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Taiwan urges China to discuss Cross-Strait Agricultural Products Quarantine Inspection Cooperation Agreement

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Taiwanâ??s Council of Agriculture (COA) is satisfied with the decision and urged China to communicate and discuss quarantine regulations on the platform of the â??Cross-Strait Agricultural Products Quarantine Inspection Cooperation Agreementâ?? regarding the agricultural and fishery products that are still suspended by China. Taiwan hopes that mainland China will conduct technical dialogue with Taiwan in accordance with international trade norms and resume trade as soon as possible.

China has resumed imports of sugar apples from Taiwan, Chinaâ??s Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council announced this. After two years China has resumed fruit export from Taiwan. Due to repeated instances of quarantine pests being detected in the particular type of fruits, mainland China suspended the import of sugar apples from Taiwan in September 2021. Since then COA was engaged in a scientific and technical dialogue with China to resume trade. According to the COA data, China was the largest fresh fruit importer from Taiwan accounted more than 80 per cent in 2021.

Taiwanâ??s Cross-Strait Agricultural Products Quarantine and Inspection Cooperation Agreement platform has not received any notification from the Chinese side to reopen the import of custard apples and has not provided registration conditions. The Chinese announcement list only has 3 packaging factories and 25 orchards.

The sugar apple or Custard apple is a national fruit of Taiwan which is also known as Buddhaâ??s head. According to agricultural figures, sugar apples grow on 2,800 hectares of land in Taiwanâ??s Taitung region. The data also shows that 4,355 tonnes of fruits were exported worldwide between December 2021 and April last year.

Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said that the decision was made based on a comprehensive assessment of relevant rectification measures.

She added that the sugar apples must come from registered packaging factories and orchards.

"The mainland is willing to work with relevant departments in Taiwan and continue to facilitate the resumption of the entry of certain agricultural and aquatic products from the island," Zhu said.

After Chinaâ??s import suspension, sugar apple growers from Taiwan eye a new market for fruit exports. Taiwan exported 3000kg of Sugar apples to Brunei in February this year. Brunei is the hope for Taiwan which can help offset losses from Chinaâ??s ban on exports of sugar apples.

Taiwan also tried to obtain a permit to export sugar apples to Japan last year. The Council of Agriculture had applied for the permit as a part of efforts to diversify Taiwanâ??s export markets of Sugar apples. Japan is an important buyer of Taiwanese mangoes, lychees, grapes, pomelos, papayas and ponkan oranges. Japan became the largest market for Taiwanese fruit exports accounting for 46.2 per cent in 2022.

According to the Council of Agriculture (COA), Sugar Apple is not native to Taiwan but Taiwan has become the largest sugar apple-cultivating country in the world. Sugar apple is grown in southern Taiwan in Kaohsiung, Pingtung and Taitung counties. Among them, Taitung is the largest production area in Taiwan. In Taiwan, the fruit can be harvested from July to February.

There are 10 major types of sugar apples currently grown in Taitung. Among them, Tamali Damu sugar apple and Beinan pineapple sugar apple are the two most popular varieties.

The sugar apple was introduced to Taiwan by Dutch colonialists about 400 years ago. Sugar apple goes by various names, including Buddhaâ??s head and custard apple. In Taiwan, it has been called the foreign litchi or Sakya. The name of foreign litchi comes from the fact that the unripe fruits look like litchi and it was from a foreign country. As for its second Taiwanese name - which is more commonly used nowadays, people call it Sakya or Buddha's head, because one variety resembles the top part of Sakyamuni's head.

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