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Project for Promoting Korea's Rural Tourism Utilizing International Students

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On September 4th, 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRC) announced that they are going to operate the rural tourism supporters group by international students in Korea. This is a part of the project of expanding Korea's rural tourism and attracting overseas tourists into the country. The current tourism trend merely focuses on shopping and sightseeing for the traditional royal palace in Seoul and its metropolitan areas. The two organizers plan to utilize international students in Korea so that they can promote Korea's rural tourism on their countries' popular SNS pages in order to attract more overseas tourists into the country's rural areas.. The government expects international students who participate in this program to post articles and upload photos and videos on their countries' popular social network services (SNS) after participating in rural tours of Korea.

The international students who are designated as the supporters for promoting Korea's rural tourism now consist of 60 international students from seven countries in Chinese territories and Southeast Asia such as China (30), Taiwan (6), Hong Kong (3), Thailand (1), Philippines (2), Malaysia (15) and Singapore (3). They are selected as they are highly interested in rural tourism and active on major SNS of their countries. The selected supporters will participate in the 'Farm Tour' three times between September 5th and December 4th of this year. Through the Farm Tour (a total of six rounds), they will visit the 'Tourism Courses Collection of 11 rural tourism resources specifically for foreign tourists. Their mission is to promote the places they visited during the tour through their individual SNS pages by creating a variety of content such as articles, photos and videos. In particular, the organizing entities plan to provide timely information on rural tourism including what to experience, eat and see by utilizing the period of 'Korea Grand Sale' (August 14th – October 31st, 2015) so that they can boost the number of overseas tourists visiting the country..

Also, there will be a launching ceremony for the supporters who are expected to actively participate in various activities while being encouraged by a high sense of duty by receiving appointment letters. In order to create high-quality contents to promote Korea's rural tourism, the supporters will also go through training on how to conduct reporting activities at various tourist attractions as well as promote their activities by utilizing SNS channels.

A government official of MAFRA's Rural Industry Division said, "Korea's rural tourism

has a potential as there are a variety of hands-on activities available under various themes like food and 'healing.' Korea is also equipped with splendid natural scenery, which is more likely to attract foreign tourists." He also added that MAFRA's supporters have high expectations as they have better understanding of and more affection for Korea, which can become a stepping stone for hosting more overseas tourists into rural tourist attractions.

Meanwhile, MAFRA will continue to develop rural tourism resources through 'Tourism Courses Collection of 11 rural tourism resources specifically for foreign tourists. They will also encourage commercialization of such resources to provide relevant information to the tourism industry. MAFRA also plans to implement numerous policies including publishing a travel guide that can provide customized information as the current government pursues 'Government 3.0', which is also a customized service based on demands.

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