

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Connecting Rural Areas and Revitalizing Local Communities: Rural Tourism Belt Pilot Model Developed

Sejong, 7 September 2026 — The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) launched its K-Gastronomy Belt initiative in 2024 and now has announced its completion of a pilot model for the new rural tourism belt. The model is part of National Policy Task 70, “Leading Balanced Growth and the Energy Transition in Agricultural, Mountainous and Fishing Communities.”

The pilot model is designed to attract more visitors to Korean rural areas and respond to growing demand for overnight and extended-stay tourism.* Rather than limiting tourism itineraries to individual cities and counties, the model links multiple rural tourism resources** across a broader area to create a series of regional-scale rural tourism belts. The MAFRA has also prepared guidelines

that local governments can use to develop such networks best suited to local conditions.

* Share of sightseeing trips to rural areas that include at least one overnight stay (%): 27.5 (2020) → 38.5 (2022) → 40.0 (2024). Source: A Fact-Finding Survey on Rural Tourism 2024 by the Rural Development Administration

** Examples include rural tourism villages, traditional Korean alcohol producers, Korean Food Masters, K-Gastronomy Belt destinations, “Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage” sites, pasture-based eco-friendly livestock farms, farm restaurants, rural education farms, healing farms, healing forests, recreational forests, arboretums, and gardens.

The pilot model was developed based on research conducted by the Tourism Sciences Society of Korea. It moves beyond the conventional focus on individual tourist attractions by linking diverse rural tourism resources across cities and counties, encouraging visitors to spend more time and money within the region.

This model proposes distinctive extended-stay tourism itineraries that connect nearby tourism resources with well-known rural destinations and major attractions in areas that already draw large numbers of visitors.

To ensure that the pilot model is grounded in objective data, the MAFRA analyzed existing tourism demand and visitor flows into and out of individual cities and counties. The analysis drew on the *Visitor Statistics for Major Tourist Attractions*, an officially approved national statistical dataset, as well as tourism big data from the Korea Tourism Data Lab.

The pilot model was developed in four stages. First, the MAFRA reviewed existing tourism demand, major rural tourism resources, and expert opinions for

139 cities and counties containing *eup* (town) and *myeon* (township) areas, and selected hub cities and counties. Second, the Ministry analyzed visitor flows into and out of the selected hubs and identified two neighboring cities or counties to be linked with each hub. Third, key concepts and themes were formulated based on major tourism resources* in the hub and linked areas, as well as on local conditions. Fourth, proposed tourism itineraries were mapped out around these concepts and themes, taking into account the characteristics of the resources and areas and practical travel routes.

* Including major rural tourism resources, traditional cultural sites, agricultural and rural landscapes, and attractions associated with K-culture.

The MAFRA has initially developed a total of 11 pilot models: one for each of nine designated areas across the country, plus one covering Uljin and Bonghwa in North Gyeongsang Province and another covering Taean, Seosan, Dangjin, Yesan, and Hongseong in South Chungcheong Province, where the first sections of the East-West Trail have opened and been connected. Each features tourism themes reflecting local resources and characteristics, including food, wellness, traditional culture, and K-culture, with itineraries ranging from day trips to a two-day, one-night stay, and a three-day, two-night stay.

In South Chungcheong Province, for example, Yesan County was selected as the hub, with Hongseong County and Asan City selected as linked areas based on their substantial visitor flows to and from Yesan. The model adopts the theme of a “traditional cultural experience belt,” taking into account such local tourism resources and characteristics as Oseosan Sangdam Village and Hongjueupseong Walled Town in Hongseong, Yesan Apple Winery and Yesan Market in Yesan, and Oeam Folk Village and Hyeonchungsa Shrine in Asan. Three itineraries

were developed: a day trip focused on natural scenery, an overnight food and wellness trip, and a two-night cultural experience trip.

The MAFRA also plans to develop and pilot specialized rural tourism belt packages under the Rural Tour Pass, which went on sale on 1 July of this year, to promote the new pilot models and provide visitors with information about them. In July, the Ministry distributed guidelines on methods for developing rural tourism belt models to local governments, encouraging them to take the lead in developing and operating belts suited to local conditions.

Meanwhile, the MAFRA has designated the second week of each month from March through this November as “Rural Tourism Week.”* The Ministry is continuing efforts to promote rural tourism through a range of initiatives, including the Rural Tour Pass and the Rural Creatour Support Programme, giving people more opportunities to stay in rural areas and enjoy what they have to offer.

* Rural Tourism Week was introduced to encourage people to direct more of their leisure and travel spending toward rural areas and help revitalize rural economies. A range of benefits are offered, including discounts on rural tourism offerings and special events.

More information on the proposed Rural Tourism Belt pilot models and the MAFRA’s other initiatives to promote rural tourism is available through the Welchon rural tourism portal (<https://www.welchon.com>). Welchon currently provides an online map with information on 1,028 major agricultural and rural tourism resources in nine categories. The service will continue to expand as new resources are added and existing information is updated.

ATTACHMENT

Proposed Rural Tourism Belt Pilot Models

1. Background

Development of regional-scale rural tourism belt pilot models that connect diverse rural tourism resources across city and county administrative boundaries, with the aim of attracting more visitors to rural areas and meeting growing demand for extended-stay tourism.*

* Share of rural tourism trips involving at least one overnight stay (%): 27.5 (2020) → 38.5 (2022) → 40.0 (2024)

※ Research on the development of rural tourism belt pilot models conducted by the Tourism Sciences Society of Korea (January–June)

A total of 11 rural tourism belt pilot models: nine designated areas + two covering the first sections of the East-West Trail to open and be connected:

- North Gyeongsang Province: Uljin and Bonghwa
- South Chungcheong Province: Taeon, Seosan, Dangjin, Yesan, and Hongseong

2. Pilot Model Development Process

(1) Step 1: Select a hub city or county. Review existing tourism demand, major rural tourism resources,* and expert opinions for the 139 cities and counties subject to rural spatial planning, and select one hub city or county.

* Rural experience and recreation villages; participating breweries in the Visiting Brewery Program; Korean Food Masters; “Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage” sites; rural equestrian facilities; pasture-based eco-friendly livestock farms; tourist farms; rural homestays; farm restaurants; rural education farms; healing farms; healing forests; recreational forests; arboretums (including botanical gardens); gardens; and forest campsites.

(2) Step 2: Select two linked cities or counties. Analyze and review visitor flows into and out of the hub city or county and select two cities or counties to be linked with the hub.

(3) Step 3: Formulate key concepts and themes^{**} based on major tourism resources,* including rural tourism, in the hub and linked cities or counties, as well as on local conditions.

* Including major rural tourism resources, K-Gastronomy Belt destinations, traditional cultural sites, agricultural and rural landscapes, and attractions associated with K-culture.

** Examples include natural scenery, food and wellness, extended-stay cultural experiences, and K-culture experiences.

(4) Step 4: Design itineraries for each of the 11 rural tourism belt pilot models, taking into account the key concepts and themes, the characteristics of local resources and areas, and travel routes. Itineraries are developed by type, such as day trips, overnight trips, and two-night trips.

3. Details of Each Step

3-1. Selection of Hub Cities and Counties

Identify 35 cities and counties that simultaneously meet the following two criteria from among the 139 cities and counties subject to rural spatial planning:*

* Cities and counties containing *eup* (town) or *myeon* (township) areas: 57 urban-rural integrated cities and 82 counties.

- (1) Fifty-one cities and counties with high existing tourism demand, identified with the aim of increasing visitor flows to nearby rural tourism resources*

* Based on the 2024 Visitor Statistics for Major Tourist Attractions, an officially approved national statistical dataset.

- (2) Eighty-eight cities and counties containing many of the 16 types of major rural tourism resources (an average of seven or more)

From the 35 cities and counties meeting both criteria, the level of existing tourism demand, the availability of rural tourism resources, expert opinions, and other factors were comprehensively reviewed. Based on this review, one hub city or county was selected for each of the nine designated areas.

	Gyeonggi	Gangwon	N. Chungcheong	S. Chungcheong
Rural Tourism Belt Hub Cites & Counties	Gapyeong County	Pyeongchang County	Jecheon City	Yesan County

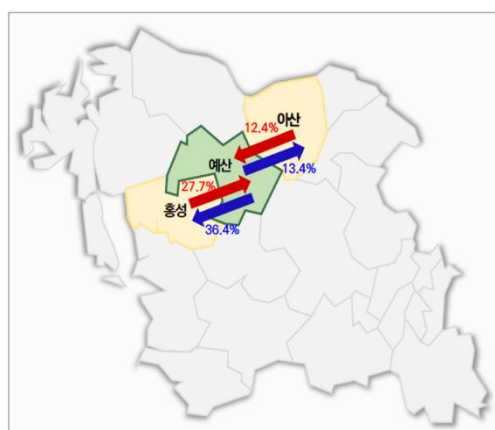
	N. Jeolla	S. Jeolla & Gwangju	N. Gyeongsang	S. Gyeongsang	Jeju
Rural Tourism Belt Hub Cites & Counties	Wanju County	Damyang County	Andong City	Sacheon City	Jeju City

3-2. Selection of Cities and Counties Linked to the Hubs

Identify cities and counties with high visitor inflow and outflow ratios relative to each hub city or county (those ranking among the top five).*

* Based on city- and county-level visitor inflow and outflow data from the Korea Tourism Data Lab (January 2025–February 2026).

<Example Analysis of Visitor Flows Based on Rural Tourism Belt Hubs in South Chungcheong Province>



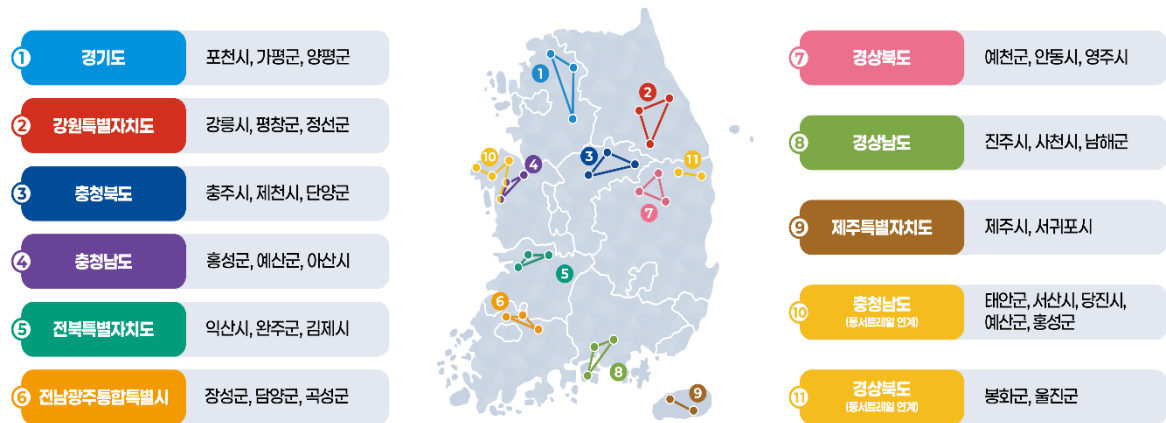
구분	예산군 상위 10개 유입지역	유입 비율	구분	예산군 상위 10개 유출지역	유출 비율
1	충남 홍성군	27.7%	1	충남 홍성군	36.4%
2	충남 아산시	12.4%	2	충남 아산시	13.4%
3	충남 당진시	9.2%	3	충남 당진시	8.4%
4	충남 서산시	6.4%	4	충남 서산시	5.5%
5	충남 평택시	3.7%	5	충남 보령시	3.3%
6	충남 천안시 서북구	2.9%	6	충남 공주시	2.5%
7	충남 공주시	2.7%	7	충남 태안군	2.3%
8	충남 보령시	2.7%	8	경기 평택시	2.1%
9	충남 군산시	2.1%	9	충남 천안시 서북구	2.1%
10	충남 청양군	1.8%	10	전북 군산시	1.8%

• 한국관광데이터랩 분석 및 지역 농촌관광 전문가 의견을 바탕으로, 예산군 유입/유출지역 중 도내 상위 순위에 있는 홍성군, 아산시를 충남권 농촌관광벨트 연계 지역으로 선정

Two linked cities or counties were selected for each province after a comprehensive review of current tourism demand, the availability of rural tourism resources, proximity to the hub city or county, local characteristics, and other factors.

For the two East-West Trail pilot models, all cities and counties along the first sections of the trail to open and be connected were selected as hub or linked cities and counties.

<Hub and Linked Cities and Counties Selected for the 11 Rural Tourism Belt Pilot Models>



Gyeonggi-do	Pocheon, Gapyeong-gun, Yangpyeong-gun
Gangwon-do	Gangneung, Pyeongchang-gun, Jeongseon-gun
N. Chungcheong-do	Chungju, Jecheon, Danyang-gun
S. Chungcheong-do	Hongseong-gun, Yesan-gun, Asan
N. Jeolla-do	Iksan, Wanju-gun, Gimje
S. Jeolla-do & Gwangju	Jangseong-gun, Damyang-gun, Gokseon-gun

N. Gyeongsang-do	Yecheon-gun, Andong, Yeongju
S. Gyeongsang-do	Jinju, Sacheon, Namhae-gun
Jeju-do	Jeju, Seoguipo
S. Chungcheong-do	Tae'an-gun, Seosan, Danjin
N. Gyeongsang-do	Bonghwa-gun, Uljin-gun

3-3. Tourism Resource Analysis and Tourism Belt Theme Creation

Key themes were formulated based on major local attractions, including rural tourism resources, in the hub and linked cities and counties, as well as on distinctive local features.

<Example of Major Tourism Resources in the Hub and Linked Cities and Counties of the South Chungcheong Province Rural Tourism Belt>

■ **Hongseong**

- **Rural tourism villages:** Oseosan Samdam Village, Turtle Village
- **Farm restaurants:** Yedang's Main House
- **Healing farms:** Happy Farm Stay, Galsan Pottery
- **Recreation forests/arboretums:** Yongbongsan Natural Recreation Forest, Picture-Like Arboretum
- **Gardens:** Dolsan Dongsan Garden (private)
- **K-Culture-linked resources:** Hongseong Traditional Market (*Love in the Moonlight*, etc.), Gungri Port (*Milky Way*, *Love in the Moonlight*, etc.)
- **Culture & tourism festivals:** Namdang Port Bird Clam Festival (Jan.)
- **Traditional culture:** Heongju-eup Fortress, Hongseong Traditional Market, Hongju Local Confucian School, Lee Ungno's House
- **Agricultural & rural landscapes:** Namdang Port, Sapgyo Stream, Lee Ungno's House, Hongcheon Culture Village

■ **Asan**

- **Rural tourism villages:** Oeam-ri Folk Village, Darami Chinese Milk Vetch Village
- **Recreation forests/arboretums:** Yeonginsan Natural Recreation Forest/Yeonginsan Arboretum
- **Gardens:** Sinjeongho Garden, Ihwaje (private garden), Monavalley Cultural

Complex (private)

- **K-Culture-linked resources:** Gongseri Shrine Catholic Church (*Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War, The Sandglass, Iris*), Oeam-ri Folk Village (*Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War, Classic*), Asan Admiral Yi Sun-sin Festival (Apr.), Asan Hot Springs Festival (Oct.)
- **Traditional culture/healing forests:** Hyeonchungsa Shrine/ Sejegol Farm Forest Campground
- **Agricultural & rural landscapes:** Gongseri Shrine Catholic Church

■ Yesan

- **Visiting Brewery Programme:** Yesan Apple Winery
- **Rural equestrian facilities/farm restaurants:** Malgil Horse-Bridge/Gaya Royal Kitchen
- **Healing farms/healing forests:** Donna's Forest, National Center for Forest Therapy, Yesan
- **Recreation forests/arboretums:** Bongsusan Natural Recreation Forest/Bongsusan Arboretum
- **K-Culture-linked resources:** Oriental Stork Park (*Salmokji*), Yesan Traditional Market (*Running Man*)
- **Culture & tourism festivals:** Yesan Jangteo Three Kingdoms Festival (Oct.), Yesan Apple Festival (Oct.)
- **Traditional culture:** Chunguisa Shrine
- **Agricultural & rural landscapes:** Yedang Reservoir, Daeheung Local Confucian School, Hwaamsa Temple, Daeheung Local Government Office, Jeong Dong-ho House, Sucheon-ri Reservoir, Sucheon-ri Terraced Rice Fields
- **Rural Convergence Industry Certification System:** Jimyeong Farming Association Corp., Taesan Farm Agricultural Corp., Yesan Apple Wine Agricultural Corp

- **Gardens:** Bareunsup Garden (privatew)
- **Major tourist attraction:** Naepo Bobusang Village

<Example of Key Themes for the South Chungcheong Province Rural Tourism Belt>

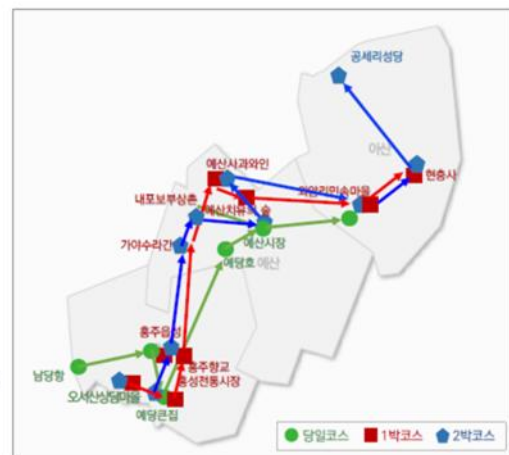
Theme: Traditional Cultural Experience Belt		
Hongseong	Yesan	Asan
• Oseosan Samdam Village, Turtle Village • Yongbongsan Natural Recreation Forest • Heongju-eup Fortress, Hongju Local Confucian School, Hongseong Traditional Market • Yedang's Main House, Namdang Port Bird Clam Festival (Jan.) • Happy Farm Story, Lee Ungno Birthplace Memorial Hall	• Bongsusan Natural Recreation Forest • National Center for Forest Therapy, Yesan • Yesan Jangteo Three Kingdoms Festival (Oct.), Apple Festival (Oct.) • Gaya Royal Kitchen, Yesan Apple Wine • Malgil Horse-Bridge, Donna's Forest • Yesan Traditional Market, Oriental Stork Park, Yedang Reservoir, Naepo Bobusang Village	• Oeam-ri Folk Village • Yeonginsan Natural Recreation Forest • Sinjeongho Garden • Hyeonchungsa Shrine • Asan Admiral Yi Sun-sin Festival (Apr.), Asan Hot Springs Festival (Oct.) • Gongseri Shrine Catholic Church
<i>Historical Culture & Traditional Culture</i>	<i>Everyday Culture & Experiences/Healing</i>	<i>Traditional Culture & Arts and Culture</i>
Enhance lifestyle-based experiential content		Enhance the appeal of traditional cultural content

3-4. Design of Rural Tourism Belt Pilot Models

Itineraries were designed for each of the 11 rural tourism belt pilot models, taking into account the key themes, local resources and characteristics, and travel routes, with options including day trips, one-night trips, and two-night trips.

<Example Itineraries by Key Theme for the South Chungcheong Province Rural Tourism Belt>

- **자연경관 감상형 코스(당일)**
(홍성) 남당항(농업농촌경관), 홍주읍성(역사문화), 예당큰집(농가맛집)
→ (예산) 예당호(농업농촌경관), 예산시장(컬처관광)
→ (아산) 외암리민속마을(컬처관광/농촌체험관광/민속마을/오름촌/스타마을)
- **마식힐링형 코스(1박)**
(홍성) 오서산삼담마을(농촌체험관광/민속마을/오름촌), 예당큰집(농가맛집), 홍성전통시장(문화관광), 홍주읍성(역사문화)
→ (예산) 예산 사과와인(농가맛집), 예산 치유의 숲(자연휴식림)
→ (아산) 외암리민속마을(컬처관광/농촌체험관광/민속마을/오름촌/스타마을), 현충사(역사문화)
- **문화체험 체류형 코스(2박)**
(홍성) 오서산삼담마을(농촌체험관광/민속마을/오름촌), 예당큰집(농가맛집), 홍주읍성(역사문화), 홍주항교(역사문화)
→ (예산) 가야수리간(농가맛집), 내포보부상촌(자연휴식림), 예산시장(컬처관광), 예산 사과와인(농가맛집)
→ (아산) 외암리민속마을(컬처관광/농촌체험관광/민속마을/오름촌/스타마을), 현충사(역사문화), 공세리성당(컬처관광)



■ Scenic Nature View Itinerary (day trips)

- **Hongseong:** Namdang Port, Heongju-eup Fortress, Yedang's Main House
- **Yesan:** Yedang Reservoir, Yesan Traditional Market
- **Asan:** Oeam Folk Village

■ Gastronomy/Healing Itinerary

- **Hongseong:** Oseosan Samdam Village, Yedang's Main House, Hongseong Traditional Market, Heongju-eup Fortress
- **Yesan:** Yesan Apple Wine, Asan Healing Forest
- **Asan:** Oeam-ri Folk Village, Hyeonchungsa Shrine

■ **Extended-stay Cultural Experience Itinerary (2 nights)**

- **Hongseong:** Oseosan Samdam Village, Yedang's Main House, Heongju-eup Fortress, Hongju Local Confucian School
- **Yesan:** Gaya Royal Kitchen, Naepo Bobusang Village, Yesan Traditional Market, Yesan Apple Wine
- **Asan:** Oeam-ri Folk Village, Hyeonchungsa Shrine, Gongseri Shrine Catholic Church