Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture Minister Visits Boeun County to Assess Impact of Rural Basic Income

Sejong, 11 November 2026 — Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Song Miryung held an on-site meeting in Boeun County on Tuesday afternoon, 27 October, to review progress on the rural basic income pilot programme and discuss its effects on the local community.

The meeting took place at Café Meomun, operated by the Boeun Darak Cooperative,* and was attended by Minister Song, National Assembly member Park Deok-heum, Boeun County Mayor Choi Jae-hyeong, local residents, and merchants. Participants discussed the county's progress in implementing the basic income programme.

* A social and solidarity economy (SSE) organisation established in 2024 to support local businesses and develop regional specialty products.

The meeting also highlighted how the Boeun Darak Cooperative, which operates Café Meomun, is helping revitalise local businesses, including those in the traditional market. Under a June 2025 agreement with Chungcheong University, the cooperative developed beverage recipes using jujubes, a local specialty, and began selling the drinks. Spending through the basic income programme has helped generate demand for these products and stimulate local commerce. Participants also shared their observations on changes in Boeun County since the programme began and their expectations for the future.

Minister Song then visited Ppangip Maeul ("Bread and Leaves Village"), a shop in Boeun Traditional Market operated by Hong Ro-a. The shop sells locally made foods using seasonal greens, cosmetically imperfect agricultural produce, and other ingredients from Boeun. Established with support from the county's 2026 Youth Local Creator Support Programme,* her business opened on 2 October and accepts basic income vouchers. Hong expressed hope that "the revitalisation of local commerce through rural basic income will encourage more young people to start businesses and settle in the region."

* A Boeun County initiative that identifies prospective entrepreneurs and supports existing businesses, helping young people establish an economic foundation for settling locally while strengthening the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Minister subsequently toured the newly established Gyeolcho Boeun Majung Sangjeom ("Marketplace of Gratitude and Welcome"), developed through the Rural Revitalisation Plus Programme.* This multipurpose facility sells local agricultural products and specialty goods while also hosting activities for local residents and hands-on experience programmes under one roof. It includes a café where visitors can relax, a retail area for locally grown produce,

and small classrooms and meeting rooms for community gatherings and workshops.

* A MAFRA programme that supports sustainable rural development by drawing on local resources, facilities, human capital, and organisations to foster specialised industries, create jobs, and build a foundation for self-reliant communities.

The centre also displays and sells products and content developed and produced by local action groups** using regional resources. These offerings can be purchased with basic income vouchers, helping create a local economic cycle in which production and consumption generate income for residents.

** Cooperatives and other resident-led community organisations fostered through the Rural Revitalisation Plus Programme.

Boeun County offers a promising example of how rural basic income can work alongside other policies to address the threat of rural depopulation. The county's Youth Local Creator Support Programme and other measures encourage young people to start businesses and settle locally, while national programmes such as Rural Revitalisation Plus help foster resident-led organisations and provide spaces for their activities. Together, these complementary efforts are expected to strengthen the impact of rural basic income and extend its benefits throughout the community.

Minister Song stated: "I was deeply impressed by the efforts of Boeun County and its residents to use basic income as a catalyst for revitalising local commerce. We will actively promote cooperation within the Ministry and across government agencies to strengthen the social and solidarity economy and coordinate policies and programmes that support youth entrepreneurship and

settlement. Our goal is to ensure that local residents are the key drivers of their communities' renewal."