

## Land Revitalization to Boost Food-Sufficiency Capacity

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As global warming continues to trigger a series of volatile weather events across the globe, all food production and supply chains face increasing levels of disruption, the COA pointed out. In the face of soaring grain prices, the government has listed food security as one of the nation's top priorities and has taken extra measures to promote its "Eat Local" policy – a consumer awareness program that will lower the nation's dependency on long-distance foreign imports, boost the consumption of local produce and reduce Taiwan's overall carbon footprint. The key to increasing the nation's calorie-based food-sufficiency rate from the current 32% to 40% by the year 2020 is to revitalize fallow farmlands, the COA added, explaining that an average of 200,000 hectares of arable land currently lies idle per year, costing the government over NT\$10 billion in subsidies while not contributing to the nation's agricultural output nor creating any employment opportunities.

Having assessed international and domestic supply and demand for food, the COA has adopted measures to bring fallow land back into use. These complement the policy of "Small Landlords, Large Tenants" in that we especially encourage landowners to rent out fallow land to tenants who will rent contiguous plots to make larger farms. The COA offers incentives for cultivation on fallow land of rice, corn for animal feed, organic crops, or other crops whose production and marketing present few problems, and is also encouraging turning fallow land to afforestation. Several objectives can be thus achieved: increasing the self-sufficiency rate in food; increasing the scale and efficiency of agricultural operations; and ensuring farmers a reasonable income.

Under the COA's revitalization plans, there will be more incentives for farmers to plant their fields for at least one crop season per year, in which crop selection can fall under four categories: cereal grains; commercial woods; export-oriented produce or environmentally friendly crops. Cereal grains such as non-genetically modified maize and soybeans will lower the nation's dependence on foreign supplies, whereas commercial woods that have a maximum yield within a short time span will prove to be a profitable venture. Moreover, robust produce such as green soybeans, iceberg lettuces and carrots have high export potential, while organic crops will not pollute the environment, have high market value and can help restore natural balance to the soil. Altogether, the COA has ample reasons to believe that replanting the nation's fallow lands with crops from these four categories will be a significant step towards achieving the coveted 40% calorie-based food-sufficiency rate without compromising the fertility of Taiwanese soil.

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