

The attitudes of pan-green and pan-blue supporters toward the economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) the government wants to sign with China and renegotiation of a agreement with the US on US beef imports were likely to be as polarized as their political beliefs, a poll expert said yesterday.

Tsai Chia-hung (蔡嘉宏), an associate research fellow at National Chengchi University's Election Study Center, said his study showed that pan-blue supporters were likely to support an ECFA and oppose holding new rounds of negotiations on the relaxation of restrictions on US beef and beef products. Their position on the two issues, however, would not be as firm as their pan-green counterparts, Tsai said.

Pan-green supporters, on the other hand, were likely to harbor opposition to signing an ECFA and support a referendum on whether to hold renegotiations on US beef, he said.

The Consumers' Foundation is in the second phase of a signature drive after the Cabinet's Referendum Review Committee approved their petition to mount a referendum on whether to hold renegotiation on US beef.

REFERENDUM

As for a referendum on an ECFA, the Taiwan Solidarity Union is in the process of gathering signatures to make a case to the committee after it rejected a similar proposal initiated by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) earlier this year.

Tsai said party support was imperative to the success of a referendum proposal.

The referendum on renegotiations on US beef stood a good chance of taking place because it was a health issue that received the backing of many pan-blue supporters, he said.

Tsai made the remarks while speaking at a seminar in Taipei yesterday. The one day event, entitled Democratic Reforms in Taiwan, was organized by Taiwan Thinktank. Since the Referendum Law (公投法) was enacted in 2003, Taiwan has held three national referendums on six different issues and one regional referendum in the outlying islands of Penghu.

ELECTIONS

Former deputy Presidential Office secretary-general Lin Chia-lung (林錫山) said a referendum had a better chance of success when it was held in tandem with elections, adding that the backing of political parties was important.

Ho Tsung-hsun (何宗昇), chief executive of Citizens Congress Watch, expressed regret over political intervention in referendums, saying it set off partisan warfare between the DPP and

US beef, ECFA polarizes public on political lines

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the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT).

One way to make the referendum on US beef renegotiations successful, he said, was to be creative in selling the issue and to canvass support in the same way as promoting a candidate for an election.

Wang Szu-wei (王昱偉), a professor at Nanhua University's department of non-profit organization management, said while Taiwan is a democracy and is supposed to be governed by the rule of law, the KMT government followed "the rule off law" — implying it usually flouts the law.

Taking the example of Taipei City Government's outstanding health care premiums, Wang said it was unbelievable to see Department of Health Minister Yaung Chih-liang (楊志良) back President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) on the issue even though the Supreme Administration Court ruled against the city in a final verdict.

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