

PRESS RELEASE

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Key Findings from the 2025 Survey on the Status of Households that Return to Farming and Return to Rural Life

Sejong, 5 March 2026 — The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) announced the results of the “2025 Survey on the Status of Households that Return to Farming and Return to Rural Life” on 26 February. The research was conducted through in-person interviews from September to November 2025, targeting 6,000 households that had left the city to return to farming or live in rural areas during the previous five years (2020–2024).

The findings reveal that most return-to-farming cases were the U-type (73.0%)—individuals born in rural areas who later moved to cities and then returned to the rural communities where they had prior ties. In contrast, the

migration to rural areas just to live in was dominated by the I-type—urban-born individuals relocating to rural areas for the first time.

- Types of return-to-farming: U-type 73.0%, I-type 13.7%, J-type 13.3%
- Types of return-to-rural life: I-type 48.7%, U-type 37.7%, J-type 13.6%
- * The J-type refers to individuals born in rural areas, went to live in cities, and then moved to a rural area where they had no prior ties.

The leading reasons cited for returning to farming were the natural environment (33.3%), family farm succession (21.7%), and aspirations for and growth potential of their farming business (13.5%). Meanwhile, the leading motivations for moving to rural areas were non-agricultural employment in a rural area (14.3%), the natural environment (13.8%), and emotional well-being or a more relaxed lifestyle (13.3%). However, younger adults (30s or under) in these surveys over the past seven years have cited the expected growth potential of their agricultural pursuits as the top reason (27.3%) * to take up farming. The majority of this demographic segment (50–60%) has consistently been motivated by either future expectations for their farming business or the takeover of a family farm.

* Reasons for younger adults to take up farming:

- Aspirations for and growth potential of a farming business: 27.3%
- Family farm succession: 26.1%
- The natural environment: 21.6%
- To live closer to family and relatives: 11.6%
- Other: 13.4%

** Combined share of “personal aspirations and perceived business growth potential + family business succession” among the younger survey respondents: (2019) 58.4% → (2020) 55.8% → (2021) 52.6% → (2022) 57.4% → (2023) 60.6% → (2024) 57.6% → (2025) 53.4%

The average annual income for households in their fifth year after returning to rural areas is KRW 33 million for the farmers and KRW 42.15 million for the rural dwellers. These figures represent a 30.2% increase from the first-year income of KRW 25.34 million for the former category and are up by 9.4% from KRW 38.53 million earned by members of the latter category during their initial year out of the city. The farming households in their fifth year took in 65.2% of the average national farm household income (KRW 50.6 million in 2024). The relatively lower overall income level of households who recently took up farming is mainly attributable to their smaller cultivation scale and shorter farming experience. To compensate, their economic activities outside agricultural production were found to be on the rise.

The average monthly living expense of households that recently returned to farming was KRW 1.73 million, down by 25.1% from KRW 2.39 million spent per month in the city. Meanwhile, urban households that went to rural areas to live in saw their monthly living expenses fall by 11.7% from KRW 2.31 million to KRW 2.04 million.

Urban households that decided to relocate to rural areas to farm needed 27.4 months on average prior to their move, while the figure was 15.5 months for those households migrating to rural areas to live in. This time was spent searching for a settlement region, housing, and farmland; raising money, and participating in return-to-farming and rural settlement education programmes. The younger individuals tended to spend less time overall, but participated more in the available training programmes, indicating efficient preparation for farming. The survey also found that participation in return-to-farming education programmes was proportional to the scale of farming operations.

The households that decided to return to rural areas either to farm or live in identified the provision of information on farmland, housing, and employment as the areas in which government policy support was most needed. Seven out of ten households reported being satisfied with their new rural lives. In addition, 71.4% of the households that returned to farming and 51.4% of those that went to rural areas to live in stated they had “good relationships” with local residents. Most respondents (97.0% of new farmers and 86.3% of new rural dwellers) indicated that they intended to continue living in their current areas.

Director General Yoon Wonsup of the Agricultural Policy Bureau of the MAFRA stated: “The ministry will continue to improve tailored education programmes for persons looking to return to rural areas either to farm or just live in. These programmes are centered on the Comprehensive Support Centre for Return to Farming and Rural Areas and include agricultural job search and experiential training, long-term education programmes for young return-to-farming participants, and online education courses. At the same time, we plan to enhance user convenience by providing broader and more diverse customized information through Green-daero, a comprehensive portal for those who wish to relocate to rural areas to farm or dwell in.”

Detailed findings from this survey will be available from late March on the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS) website (kosis.kr).