

PRESS RELEASE

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Date of Release: 5 July 2026

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Space-Based Agri-Management: S. Korea to Launch Its First Proprietary Satellite

Sejong, 5 July 2026 — With the launch of the Agricultural and Forestry Satellite (the fourth next-generation medium-sized satellite), the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) will accelerate the transition towards data-driven, science-based agricultural management. The satellite will significantly enhance the comprehensive system for collecting, analysing, and utilising satellite data across the agricultural sector.

The Agricultural and Forestry Satellite has been jointly developed by the Korea AeroSpace Administration (KASA), the Rural Development Administration (RDA), and the Korea Forest Service (KFS). It is scheduled for launch at 16:10 Korea Standard Time on 7 July (00:10 local time on 7 July) from Vandenberg Space Force Base in the United States, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 launch vehicle.

As South Korea's first independently developed satellite dedicated exclusively to agriculture and forestry, it has been built to reduce reliance on overseas satellite data and establish a stable public Earth observation infrastructure. The satellite is capable of acquiring imagery of the entire Korean Peninsula every three days, with a spatial resolution of 5 metres and a swath width of 120 kilometres. Equipped with five spectral bands optimised for monitoring crop and forest growth, it provides a precision observation platform tailored to the characteristics of Korea's agricultural and forestry sectors.

The Ministry will utilise the satellite to support key policy areas, including farmland use surveys, compliance monitoring for the Public Direct Payment Programme, supply and demand management for agricultural produce, agricultural disaster response, agricultural water and infrastructure management, and forest disaster and growth monitoring.

In addition, the Ministry will actively support the private sector in developing a Korean agricultural AI foundation model. This will be achieved by combining satellite imagery reflecting the characteristics of farmland across the country with crop, weather, soil, and environmental data.

1. Farmland Use Surveys, Public Direct Payment Programme Compliance Monitoring, and Farm Business Management

The Ministry will introduce satellite-based services to areas of high policy priority, as well as those with strong potential for policy application.

Specifically, the satellite will conduct comprehensive, large-scale surveys of

agricultural land. This is expected to reduce the manpower, time, and costs required for on-site inspections related to the Public Direct Payment Programme and the Production Adjustment Programme (the rice cultivation area adjustment scheme), while improving the accuracy of compliance assessments. Continuous, imagery-based verification of registered farm business information will also enable programme administrators to access more accurate data, helping to prevent fraudulent subsidy claims.

2. Supply and Demand Management of Agricultural Produce and Provision of Cultivation Guidelines

The satellite will continuously monitor production areas for supply-sensitive crops, such as vegetables, alongside the growth conditions of staple crops, including rice and soybeans. This will improve the accuracy of agricultural production forecasting, strengthening the Government's ability to respond proactively to price volatility.

The system will also facilitate the early detection of abnormal crop growth caused by pests, diseases, or extreme weather, allowing for timely preventive measures and more effective crop protection.

3. Management of Agricultural Water and Infrastructure and Agricultural Disaster Response

The satellite will repeatedly monitor reservoirs, irrigation facilities, and flooded farmland on a wide-area basis to improve the management of agricultural water resources and infrastructure.

The resulting data will support both continuous water management and the rapid, objective assessment of flood damage, helping to secure the critical window for disaster recovery and enabling prompt assistance. In addition, wide-area assessments of wildfires, landslides, and forest damage will support faster decision-making for recovery efforts and strengthen overall disaster preparedness.

4. Rural Spatial Information Monitoring

Wide-area satellite imagery will allow the Ministry to monitor space utilisation across rural areas at the municipal and township levels, updating spatial information on a regular basis. This will support the systematic planning, implementation, and management of rural spatial development.

5. Services for the Private Sector and the Public

Satellite data will be made accessible to the private sector and the public in a phased manner. Such large-scale data is expected to support the development of autonomous farming technologies and create new commercial opportunities.

The public will also benefit from more detailed environmental information. For example, satellite data will enable residents to access location-specific seasonal forecasts.

<The Agricultural and Forestry Satellite>

