

Recent Implementations in Promoting Local Production and Local Consumption of Taiwanese Food

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For the past few years, consumers have been paying attention to food security and the logistics of food distributions from farm sources.. This emerging consumer trend encourages multiple ways of innovative marketing aligned with the concept of community supported agriculture (CSA) beyond the conventional channels of food distribution system, such as farmers' market, farmers' direct sales, door-to-door delivery, and boxing vegetable package sales. The Council of Agriculture (COA) has also committed a lot of policy resources to developing local production and local consumption programs. Some preliminary outcomes of policy implementations are discussed as follows.

I. Promotion of local special cuisine

In order to promote the policy of local production and local consumption of local food COA launched a campaign to promote local special cuisine across 20 townships located in 13 counties last October and December, 2014. In the said campaign, COA invited professional chefs to review and select local special foods and develop them into special cuisine in order to bridge the dialogue between food arts and agricultural production. In addition, local farmers' associations were the ones responsible for teaching the local special cuisine and further conduct the cooking competitions. There were a total of 120 varieties of cuisine menus selected as the top 3 winners in the competitions were held in each township. Furthermore, these menus were published in the APP platform for further extension into mobile marketing networks for domestic agricultural products. The innovative APP developed a model of multiple marketing channels for a new consumption potential aligned with the concept of rural regeneration.

II. Verify safety food for promotion of agricultural products

COA collaborates with local governments for promotion of supplying organic vegetables to student and corporate meals in order to expand channels of local production and local consumption of organic agricultural products. In addition, COA started to encourage local restaurants located in Haulien and Yilan to adapt local organic agricultural product consumptions. There were 20 restaurants who got assistance to join the alliance of "Restaurants of Organic Heart Cuisine". In addition, 18 organic farmers' markets were established to promote the concept of organic agriculture in 10 counties including Taipei City.

Moreover, COA would like to ensure a responsible concept towards farming production by using a food safety label of "Ji-Yuan-Pu" for safe vegetables which can be traced back to the drug usage during the farming process. There were around 25,719 hectares in "Ji-Yuan-Pu"- labeled farming area at the end of 2014. The government then advised 115 retail chains of supermarkets to sell the labeled vegetables. In addition, the New Taipei Government collaborated with "Ji-Yuan-Pu" production and sales groups in contracting the production of vegetables to supply lunch meals to a total of 286 elementary schools with 0.34 million students in New Taipei City starting from 2014. This collaboration intends to take advantages of schools to source back to the safety origin of agricultural production, which is expected as the foundation of building a safety concept in agricultural consumptions.

III. Promote domestic food towards local production and local consumption

COA started to promote elementary school courses regarding local production and local consumption by recognizing local food in order to promote domestic food consumption.. Moreover, the courses combined the experiences in farming activities. The events of “family rice farming experiences and rice food extension” are also regularly held in the metropolitan areas, which are also considered as the foundation knowledge of food which are embedded in the educational activities to get young students to know about the food in their immediate environment. On the other hand, because of the unavoidable trend of eating out habits, COA designed a label of “Taiwan Rice” to promote domestic rice as a priority for consumers’ recognitions and choices. There are currently 13 restaurants which got the label of “Taiwan Rice” in addition to a total of 3,663 outlets of rice product retailers.

COA also actively coaches other agricultural products to establish traceability system and production origin certification. For example, there are nearly 0.2 million tea certificate labels distributed with a volume of 120 metric tons of high quality tea with safe origins and production. Other agricultural products such as soybean, Job’s-tears, buckwheat, Sesame, and other grains with competitive advantages, are also promoted by COA to encourage farmers to transfer from fallow into re-cultivation in order to increase self-sufficiency in local production and local consumption. When team productions between farmers and agribusinesses are well established, high-quality safe grains produced in Taiwan can be secured.

IV. Build multiple marketing channels for agricultural products

COA assisted regularly in the recently held farmers’ markets in Taipei, “Taipei Hope Plaza” and “Flower Expo Yuan-Shan Plaza”, to promote local production and local consumption in the metropolitan city. These two big scale venues provided direct touches between farmers and consumers, which can directly raise farmers’ incomes by meeting with consumers’ demands in the mtropolis. There were 51 runs of “Taipei Hope Plaza” farmers’ markets in 2014, with a total agricultural product sales amounting to NT\$188.96 million in 2014, while 48 runs of “Flower Expo Yuan-Shan Plaza” amounted to NT\$128.27 million in sales in the same year.

In other cities, COA also assisted farmers’ associations to launch several agricultural product sales events with more than 118 runs in 2014, such as international orchid exhibitions, the Kaohsiung Yuheboa Beer Festival, and the Central Taiwan Agricultural Expo. These events resulted in high exposures to promote local production and local consumption via multiple marketing channels. More than these, the event of “Local Fresh: Agricultural Specials in 2014” attracted 57,523 visitors with quite good sales amounting to NT\$9.68 million.

In 2013, COA set a pilot project of farmers’ markets and farmer direct-sale kooks in order to reduce food miles via a sales platform of small-scale farmer products. There are six locations of farmer-direct-sales pilots setup between June 2013 and January 2015, including Nantou Chichi farmers’ markets, Haulien Farmers’ Associations (Hua-commerce Supermarket, Zuchan Supermarket, Tienpu Supermarket), Beipu Farmers’ Association, Kungkwan Farmers’ Association, and Shinpu Farmers’ Associations. The total sales from this set up achieved NT\$25.24 million contributed by 223 farmer suppliers.

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