Ministry of SMEs and Startups

Press Release

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Government Unveils New Export Strategy as SME Exports Reach Record High

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups unveiled a new export strategy for SMEs at the 13th National Policy Coordination Meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister, on September 3.

SME exports reached a record USD 64 billion in the first half of 2026. K-beauty products and e-commerce exports have emerged as important new sources of growth, adding greater momentum and diversity to Korea's exports.

The government introduced the strategy to turn the current export momentum into sustained growth continues over the longer term. It is built around four priorities: helping more SMEs enter overseas markets and supporting promising exporters as they scale up; developing new export opportunities in consumer goods and advanced industrial products; using high-level diplomatic partnerships to open doors in emerging markets; and making government export programs easier for companies to navigate.

Helping New Exporters Enter Global Markets and Promising Firms Scale Up

Under the Global Scale-up 500 initiative, the government will provide several years of coordinated support to 500 SMEs with strong export potential. Each company will receive help developing an export roadmap, followed by a package of programs tailored to its growth plans.

Export vouchers will be expanded to cover the sourcing of raw and intermediate materials, while new partnerships with market-entry specialists overseas will extend support beyond marketing to areas such as supply chains and local operations. Coordination between government ministries will also be strengthened.

A separate initiative, Export ON 2000, will help 2,000 young entrepreneurs, micro enterprises, regional businesses and former exporters make their first overseas sales or return to international markets.

Young entrepreneurs will receive support suited to their level of readiness, ranging from opportunities to gain first-hand export experience to assistance in preparing their businesses for overseas markets. Micro enterprises with distinctive products or brands will receive help reaching customers through online platforms, while regional SMEs will be supported in entering overseas markets alongside other businesses in their industries. Companies seeking to resume exports will receive help identifying the reasons for earlier setbacks and developing a new approach.

Building the Next Wave of K-Brand and K-Tech Exports

In consumer goods, the government will identify promising categories – including fashion, food and beauty devices – as the next generation of strategic K-brand products. SMEs will be able to use the distribution channels and international networks of major retailers and media companies to reach overseas customers through a wider range of marketing channels.

Government ministries will work together to address common obstacles involving logistics, intellectual property and product certification. Support for manufacturing, financing and branding will also be expanded to help consumer-goods companies grow.

For industrial and technology products, the government will identify strategic K-Tech categories with strong growth prospects, taking account of overseas industrial policies, changes in global supply chains and emerging technology trends.

Selected SMEs will be supported in working with major Korean and global companies on proof-of-concept trials in overseas markets and further developing their technologies and products. Assistance will cover the full export process, from finding potential customers and participating in international trade shows to securing the financing and professional advice needed to fulfill contracts.

Turning Diplomatic Partnerships into Business Opportunities

The government will use cooperation channels created through summit diplomacy and other high-level exchanges to help SMEs enter emerging markets.

In India, a new overseas business hub will provide office, exhibition and warehouse space. It will also connect Korean companies with local institutions, venture capital firms and universities, offering support in areas such as manufacturing, product testing, investment and recruitment.

In Brazil, the government will help K-beauty companies expand through both online and offline channels while strengthening cooperation with local regulators.

Singapore will host a new startup hub and the K-Global Venture Fund, known as K-VCC. In Europe, the government will establish a year-round showcase for K-brands, while in Mongolia it will help Korean SMEs use local distribution channels, including convenience-store networks. Each initiative will be tailored to the needs and conditions of the individual market.

Making Export Support Easier to Access

To make government programs more accessible, the government will publish a consolidated guide to SME export support and reduce the paperwork required to apply. AI tools will also recommend potential buyers and relevant support programs based on each company's needs.

A dedicated help desk will allow businesses to report difficulties arising from sudden changes in global conditions, supported by closer coordination across government ministries.

The government will strengthen the evidence base for export policy by expanding its analysis and reporting on imports and services exports. It will also pursue legislation to promote the overseas expansion of SMEs.

Overseas support centers for Korean SMEs and startups will be strengthened and adapted to reflect business demand and the characteristics of each market. Cooperation with international networks, including the APEC Startup Alliance, will also be expanded.

"SME exports continue to set new records, but with uncertainty persisting across the global trading environment, it is more important than ever to broaden the base of exporting SMEs and strengthen their foundations for growth," said First Vice Minister Roh Yong-Seok, who is serving as Acting Minister of SMEs and Startups.

"We will move quickly to put this strategy into action and focus our policy resources on raising annual SME exports beyond the previous national target of USD 150 billion to USD 180 billion by 2030."

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