

The Policy Directions Pointed by the New Minister Tsao of Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan

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The newly appointed Agriculture Minister of Taiwan Chi-hung Tsao was officially on board May 20, 2016. He pointed out the agricultural policy directions, which reflects the current status and its future development. The policy directions are summarized below.

Taiwanese agriculture used to play a critical role in international trade to assist the industry's development in Taiwan. However, currently there is an urgent demand to upgrade Taiwan's agriculture sector, particularly in today's free trade era. Meanwhile, the potential risk of natural disasters and agricultural damages is increasing because of climate change. These are the major challenges to be responsive and adaptive from the agricultural authorities. However, the agriculture industry is not merely an industry, but serves multi-functional purposes in stabilizing food supply, sustaining eco-system environment, protecting food safety, preserving socio-cultural traditions. These multiple purposes are closely related to the lives of all Taiwanese people. The new innovation of creating the value of Taiwanese agriculture is fully based on the foundation of an overall agricultural citizenship for the Taiwanese. The re-enforced competitiveness of Taiwanese agriculture has to be built upon an agricultural paradigm, agricultural safety system, and upgraded marketing capabilities.

The Establishment of an Agricultural Paradigm

Purpose:

Increase farmers' income, secure farmers' welfare, raise self-sustained food, and respond to trade liberalization.

Strategy:

Promote land-specific green environment reimbursement

The land-specific green environment reimbursement can become another option to construct a dual security system of farmers' income, with the established guaranteed crop-price of government purchase. If a farmer chooses the former option, he/she will be reimbursed according to the qualification of farmland for farming with baseline years. This option provides motivations to farm import-substituted crops with an eco-friendly organic farming process. It aims to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in order to activate the soil with the use of bio-carbon.

Promote agricultural insurance

To effectively respond to extreme weather caused by climate change and keep stable incomes for farmers, the government will promote agricultural insurance in the crop, fishery, livestock, and agricultural facilities sectors.

Upgrade the livestock industry

It is important to establish the following institutions to upgrade the livestock industry. First, the pre-alerting mechanism of disease status should be established. Second, the fast-testing center on site should be established. Third, the livestock filing system and disease preventing SOP should be established. Fourth, the control system of several major animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and bird flu should be established in order to minimize the spread. In addition, the government will assist the farmers to re-start their livestock farming procedures at a disease-preventing standard. Fifth, the survival rate of mature pigs should be increased, which can be combined with the promotion of green-energy from biogas. In addition, the production of livestock products should be upgraded along with the process of raising, killing, cutting, and logistics. It aims to re-enter the international market by exports on the basis of quality control via production-tracking records establishment.

Solidify the fishery resource conservation

The local-sea fishery resources should be conserved. In the meantime, the distant-sea fishery should be managed based on an international regulatory standard. The fishermen welfare can be secured by good fishing environment with sustainable fishery resources.

Sustain woods resources

Amend the law by including the prohibitions on destroying natural woods and adopt the regulatory standard of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for economic woods. Expand as well as deepen the spirit of "Satoyama Terroir" to achieve the sustainable usage of the woods and environment.

Achieve a win-win scenario in agricultural electricity

For some unfriendly-use farmlands, such as polluted, salty, severe subsidence, highland layers of floating light facilities for non-agricultural purposes can be setup. In addition, the soil experiment and improvement should be intended to recover the land for agricultural purposes. A rigorous inspection should be implemented on those superior farmland owners who apply agricultural electricity and lighting facilities, including the light transparency, cover area, rain water collector, in order to ensure the quality of farming purposes. A public-assessed contract sample should also be published to protect farmers.

Develop smart agricultural technology

Establish the new technology for agricultural facilities by an integration of telecommunications, IOTs, big data, biotechnology, and green energy.

Assist young people's agricultural careers

Establish a full system of agricultural education and practice fields. The fields should rely on an integration of farmers' associations, agricultural extension and experiment institutions. The increase of agricultural careers as young people's choices should be planned and expected.

Inspire the local economy

The local food as primary and secondary school lunch should be awarded. Food and farming education should be launched to encourage the local production and local consumption activities. In addition, the integrative production and consumption can be delivered by the regional agricultural processing center, and further to promote the agricultural leisure tours and travels.

Construction of an Agricultural Safety System

Purpose:

Stabilize food supply, raise overall agricultural product quality, and ensure food security for consumers.

Strategy:

Establish food security system

The food security system is built upon several nodes with a mechanism to their linkages. These nodes include food-aids project, crop plantations/ woods/ water/ soil resource investigated database with classifications, farmland conservations, farmland-for-farm purposes and hill landscape water reservoirs, upgrade farmland usage rate by reducing fallows, and the raise of the effectiveness usage for agricultural purposes.

Big-barn Project: Non-GMO Crop Production Zone

Riding on the trend of consumer demands on safe food, the government will encourage farmers and agribusinesses shift into contracting farming models. By doing so, it can motivate young farmers to invest in an integrative model of farming and processing activities. Such integrative model is expected to increase farmers' income as well as value-adding activities in rural communities. Particularly for the current fallow zones, the government will encourage the rehabilitation for import-substituted crops or non-GMO soybeans and corns.

Promote organic and eco-friendly farming

The government will amend the organic law especially for those out-of-date regulations in order to be friendly to organic farmers without unnecessary burdens. On the other hand, the government will increase the organic farming lands, promote bio-method control, and develop carbon-seal technology. Agricultural wastes can then be converted into bio-carbon to enrich soil organic elements, which can further conserve water, fertilizers, with additional benefits from microorganisms embedded in the soil.

Establish agricultural product safety back from origins

The separation of irrigation and drainage has to be implemented. Moreover, the government will strictly investigate farmland pollutions and prevent the over-usage of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The "Teacher Chang Inquiry" system should be established to consult reasonable fertilization as well as the integrative management of crops and pests.

Raise the investigation frequency of agricultural products

Strengthen inspections on crop pesticides and fish/ meat medicals. In addition, inspections of marketplace fertilizers, feed, and heavy metals of agri-production supplies have all been demanded to have more control through inspections.

Build a trustworthy agri-product labeling system

Taiwan Good Agricultural Practice (TGAP) and GLOBAL G.A.P. should be well matched and build their trustworthy reputations for domestic consumers. By doing so, it is possible to expand into the international consumer market based on a trust of Taiwanese quality agricultural products.

Upgrade Agricultural Marketing Capabilities

Purpose:

Establish multiple marketing channels, promote agricultural product exports, and establish internet portals for agricultural products

Strategy:

Raise up small farmers and agribusiness farmers

Facilitate farmer's production re-organization in order to raise up small farmers and assist agribusiness farmers. Moreover, the integration among cooperatives, sales and production groups, farmers' associations can scale up small farmers for large production capacity. The scale of economies might enhance the competitiveness of agricultural production. In addition, the plan of industrial park of agricultural production and specialized zones can further implement vertical integration from farming, processing, packing, and marketing activities.

Establish export company

Select the competitive agricultural products to promote international top-end markets, such as tropical fruits, special crops, facility-based flowers, and some potential primary and secondary products. Based on the market demand, the export sector will have motivations to collaborate with farmers to promote quality in order to target high-end international markets via multiple exporting channels.

Establish agri-product internet trading portal

The agri-product internet trade portal will include all internet-based agricultural sellers. The government will ensure the product safety at this portal. In addition, consumers will have a full understanding of all production processes. Thus, the transaction via portal will involve less risks.

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