

Taiwanese protest US beef import plan

By ANNIE HUANG | Associated Press – Thu, Mar 8, 2012

<http://news.yahoo.com/taiwanese-protest-us-beef-import-plan-042751511.html>

Thousands of Taiwanese farmers staged a raucous protest Thursday against a government plan to allow the import of U.S. beef containing a growth drug, challenging the island's president to "say no" to Washington.

The protest outside Taiwan's ornate legislative building came as newly re-elected President Ma Ying-jeou seeks to strengthen ties with the U.S. by resolving the long-standing beef dispute. The beef issue has stalled trade talks crucial to keeping up the island's competitive edge in global trade. Protesters later marched to the Agriculture Council — Taiwan's Ministry of Agriculture — and pelted police with pig excrement and rotten eggs. Shield-wielding officers prevented them from entering the building after they broke through an outer security barrier.

The Cabinet announced this week it plans to lift a ban on U.S. beef containing minimal traces of ractopamine, a feed additive for meat leaning. The government sought to appease opponents by promising to ensure that vendors properly label their meat products. The plan needs legislative approval. Many of the protesting hog farmers chanted anti-U.S. beef slogans and held English-language placards saying "President, Dare You Say No to USA?" They were joined by several lawmakers from the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party, which has been in the forefront of the anti-U.S. beef movement. Hog farmers fear that lifting the ban could spark widespread health concerns that would affect consumption of other meat products, undermining their livelihoods.

The U.S. has long been the most important foreign partner for diplomatically isolated Taiwan, which China claims is part of its territory. Washington maintains that ractopamine is a safe additive, legalized in more than 100 countries. Notable exceptions are the European Union and China.

DPP lawmakers have paralyzed several legislative sessions, demanding that Premier Sean Chen step down for backing the new ractopamine policy. They question the rationale of imposing a ban on all ractopamine-treated meat except U.S. beef.

Taiwan's other sources of imported beef are New Zealand and Australia. Neither country uses ractopamine. Economics Minister Shih Yen-hsiang warned that failing to lift the beef ban could jeopardize negotiations for a trade framework that he said could herald a free trade agreement with the U.S.

Slashing tariffs on Taiwanese exports to the U.S. could reduce the island's heavy reliance on the mainland Chinese market, he said.

The U.S. sent a team to inspect security measures at Taiwanese airports this week, as part

of a plan to grant Taiwanese visa-waiver status. It is widely seen as a gesture in support of the Cabinet plan to lift the beef ban.

Taiwan banned all U.S. beef imports in 2003 over concerns about mad cow disease but permitted boneless beef imports in 2006.

Questions

1. Do you support American Beef's import?
2. In your opinion, what's the reason that government hesitate to import American beef?
3. Which one do you support, the farmer or government?
4. If government allow American beef's import, what's the influence on farmers?
5. If you are a farmer, how will you handle the situation after government open American beef import?
6. In America, ractopamine is allowed, then why Taiwan ban it?
7. If we ban American beef, U.S.A will stop the FTA's corporation, what's your response measures?
8. Why America used this issue to threat Taiwan?
9. What's your choice? Healthy or economy?
10. Do you like beef?