



Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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A Brief Summary

1. Intensive Support for Stabilization of Decent Livelihood of People in Five Areas of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs
 - Strengthen farmers' income stability through the government subsidy programme, insurance programmes, and other support.
 - Enhance the quality of lives of residents and farmers in rural areas through improvement of outreach services.
 - Improve a supply management system of agricultural and livestock products.
 - Strengthen the management of the agricultural value chain by taking advantage of scientific data to minimize the instability of the supply of agricultural products against climate change.
 - Expand the food safety net for the socially-disadvantaged.
 - Continue working to reduce small food and beverage business owners' financial burdens for running their businesses and to promote Korean food and food culture across the world.

2. Four Major Reforms of Farming and Rural Areas to Promote the Growth of Rural Areas and the Agro-industry
 - Improve the farmland system.
 - Change the structure of the rice industry to prevent overproduction of rice, increase the production of high-quality rice, and promote consumption of rice.
 - Lay the foundation for food security.
 - Transform an agricultural corporation into an innovative business entity and expand support for young people returning to farming and rural areas.
 - Ensure that policies and regulations concerning entry of facilities into rural areas can be applied more extensively
 - Revitalize rural areas.
3. Four Major Initiatives to Turn Agriculture into a High-Growth Industry
 - Transform 20% of the entire greenhouse farms (approximately 55,000 hectares) into smart farms in 2025, up from 16% in 2024.
 - Take smart farming to another level by linking advanced technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence (AI), robotic technologies, etc.) and related forward- and backward-linked industries.
 - Invest KRW 121.2 billion in expanding an R&D and production infrastructure to accelerate the growth of emerging industries with forward and backward linkages with food-tech and green biotechnology sectors.
 - Make a large-scale R&D investment in new high-growth industries.
 - Implement an initiative to achieve KRW 14 billion in K-Food Plus exports.
4. Making the Growth of Agriculture and Rural Areas Sustainable by Expanding an Animal Welfare Infrastructure and Nurturing Environment-Friendly Agriculture and Livestock Industries
 - Improve the animal welfare policies, strengthen animal welfare infrastructure, and develop companion animals-related industries.
 - Nurture environment-friendly agriculture and livestock industries.

The 2025 Work Plan for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, South Korea

Sejong, 14 February 2025 — The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA), the Republic of Korea, has announced its work plan for the year 2025.

Minister SONG Miryung said: “Since agriculture and rural areas directly affect the livelihood of people, the government’s policy is very important for the recovery of the household economy. This year, we will prioritize stabilizing the household economy and make intensive efforts to address challenges facing households and farmers in the first half of the year. And we will implement policies and measures for a brighter future of agriculture and rural areas as we have planned.”

The MAFRA will focus on the four major areas as in the following:

1. Intensive Support for Stabilization of Decent Livelihood of People in Five Areas of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs

1.1 The MAFRA will strengthen farmers’ income stability through the government subsidy programme, insurance programmes, and other support. The MAFRA will also enhance the quality of lives of residents and farmers in rural areas through improvement of outreach services.

Improvement of the public direct payment programme

Since 2020, the MAFRA has been implementing a “basic-type public direct payment programme” of providing subsidies to farmers, with the aim of enhancing the public functions of agriculture and rural areas as well as of helping farmers achieve their income stability. Starting from 2025, under the programme, the MAFRA will raise farmland size-based farming subsidies (farmland size-based direct payments) by 5%, and ease the permissible levels of farming subsidy recipients’ annual income—currently KRW 37 million or less—from non-farming work activities in line with the growth rates of their household incomes.

The insurance programme to guarantee farmers’ income stability

The MAFRA implemented an insurance programme for guaranteeing farmers the stability of their agricultural incomes as a pilot project in 2024 to ease farmers’ income instability caused by natural disasters and the price fluctuations of agricultural produce. The insurance programme as a pilot project was applied to nine agricultural product items such as sweet potatoes, garlic, onions, etc. Starting from 2025, the MAFRA will turn the insurance programme into a service of reaching all the farmers across the nation for the nine agricultural product items, and, as a pilot service, add six new agricultural product items (e.g. rice, autumn kimchi cabbages, autumn radishes, etc.) to the insurance programme.

The disaster insurance programme for agricultural crops

As for the disaster insurance programme for agricultural crops, there will be

improvements to the increases and discounts of the insurance premiums, and the insurance coverage will be expanded to give a wider protection against new disasters such as damage by harmful insects and diseases, lack of sunlight, etc. Insurance protection of four kinds of fruit trees against “comprehensive” dangers—such as natural disasters, damage caused by birds and animals, fire, etc.—will be strengthened as well.

Application of the quota tariffs system and support for taking out a loan

According to the quota tariffs system, lower tariff rates will be applied to imported raw materials for fertilizers and livestock feed to alleviate farmers’ increasing financial burdens on their farming management driven by a possible sharp rise in the U.S. dollar against the Korean won. The government financial support will also be expanded to help suppliers take out a loan at a lower interest rate in purchasing raw materials for fertilizers and livestock feed.

Cooperative purchasing-based import, migrant workforce, and outreach services

Until 2024, import based on cooperative purchasing through a single cargo ship had been allowed for livestock feed only, but starting from 2025, this import method will be allowed for purchasing fertilizers and other items as well as livestock feed. Also, the MAFRA will increase the number of migrant workers from overseas countries to approximately 67,000 people until the first half of 2025 to provide enough workforce for farmers during farming seasons.

Outreach services for people in rural areas, such as provision of medical care,

sale and delivery of daily necessities, and transportation, will be expanded with additional services of education and care to be included.

1.2 The MAFRA will improve a supply management system of agricultural and livestock products.

The supply management governance will be focused on 10 major agricultural and livestock product items having a significant impact on the household economy of people—kimchi cabbages, radishes, garlic, onions, apples, pears, *hanwoo* (Korean beef), pork, chicken, and eggs.

Supply management of agricultural products

As for the supply management of agricultural products, the MAFRA will strengthen public-private collaboration and create new checkoff funds for other agricultural products (e.g. summer kimchi cabbages grown in Gangwon-do, winter radishes grown in Jeju-do, etc.). The MAFRA will also supply a larger number of spare seedlings, as well as supply agricultural pesticides to farmers at a discounted price to prepare for the factors threatening a stable supply of agricultural products.

The MAFRA will introduce controlled atmosphere storage (CA) technology to extend the storage period of kimchi cabbages from 2 to 3 months; increase the supplies of major vegetables through contract farming; and create an “overseas agricultural development model” to ensure that vegetables can be imported in a timely manner.

Supply management of livestock products

As for the supply management of livestock products, the MAFRA will sell and distribute, on a pilot stage, the meat products of *hanwoo* cattle raised for a shorter period than the current 30 months, and then, in the second half of this year, introduce a new grading system for such *hanwoo* meat products. The MAFRA will also increase the online trading volumes of livestock products up to a value of KRW 280 billion.

1.3 The MAFRA will strengthen the management of the agricultural value chain by taking advantage of scientific data to minimize the instability of the supply of agricultural products against climate change.

To this end, the MAFRA will advance its forecasting and observing capabilities for agriculture through an agriculture-specific satellite and drones; increase the number of the smart-farming zones of open fields, as a pilot project, to grow open-field vegetables such as kimchi cabbages; develop new production areas for apples; and create a demonstration zone to grow, as a pilot project, varieties of agricultural products with adaptability to climate change. Also, efforts will be made to reduce the distribution cost of agricultural products.

1.4 The MAFRA will expand the food safety net for the socially-disadvantaged.

The MAFRA will expand the food safety net worth KRW 87 billion. Specifically, there will be an expansion of the agri-food products voucher programme targeted at the households of receiving the government's livelihood

support, including the households of pregnant women, new mothers, newborns, infants, and toddlers. There will also be an expansion of the 1,000-won breakfast project, co-financed by the MAFRA and universities, under which high-quality breakfast, using processed rice-based products and rice, is provided for undergraduates at a price of KRW 1,000 to promote rice consumption and reduce their financial burdens for food expenses.

1.5 The MAFRA will continue working to reduce small food and beverage business owners' financial burdens for running their businesses and to promote Korean food and food culture across the world.

The MAFRA will build an integrated platform of local governments-run food delivery applications to help restaurant owners and franchisees reduce their burden for paying the commissions for using delivery applications of private companies. Also, there will be a relaxation of requirements that restaurant owners must meet to apply for permission to hire foreign nationals holding an E-9 visa. The government support will also be provided for small-sized businesses (e.g. food producers, food and beverage businesses, restaurants, etc.) and young entrepreneurs of the food and beverage industry to take out a loan at a lower interest rate in purchasing raw materials of Korean agricultural products.

The MAFRA will ease related regulations to invigorate the Korean traditional alcoholic beverage industry. The MAFRA will also make efforts to promote Korean food and food culture across the world by expanding the K-gastronomic belt and holding an international culinary event such as Asia's 50 Best Restaurants. The K-gastronomic belt is a project to strengthen the connection

between agriculture and tourism so that tourists from inside and outside South Korea can have the opportunity to enjoy a tour of Korean cuisine across the nation.

2. Four Major Reforms of Farming and Rural Areas to Promote the Growth of Rural Areas and the Agro-industry

2.1 There will be an improvement to the farmland system.

Expansion of farmland use

Relevant regulations have confined the use of farmland to production of agricultural products (e.g. land for crop cultivation, land for building a greenhouse, etc.). Starting from 2025, the use of farmland will be allowed to be expanded to include other purposes such as building agricultural production-related facilities and subsidiary facilities (e.g. vertical farms, parking lots, etc.). The MAFRA will also further diversify the use of farmland by expanding the range of farming to include agro-industries such as distribution, agricultural food processing, agricultural equipment, etc.

Farmland leasing and improvement of the farmland management system

Farmland leasing has been allowed restrictively, but regulations on farmland leasing will be improved to enhance agricultural productivity and the constructive use of farmland. Also, the authority to divert farmland outside “agricultural promotion areas” will be extended to local governments. Local

governments' authority to manage farmland inside agricultural promotion areas will also be expanded if local governments have established a basic plan for management of such farmland. Diversion of farmland means that farmland is used for purposes other than for agricultural production or improvement of farmland, such as cultivation of crops or growing of perennial plants.

2.2 The MAFRA will change the structure of the rice industry to prevent overproduction of rice, increase the production of high-quality rice, and promote consumption of rice. The MAFRA will also lay the foundation for food security.

To this end, the MAFRA will implement the programme for reducing rice cultivation areas through cooperation with local governments. Local governments will operate, on a pilot stage, zones for high-quality rice production, and rice will be required to be labelled to indicate protein content for consumers.

The MAFRA has been carrying out a “strategic crop direct payment programme” to enhance the food self-sufficiency rate, stabilize the supply of rice, improve the rate of rice field utilization, and help farmers achieve their income stability. Strategic crops mean crops cultivated in rice fields (e.g. wheat, corn, floury rice, etc.) to achieve such purposes. Starting from 2025, the MAFRA will add sesame to the current strategic crops, raise “strategic crop direct payments” (government subsidies) per hectare of cultivation areas, and increase the size of cultivation areas, per hectare of which government subsidies are provided.

2.3 The MAFRA will transform an agricultural corporation into an innovative business entity and expand support for young people returning to farming and rural areas.

Promotion of farming in partnership

To this end, the MAFRA will provide tax incentives for farmers to ensure that farming in partnership can be introduced widely across the nation. Farming in partnership means that farmers and an agricultural corporation farm jointly or use farmland jointly to reduce production cost and improve farming business management. The MAFRA will also classify farming in partnership into four types: (a) farmers entrusting their farmland to an agricultural corporation, (b) farmers entrusting and renting their farmland to an agricultural corporation, (c) farmers renting their farmland to an agricultural corporation, and (d) farmers owning shares in an agricultural corporation in return for giving the ownership of their farmland to the agricultural corporation.

Also, the business range of an agricultural corporation will be extended beyond the production of agricultural products to include the businesses of the agro-industry such as education, consulting, the processing and distribution of agricultural products, R&D, etc.

Expansion of support for young people returning to farming and rural areas

The MAFRA will expand support for young people to settle in rural areas and grow as farmers. The support includes government subsidies, education, 10-year rental smart farms, etc. As part of such support, the MAFRA will also build 10

more rental house complexes this year, which brings the total number to 27. A rental house complex is composed of 30 houses, exclusive for young people returning to farming and rural areas and newlyweds residing in rural areas.

2.4 The MAFRA will make efforts to ensure that policies and regulations concerning entry of facilities into rural areas can be applied more extensively, as well as to revitalize rural areas.

Relaxation of the regulations concerning rural areas

The MAFRA will ease the regulations of controlling the entry of facilities into farmland and mountainous districts. Relaxation of the regulations will be carried out based on local governments' plans for placemaking of their rural areas. Also, the government's budget and funds will be provided for local governments to revitalize rural areas, and the MAFRA will designate and nurture five leading districts (先導地區) in rural areas.

An introduction of a self-regulating innovative district programme

Also, the MAFRA will lay out detailed ways to introduce a "self-regulating innovative district programme" and make a legal basis for the programme, which will help improve economic vitality of rural areas. A self-regulating innovative district programme means that local governments can decide autonomously the range of special exception cases concerning regulation of their rural areas to meet the characteristics of their rural areas.

Expanding a rural infrastructure

The MAFRA will make an investment of KRW 27 billion in building and expanding a rural infrastructure. Specifically, the MAFRA will build, as a pilot project, three “complexes for rural sojourn” composed of diverse functions such as residential facilities, vegetable gardens for farming experience, and programmes of connecting a tour of rural areas and rural cultural resources. The pilot project of building a complex for rural sojourn aims to open an era of “spending four days in cities and spending the other three days in rural areas,” which will meet an increasing demand for people in cities seeking leisure and resting in rural areas and provide them with places for new forms of leisure and resting.

The investment will also go to building a platform of providing information on unoccupied and derelict houses in rural areas to promote the selling and buying of such houses, as well as to expanding an upcycling of abandoned rural housing.

3. Four Major Initiatives to Turn Agriculture into a High-Growth Industry

3.1 The MAFRA will transform 20% of the entire greenhouse farms (approximately 55,000 hectares) into smart farms in 2025, up from 16% in 2024 and take smart farming to another level by linking advanced technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence (AI), robotic technologies, etc.) and related forward- and backward-linked industries.

To this end, the MAFRA will create four new smart-farming fostering zones where smart farming-related companies, related forward- and backward-linked industries, and long-term lease-based smart farms sit together. The MAFRA will also ease the regulation of controlling the entry of smart farms into farmland, industrial complexes, development-restricted zones, and other areas to ensure that news forms of smart farming (e.g. building-based vertical farms, container-based smart farms, etc.) can spread widely.

Other efforts include, but not limited to, (a) providing support for smart farm equipment and solutions manufacturers to ensure that national standards for smart-farming technologies and equipment can be more widely adopted by a larger number of such companies and (b) providing support for R&D and technology verification on agricultural drones, robots, autonomous vehicles, etc.

3.2 The MAFRA will invest KRW 121.2 billion in expanding an R&D and production infrastructure to accelerate the growth of emerging industries with forward and backward linkages with food-tech and green biotechnology sectors.

Food-tech R&D support centres and smart food factories

The MAFRA will make efforts to ensure that the food-tech market can be expanded into diverse fields such as food robotics and food upcycling. To this end, the MAFRA will increase the number of a food-tech R&D support centre to 5 in 2025, up from 3 in 2024. The MAFRA will also expand support for food manufacturing companies through a public-private partnership to ensure that the

number of smart food factories will be increased from 30 in 2024 to 70 in 2025.

Food-tech, a merger of food and technology, refers to a new industry of applying cutting-edge technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), biotechnology, etc.) to the entire value chain covering all the business processes, including production, manufacturing, distribution, and delivery, with regard to food products. Instances of food-tech include a cooking robot, a food-serving robot, a food delivery robot, plant-based meat alternatives, etc.

Fostering the green biotechnology industry and increasing the number of green biotechnology R&D support facilities

In 2025, the MAFRA will select zones for fostering the green biotechnology industry and build another green biotechnology R&D support facility, which brings the total to 12. The MAFRA will also create the Future Innovation Growth Fund worth KRW 40 billion to promote private investment in emerging industries.

3.3 The MAFRA will make a large-scale R&D investment in new high-growth industries.

In 2025, the MAFRA will make an R&D investment worth KRW 108.8 billion in new high-growth industries such as smart farming, green biotechnology, and food-tech. The R&D investment will also go to projects in high demand (e.g. R&D on the improvement of a livestock farming environment, R&D on agricultural machines and equipment, etc.), as well as to addressing medium-

and long-term challenges (e.g. climate change, shrinking rural areas, etc.).

The MAFRA will also formulate a medium- and long-term road map for R&D investment in the agri-food sector for the years 2025–2029. The MAFRA will create a new fund worth KRW 10 billion for the agro-industry to invest in new industries proposed by the private sector.

3.4 The MAFRA will implement an initiative to achieve KRW 14 billion in K-Food Plus exports.

K-Food Plus (K-Food⁺) is a term referring to agri-food products, combined with the products from related forward- and backward-linked industries (e.g. smart farms, agricultural equipment, pet food, veterinary medical products, etc.). Agri-food products mean processed and non-processed food products, excluding aquatic food products.

To expand export markets for K-Food Plus by targeting the Middle East, the Republic of South Africa, and other parts of the world, as well as small- and middle-sized cities in the U.S., China, and Japan, the MAFRA will make the maximum use of all resources available, including overseas offices of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and consultative bodies of overseas buyers.

In particular, with focus on 10 major export items, the MAFRA will provide support for agri-food exporters in terms of producing high-end versions of products (grapes and strawberries) and developing new products (processed rice-based products). Such support will also be made by carrying out large-scale

marketing campaigns such as K-Food Fair (instant noodles). 10 major export items include paprika, grapes, strawberries, pears, ginseng, kimchi, ramyeon, processed rice-based food, biscuits and confectionery, and beverages.

As for smart farm exports, the MAFRA will increase the number of export consortiums from 4 in 2024 to 6 in 2025, and provide support for the Korean smart-farm companies so that they can demonstrate their smart-farm technologies to potential overseas buyers.

4. Expanding an Animal Welfare Infrastructure and Making the Growth of Agriculture and Rural Areas Sustainable by Environment-Friendly Agriculture and Livestock Industries

4.1 The MAFRA will improve the animal welfare policies, strengthen animal welfare infrastructure, and develop companion animals-related industries.

Improvement of the animal welfare system and infrastructure

To prevent the abandonment and loss of animals, the MAFRA will expand the scope of the animals for mandatory registration in stages to include special-purpose dogs and service dogs. The MAFRA will also increase the number of animal care centres established and run directly by local governments from 87 in 2024 to 102 in 2025, as well as increase the number of animal protection officers in the government and animal protection workers in the private sector.

Expansion of support for companion animals-related industries

The MAFRA will nurture the industries of veterinary medicine and pet food and diversify related industries, as well as draw up a comprehensive plan for veterinary medicine advancement to improve the Korean veterinary medicine system. The MAFRA will also set up guidelines on the categorization, labeling, and nutritional requirements of pet foods, and expand the scope of business areas for companion animals.

4.2 The MAFRA will nurture environment-friendly agriculture and livestock industries.

Expansion of an environment-friendly farming direct payment programme

The MAFRA has been implementing an “environment-friendly farming direct payment programme” of providing government subsidies to farmers engaging in environment-friendly farming, with the aim of encouraging environment-friendly farming practices to be more widely introduced across the nation.

Starting from 2025, the MAFRA will raise the environment-friendly farming direct payment (government subsidies) and increase the maximum size limit of rice paddies per farming household that determines a ceiling on such farming subsidies.

Expansion of an environment-friendly infrastructure for agriculture and livestock industries

The Low-Carbon Agriculture programme aims to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging farming practices contributing to reducing carbon emissions. Such farming practices include, but not limited to, (a) draining off water from rice paddies for two weeks or more after rice transplanting to dry the soil of rice paddies; (b) keeping water on rice paddies at a shallow depth of 2 to 3 centimetres, leaving it to dry naturally, and then repeating the irrigation process; and (c) adding biochar to farmland soil.

Starting from 2025, the MAFR will expand the range of low-carbon emitting farming practices to include autumn ploughing, livestock waste disposal, etc.; introduce a carbon credit trading scheme in the agriculture sector; and provide support for local governments to formulate roadmaps for transitioning rural waste resources (e.g. livestock manure, etc.) into renewable energy.

