bill Gates Buying Farm Land?](#) Common Sense in America, 4 May 2021 and [Bill Gates buys big on a farmland shopping spree](#), DW, 9 April 2021

## Africa

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been a strong advocate for agricultural development in Africa, [Century 21 noted](#). In fact, the Foundation has committed more than \$700 million to support African farmers.

In January 2021, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the non-profit [Gates Ag One](#). It will help farmers in developing countries access agri-tech, improve farming tools, learn how to maximise yield better and better adapt to climate change.

Not everyone is on board with Bill's agricultural initiatives. Gates Ag One has been referred to as a 'recolonisation of agriculture' due to its top-down ownership structure and the introduction of globalised crops and farming techniques. Gates' apparent commitment to sustainability has been derided by many as a brazen attempt to bolster his image while accumulating even more wealth.

"It will be interesting to see how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation responds to Bill Gates' purchase of farmland in the United States. The Foundation has a lot of experience with agricultural development, and they may get involved in Gates' new project. It's also possible that the Foundation will continue to focus on Africa, where there is still much work to be done in terms of food security," *Century 21* concluded.

However, judging by Gates' video below he seems more eager to apply his knowledge from his previous career at Microsoft to farming and sell smartphones to "poor" farmers than promote farming. Once again showing how out of touch he is from the lives of ordinary people.

Bill Gates: The future of farming, 20 January 2016 (2 mins)

It's fair to say Gates' focus on Africa is a concern for Africans who, rather than being given a smartphone, would prefer to have the ability to grow food. Food from natural seeds not genetically modified seeds as patented by a [large corporation that then collects royalties](#).

## Land Reform in Zimbabwe

A particular example of corporatism and social control can be found within national or global food systems, in the ways they are monopolised and managed. Zimbabwe is one such example.

The Nixon Administration began the process of destroying the domestic food production of developing countries as the opening shot in an undeclared war to create a vast new global market in "efficient" American food exports. In Henry Kissinger's 1974 report "National Security Study Memorandum 200" (NSSM 200), he directly targeted overseas food aid as an "instrument of national power."

Read more: [Democratic Unfreedom – Social Technique and the Manufacture of Control](#), TruthOut, 19 June 2012

In February 1976, Kissinger announced a formal interest in the [Rhodesian situation](#) and spent the rest of the year holding discussions with the British, South African and [Frontline governments](#), a loose coalition of African countries, to produce a “mutually satisfactory proposal.”

In 1979 Rhodesia become known as Zimbabwe Rhodesia. In late 1979 the British government held negotiations in London – the three-month-long conference almost failed to reach conclusion, due to disagreements on land reform, but resulted in the Lancaster House Agreement and in 1980 Robert Mugabe became President of an independent Zimbabwe.

In 1980 when Mugabe gained power, white farmers owned more than 11.6 million hectares. White farmers, who made up about 1% of the country’s population of 12 million but formed the backbone of its economy, were urged to stay as a minority class protected by law. White-owned commercial farms exported enough maize to feed 10% of Africa. In the 1980s, Zimbabwe and Sudan alone could have supplied grain for all of Africa, with an excess for world markets.

Facing severe economic problems and an election, Mugabe changed course in early 2000. He sought to nationalise 4,500 properties – about 95% of farmland owned by whites – and distribute the land to supporters. By 2001, the first white farmers were killed for resisting.

Between March 2000 and September 2001, [some 1,700 of the 4,600 farms](#) owned by whites were invaded by militant blacks. In violent clashes, at least 11 white owners and scores of black workers were murdered.

Under pressure from other nations, Zimbabwe agreed in September 2001 to stop violent takeovers of white-owned farms. The chair of the Southern African Development Community (“SADC”) said: “the economic and political problems Zimbabwe is facing now could easily snowball across the entire southern African region.”

Read more: [Here’s What Happened When Zimbabwe Seized White Farmers’ Land](#), PJ Media, 30 August 2018

In 2002, when Zimbabwe was facing famine, Mugabe ordered farmers to stop growing food. Mugabe commanded them to park their tractors and stop farming. With half the people in Zimbabwe on the brink of starvation, this was, even by Mugabe’s standards, an exceptionally bad idea, [The Economist wrote](#).

Some 2,900 white farmers, whose farms had been earmarked to be seized and given to blacks, were legally obliged to cease work. Those who continued to plough, weed and scatter seeds faced jail terms of up to two years. Generously, the government said it would allow them to continue living in their homes for another 45 days, but then they must leave. Most of the seized land was handed over to Mugabe’s cronies.

The next two successive elections in 2002 and 2008 were built around the land question by Mugabe’s party, portrayed as the “Third [Chimurenga](#).” Yet, the land invasion precipitated the worst economic

collapse of Zimbabwe's economy which the country was still reeling from 14 years later – as it seemingly turned overnight from being one of [Sub-Saharan Africa's breadbaskets into a basket case](#).

In 2008 a drought added to the food shortages, and as the elections drew closer, the Zimbabwean government once again focused its attention on food distribution – food for votes.

The Zimbabwean authorities have a history of controlling access to food for political purposes. Soon after independence in 1980, Mugabe and his ruling party began using food as a weapon against political opponents. Since Mugabe launched the campaign to dispossess white farmers in 2000, many people became reliant on handouts from relief agencies or the government. As well as selective distribution through its own food aid centres, the government also tried to influence the way international relief groups managed distribution.

Read more: [Food for Votes in Zimbabwe](#), IWPR, 11 April 2008

Fourteen years after the land invasions began, observers in 2014 viewed the Zimbabwean government's ongoing lack of stamping its foot decisively down, treating land invaders with kid gloves, as a strategy by the ruling party to leave the door slightly ajar to make room for it to exploit the land issue again whenever it pleases.

Mugabe showed how a power-corrupted despot can turn a breadbasket into a basket case. After farming collapsed, hungry people decimated wildlife, from noble big game to bite-sized rodents. When there was nothing to shoot, the options were stealing or starving, the [Mort Report wrote](#) in 2019.

**The West needs to learn from the lessons of Africa because methods of controlling the population have already been implemented there. One method is food: whoever controls the food does indeed control the population. The threat we face is not from nationalists but from globalists, supranationalists who seek to operate outside of nations' elected officials. Do you trust Bill Gates and his cronies to control your food supply?**

By Rhoda Wilson

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