

## Research on food security system in Taiwan – the 2014's case

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to report and analyze a food security case happened in Taiwan through three element model. It showed both failure and successful stories under Taiwan's food security system. Readers are able to know how the system worked in Taiwan based on this paper.

### Case Report

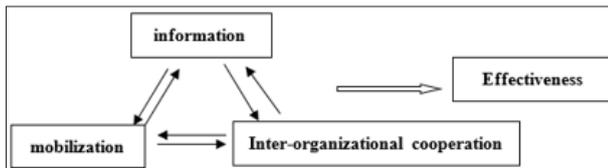
There was a food security case happened in Taiwan around September of 2014. The Chang Guann Company (CGC), located in Ping-tung County of Southern Taiwan, collected and reproduce used cooking oil for sale illegally. A 60-year-old farmer, living nearby the company, reported the case to local governments for 5 times owing to strong odor from the company. But no evidence of violation was found by local public health officials. The farmer reported again the 6th time to Taichung Branch of Criminal Investigation Bureau in Middle Taiwan. The evidence was found that CGC violated food security laws and was prosecuted. But CGC's cooking oil had been circulated and used by customers in Taiwan for years.

The case showed both successful and failure stories. CGC had produced illegal edible oil for some time. Both government and market failure were clear. A farmer was able to crack down the food security case. It meant the resilience of the food security system in Taiwan. The purpose of this paper is to explore how Taiwan's food security system functioned for the 2014's case. Food security system included central government, local government, non-profit organization, and community [1]. It could be stated that local government, the Ping-tung County, did not perform well to stop the case. The farmer together with judicial institutions stop the case.

The intervention was initiated by judicial institutions, which were governed by central government. Media could be treated as non-profit organizations owing to publicness characteristics. Community could be explained as friends and relatives surrounding the farmer. Yang [2] pointed out that there were institutional problems including transparency of reporting process, lack of bureaucratic accountability, lack of trust in elected officials, little coordination among local judicial institutions, and civic food safety groups were simply not active enough. These were also problems of local governance in Taiwan. The problems could be explained by North's [3] theory of institutions. Human behaviors were determined by institutions, including formal and informal constraints, which affected functioning of food security system.

However, opportunities were given to the farmer to file complaints across county border under the institutional arrangements. In order to improve the effectiveness of food security, [4] proposed coalition and networking among local agencies including District Attorney, local Public Health Agency, Police Organizations, and environmental groups. It was because the coalition model had been successfully implemented in cases of environmental pollution. Food security authority of local public health agencies, which were responsible for implementing food security laws and regulations, might be influenced by local politics directly and/or indirectly. Under the support of District Attorney, local public health agencies were empowered to work on food security regulation.

Three element model developed by Yang [5] could also be used to analyze the operation of food security system and to design strategies of dealing with food security problems. The three elements, including information, mobilization, and inter-organizational cooperation, could be treated as independent variables. And effectiveness is dependent variable. Information is the key of making food safety possible. Without accurate information, food security effectiveness could not function. But the information has to be taken care seriously by judicial institutions, which are a centralized system in Taiwan (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework for food security system.

Information could be linked with media owing to transparency purpose. The above food security case was widely reported by

Taiwan media. Judicial institutions were forced to take actions for the case effectively. Related resources were mobilized to deal with the case. This indicates freedom of speech of institutional arrangements in Taiwan. Mobilization means related resources could work actively to solve food security problems including policy, management, and technical issues. And most resources were controlled by organizations. Inter-organizational collaboration became important to improve effectiveness of food security. It proves the importance of coalition and networking among different agencies as mentioned above.

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