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Korea's Coffee Industry Surges to Over KRW 3.7 Trillion

Sejong, 21 August 2026 — The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI) jointly analyzed Korea's coffee industry and consumption trends and found that the domestic market reached approximately KRW 3.74 trillion in 2024, up 35.6% from 2018. The sector recorded an average annual growth rate of 5.2% over the six-year period, demonstrating that coffee has firmly established itself as a key driver of Korea's food industry.

1. Coffee Shop Numbers Continue to Rise, Reaching One in Seven Foodservice Establishments

The industry landscape is also undergoing significant change. The number of coffee processing businesses declined for the first time in 2023, down 8.0% year on year to 1,660. By contrast, the number of coffee shops rose 5.7% to 106,452 that same year. Their share of all foodservice establishments also increased from

9.3% in 2018 to 13.4% in 2023, an increase of roughly 50%. Thus, approximately one in seven foodservice establishments in Korea was a coffee shop that year.

2. Coffee Preferences Shift from Mixes to Beans amid Growing Demand for Both Premium and Value Options

Coffee consumption patterns are also changing rapidly in Korea. The market for roasted coffee products, including whole and ground beans, reached approximately KRW 1.32 trillion in 2024, recording an average annual growth rate of 15.8% over the previous six years. By contrast, products such as coffee mixes, which once dominated coffee consumption, saw their market contract at an average annual rate of 0.5% over the same period, indicating a significant shift in consumer preferences.

However, consumers are not all simply moving upmarket. Specialty coffee consumers are increasingly seeking distinctive flavours based on bean varieties, roasting methods, and other characteristics. At the same time, demand is rising for affordable coffee during commutes or after meals. As a result, low-priced coffee chains are proliferating while larger package sizes are gaining popularity, creating a clear bifurcation between premium and value-oriented consumption.

Coffee has evolved from a discretionary beverage into an everyday staple, causing the market to diversify, with consumers choosing different price and quality levels according to the occasion and purpose. These increasingly sophisticated consumption patterns have also made Korea a key test market where global coffee brands can gauge commercial potential prior to broader rollouts across East Asia.

3. K-Coffee Shows Export Potential Despite Dependence on Imported Raw Materials

Korea's coffee industry remains structurally dependent on imported raw materials. In 2024, coffee raw-material imports totaled 204,841 metric tons, valued at over USD 1.37 billion, with volume increasing 5.8% year on year.

Despite such import dependence, exports of Korean coffee-related products reached USD 229.6 million in 2024, up 4.6% from the previous year. Instant coffee accounted for 98% of Korea's total coffee export volume of 35,349 metric tons. More recently, roasted coffee bean exports rose sharply, increasing 46.8% year on year in May 2025. The increase points to rapidly growing overseas demand for premium beans roasted using advanced techniques.

By destination, Israel ranked first, accounting for 18.1% of Korean coffee exports by value, followed by China (15.4%), Australia (7.1%), the Philippines (6.5%), and Chile (5.7%). Israel overtook China in 2023 after China had held the top position until 2022.