A bill approved this year by the North Dakota legislature will provide new exemptions to the state’s decades-old ban on corporate farming, but it might also face a future challenge at the ballot box.

SB 2351 was signed into law in March. According to The Bismarck Tribune, the measure exempts pork and dairy operations. Up to 640 acres of land, per facility, can now be leased or owned by a domestic corporation or a limited liability company.

State restrictions had to be eased, SB 2351 supporters say, in order to boost investment in North Dakota’s livestock industry and revive this economic sector. Dairy production in the state, for example, has plummeted over the past decade. But North Dakota Farmers Union president Mark Watne says the statutory change goes against the preference of most residents that “farmland ownership and agricultural production ... be in the hands of families making a living off of the land.” His organization plans to pursue a constitutional amendment that would overturn the legislature’s recent actions.

According to the National Agricultural Law Center, nine states have laws that restrict corporate farming, including Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

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