

## Alliance calls for halt to trade talks

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>Green Party-Social Democratic Party alliance members gesture in Taipei yesterday as they call on the government to halt talks on the cross-strait trade in goods agreement.

**Photo: Chang Chia-ming, Taipei Times**

The cross-strait trade in goods agreement talks should be halted, as the deal would harm the interests of workers and farmers, Green Party-Social Democratic Party alliance candidates said yesterday.

“Our salaries are already low and work hours long enough — how can the government keep harming us, even forcing us to eat contaminated food if the agricultural market is opened up?” alliance legislator-at-large candidate Chang Li-fun (蔣麗芬) said, adding that President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) administration is pushing forward negotiations on the agreement prior to the passage of supervisory regulations by the Legislative Yuan.

Passage of regulations mandating greater transparency in negotiations with China was a key demand of last year’s Sunflower movement — a student-led action in response to the government’s handling of trade talks with China — with protesters demanding the regulations be passed prior to any further negotiations.

Taipei City Confederation of Trade Unions board of supervisors convener Chiang Wan-chin (蔣萬安) said the agreement would hurt workers’ interests by exposing them to further competition from cheap Chinese labor, forcing businesses in affected industries to shed workers and cut wages.

Transition to other industries would be difficult for affected workers because of their age and the skill gap, Chiang said.

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Alliance legislator-at-large candidate Yeh Ta-hua (葉大華) said that because the agreement would include more than 2,000 products in “fundamental” industries, such as steel and textiles, it could lead to an “economic tsunami.”

As a caretaker administration, Ma’s government does not possess a blank-check mandate to pursue the agreement in the face of public opposition, Yeh said.

Taiwan Rural Front spokesperson Chen Ping-hsuan (陳平煥) said that based on government statements, at least some agricultural products would be opened to Chinese imports, along with processed food products.

Because remaining agricultural protections are all for “sensitive” products vulnerable to price fluctuations, any further opening would greatly impact the agricultural market, Chen said, calling for the government to publish a list of the specific products being dealt with in the talks.

Rumored border inspection exemptions for Chinese food products would create safety risks, he added.

Protesters also called on the Democratic Progressive Party to take a clear stand against the agreement.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/11/03](#)