

## Wang Jin-pyng backs beef amendment

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Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) yesterday supported banning “risky” beef products to override a protocol recently signed with the US.

Saying that legislators across party lines had agreed to amend the Act Governing Food Sanitation (食品安全法) and ban beef products that may be “health-threatening,” Wang said the amendment, once passed, would trump the protocol.

Wang said he had talked to National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi (蘇起) about the amendment, adding that the legislature would respect the government’s opinion.

Lawmakers agreed on Tuesday that the amendment, which they vowed to pass by Nov. 17, should ban the import of bovine organs, spinal cords, brains, skulls and eyes as well as ground beef.

The legislature is expected to allow two versions of the proposal to skip a preliminary review at tomorrow’s session. One is from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the other from Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Daniel Hwang (黃珊珊).

The KMT is undecided on whether the ban should apply to “risky” products from all regions where cases of mad cow disease have been recorded or only to regions with current outbreaks.

Under the terms of the protocol signed with the US, bone-in beef, ground beef, bovine intestines, brains, spinal cords and processed beef from cattle younger than 30 months that have not been contaminated with “specific risk materials” (SRMs) will be allowed into Taiwan starting Tuesday.

SRMs are defined in the protocol as the brain, skull, eyes, trigeminal ganglia, spinal cord, vertebral column and dorsal root ganglia of cattle 30 months of age and older, as well as the tonsils and the distal ileum of the small intestine from all cattle.

But in response to public criticism, the government on Monday said it would effectively block ground beef and bovine intestines by changing import inspection rules. Ground beef and intestine imports will be thawed for examination (ruining them in the process) and any shipments mixed with bone-in beef will be destroyed.

Meanwhile, Cabinet Spokesman Su Jun-pin (蘇俊平) dismissed media speculation that the US had warned the government against undermining the protocol.

“All of the measures taken by the health department, the Council of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs are meant to safeguard the health of Taiwanese and food sanitation. They are necessary,” Su Jun-pin said.

He said the government dealt with the issue “from the perspective of the people” and the

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measures would remain unchanged.

KMT caucus secretary-general Lu Hsueh-chang (呂秀蓮) said he had no information indicating that Washington had warned the government over the legislature's proposed amendment.

At a separate setting yesterday, DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said the US, as a large beef producer, has difficulty ensuring the safety and sanitation of each and every slaughterhouse and packing plant, while Taiwan lacks the resources and expertise to ensure that all US beef imports are safe.

"Japan has an exemplary inspection mechanism in which it posts its own inspectors to the US to examine the quality and safety of the beef. But as a small country, Taiwan does not have that because it would be a monumental burden on the Department of Health," she said.

The US recently reported two deaths resulting from beef tainted with E. Coli, which sickened another 28.

Tsai said most Americans do not eat the internal organs of cows and it is therefore questionable that the products would be scrutinized to the same extent by slaughterhouses and sanitation authorities prior to export. At the same time, the US does not require all meat producers to register their cattle, she said, making it difficult to trace the origin of any tainted meat that reaches Taiwan.

Former premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) said Ma was arrogant in thinking he could "fool the Americans" with technicalities. "I was premier before, so I understand the heavy pressure from the US over beef [imports]. Still, Ma really surprised everyone with his inability to withstand pressure when he promised the US full access," he said.

In related developments, supermarkets, restaurants and fast food chains on Taipei's Yongkang Street and surrounding areas yesterday displayed logos issued by the city government to declare their boycott of US ground beef, intestines and spinal cords.

Well-known stores and restaurants in the Yongkang Street area including Matsusei Supermarket, Mos Burger, Tung Men Dumpling Restaurant and Yongkang Beef Noodle Shop, joined the "Anti-US Ground Beef, Intestines and Spinal Cords Association" formed by the city government, and said displaying the logo would help their business.

"Customers are worried about eating US beef without knowing. We always use beef from Taiwan and Australia, so displaying the logo will help us inform the customers and ease their worries," the owner of Yongkang Beef Noodle Shop said.

Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) toured the area to issue the logo stickers to the stores yesterday morning, saying that more than 1,200 establishments had joined, many of which asked to receive the logos as soon as possible.

Hau brushed off apparent US opposition to boycotts by local governments and said the city's

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campaign was legal and in the public interest.

“The city government has not violated any regulations, and [forming this association] is within our authority,” he said at Yongkang Street.

“Even in the US, state governments have some autonomy in dealing with the policies of the central government,” he said.

When asked about a potential referendum on whether the government should renegotiate its beef policy with the US, Hau said both a plebiscite and demonstrations over the matter would be a waste of resources.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/11/05](#)