

## Obstruction by pro-China forces

Written by Chen Hsiang-jung 陳香君

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After China maliciously stopped importing pineapples from Taiwan, effective from March 1, many overseas Taiwanese in the US voiced their desire to buy Taiwanese pineapples. However, when the Overseas Community Affairs Council offered to help them buy pineapples from Taiwan, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Chen Yu-jen (陳玉建) accused the council of using state mechanisms to make propaganda for domestic consumption.

Taiwanese agricultural products have become overdependent on the Chinese market mainly because of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, which was signed during the administration of former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of the KMT. The terms of the agreement, which allowed many of Taiwan's farm products to be shipped to China tariff-free, help China to ensnare Taiwan with its "lure, trap and kill" strategy.

Now, just when pineapple farmers are in trouble, the KMT is mocking the government's remedial measures. Does the KMT think that letting growers lose as much as possible is the right way to prove that sucking up to China is the only way forward?

Taiwanese fruits are outstanding compared with those of other countries. As long as the pro-China crowd gets out of the way and lets the government establish long-term sales channels, Taiwan can definitely break free of the Chinese market and make bigger profits elsewhere.

Having been in the US for more than a decade, I know that overseas Taiwanese have always been eager to buy quality Taiwanese fruit. When Taiwanese guavas arrived in the US last year, everyone did all they could to spread the word. Taiwanese fruits taste great and look great, too. They are suitable for sale as special-quality fruit in high-end US supermarkets.

For instance, when shopping at a rather upscale supermarket the other day, I noticed that Taiwanese starfruit had been placed in the most eye-catching position as a flagship product. Among fruits that are familiar to Americans, such as mangoes, pineapples and mandarin oranges, the quality of those grown in Taiwan is much higher than the usual ones available on the US market. As to fruits that are less familiar to Americans, such as wax apples, starfruit and dragon fruit, my American friends have found them easy to accept, so there should be a big potential market for them.

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The only five fruits that Taiwan currently exports to the US are guavas, starfruit, mangoes, lychees and longans. Meanwhile, China sells the US five kinds of citrus fruit alone, while other Chinese fruits, such as bananas, apples and jujubes, are also widely available. It is hard to believe that Taiwan, with its advanced agriculture, cannot compete with China. All it takes is the will to do it.

There are also other obstacles that make it hard for Taiwanese fruit to compete. On March 11, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chiu Yi-ying (邱毅) revealed that a cold-chain chopping and packing center that the Council of Agriculture planned to set up in Kaohsiung's Dashu District (大樹) was shelved while the KMT's Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) was the city's mayor.

This shows how, even though the central government is in the hands of the "pan-green" DPP, pro-China forces at the local level can make it very hard to set up the infrastructure that is crucial for farm produce exports.

China's ongoing repressive actions have made overseas Taiwanese keen to buy Taiwanese pineapples. The campaign to place orders for dried pineapples launched by the Taiwanese associations of greater Seattle and greater Portland have won strong support from residents of Washington and Oregon, but this campaign cannot last forever.

As well as calling on those in charge of local governments in Taiwan to stop obstructing, let us hope that voters will no longer vote for pro-Chinese candidates who aim to sell out Taiwan and ruin its agriculture.

*Chen Hsiang-jung is a committee member of the Taiwanese Association of Greater Seattle and a participant in the Taiwan Statebuilding Party's training program.*

Translated by Julian Clegg

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