

Mayor Hau says Taipei City to launch boycott against select US beef products

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Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) said yesterday the city government would launch a campaign next month to discourage restaurants from serving US ground beef and cow intestines and spinal cords.

“I am against [the US beef import] policy from the perspective of food safety. The central government should reassess it,” Hau told a press conference at the Taipei City Hall.

Hau said the city government would form an “Anti-US Ground Beef, Intestines and Spinal Cords Association” and encourage the more than 15,000 restaurants, department stores and supermarkets in Taipei to join the association and its boycott.

“We have no right to ban these three items [US ground beef and cow intestines and spinal cords] in stores and restaurants, but we will do our best to protect the safety of Taipei residents,” he said.

Taipei is the first local government to announce action against the central government’s beef policy. However, Taichung Mayor Jason Hu (胡志強) said the Taichung City Government may also take action.

Under the new accord, US bone-in beef, ground beef, cow intestines, brains and spinal cords, and processed beef from cattle younger than 30 months that have not been contaminated with “specific risk” materials can be imported starting on Nov. 10.

Hau brushed off speculation that the city government’s opposition to the deal would worsen his relationship with President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), saying he had informed the Presidential Office of the city’s decision.

Liu Chia-chun (劉家春), director of the city’s Business Management Office, said the association would be launched on Nov. 16. Participating stores will display stickers for identification.

Participating stores will agree not to sell or use US ground beef, cow intestines or spinal cords. If caught violating the association’s regulations, they will face fines of between NT\$60,000 and NT\$150,000 under the Consumer Protection Law (消費者保護法), Liu said.

Allen Chiu, commissioner of the city’s Health Department, said the city would not allow the products to be used in school lunches.

The city’s law and regulation commissioner, Yeh Ching-yuan (葉清源), said the city government could not force stores to join the association, and stores that do not join will not be fined.

“But we encourage stores and restaurants to join us in protecting the safety of Taipei residents,” he said.

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Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Taipei City Councilor Chuang Ruei-hsiung (莊瑞雄) said the city government should also look into the beef to be used in next month's Beef Noodle Carnival.

Liu said the participating beef noodle shops use beef from Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan, and that the office had not found any shops using US beef so far.

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