

South Korea aims for \$14Bn in K-Food Plus exports by 2025

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The popularity of K-dramas is contributing to a growing interest in Korean cuisine worldwide. In response to the surge in K-food exports, South Korea's Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs has set an ambitious goal of reaching \$14 billion in K-Food Plus exports by 2025. The ministry's work plan for 2025 focuses on stabilizing the supply and demand of agricultural products, a challenge that is increasingly influenced by climate change.

In 2024, K-Food Plus exports reached a record \$13.03 billion, the highest since related statistics were first recorded in 2022. In February, the Ministry introduced the K-Food Plus Export Innovation Strategy to position K-Food Plus as a global strategic export industry. The initiative encompasses agricultural and food products such as Kimchi, ramyeon, processed rice-based goods, and other items.

The ministry aims to boost K-Food Plus exports to \$13.5 billion in 2024 and an ambitious \$23 billion by 2027. The overarching vision is to establish K-Food Plus as one of South Korea's top 10 strategic export industries.

To strengthen export capabilities, the ministry has prioritised improving the logistics infrastructure for fresh agricultural goods. A specialised system will be established to support all stages of export, targeting both domestic and international markets. By 2027, the number of countries with cold chain logistics systems—ensuring temperature control during storage and transit—will double from six (including China, Vietnam, and France) to 12.

Efforts will focus on developing and marketing key export items, such as instant noodles and processed rice products, which have driven export growth. For fresh produce like grapes and strawberries, the strategy is to enhance their global appeal through premiumisation, elevating Korean fruits in overseas markets.

To address the instability of supply and demand for major agricultural and livestock products—including cabbage, radish, apples, and pears—the ministry will implement several measures:

Controlled Atmosphere (CA) Storage Technology: Extending cabbage storage periods from 2 months to 3 months.

Expanding Contract Farming: Increasing the share of major vegetables under contract farming from 25 per cent to 30 per cent.

Advanced Forecasting Tools: Leveraging agricultural satellites and drones to improve observation and reduce weather-related disruptions.

To counter the effects of climate change, the ministry will develop climate-adaptive varieties, such as the "Haradew" cabbage. This will involve creating new production areas and demonstration complexes to foster innovation in agriculture.

Through these comprehensive strategies, South Korea aims to solidify K-Food Plus as a globally recognised export powerhouse, while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by climate change to its agricultural sector.

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