



Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Seung-ho Choi, Foreign Press Spokesperson

TEL: +82-44-201-1120

E-mail: csh9731@korea.kr

Unoccupied and Derelict Houses Are Reborn into Spaces for Living, Business, and Culture

Sejong, 19 February 2025 — The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) will launch a project to remodel and repurpose unoccupied and derelict houses clustered in declining rural areas to increase a living population in rural areas.

A living population means, but is not limited to, persons visiting and staying in a specific region for the purpose of commuting to work or school, touring, resting and leisure, business, regular exchanges, etc.

These days, a growing number of people living in cities are choosing to live in rural areas in diverse ways—living in a city for four days in a week and spending the other three days in a rural area, or spending the weekend in a rural

area doing farming. Also, a growing number of young people are becoming interested in starting a business in rural areas. All these are fueling national attention to what use can be made of unoccupied and derelict houses in rural areas. An answer can be found in Mungyeong-si (the city of Mungyeong), Gyeongsangbuk-do (a province in eastern South Korea), where traditional Korean houses (*hanok*) built in the 1790s, breweries, and Japanese-style houses built during the Japanese colonial rule were remodeled into *hanok* guesthouses, cafes, local marketplaces, etc. This rural regeneration in the city attracts approximately 120,000 visitors a year and contributes to revitalizing the local economy through local specialties.

Under the project to remodel and repurpose unoccupied and derelict houses, such houses in rural areas will be reborn as spaces for a living population such as residence, “workation” (balancing work and vacation), experience of local culture, and starting a business, as well as communal spaces of local residents such as a movie theater for villagers, communal kitchens, etc.

In accordance with the Framework Act on Agriculture, Rural Community and Food Industry, the MAFRA will receive applications from 139 local governments in rural areas, select three out of them, and invest a total of KRW 2.1 billion into the project of remodeling and repurposing unoccupied and derelict houses over a three-year period.