

‘Global Hansang business network expands its economic sphere with K-food’

Second World Korean Business Forum in Mokpo; discussions on building economic sphere for Korean merchants and overseas expansion for SMEs
OKA and South Jeolla Province co-host 2025 2nd Export Consultation Fair; enthusiasm for consultations at ‘fever pitch’

Strategies to expand the “hansang” (Korean merchants) economic sphere using K-food were discussed at the World Korean Business Forum in Mokpo, South Jeolla Province, on Oct. 21.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup) and South Jeolla Province (Gov. Kim Young-rok) hosted the 2nd World Korean Business Forum at Hotel Hyundai by Lahan Mokpo that day.

The forum, which included an opening ceremony, keynote presentations and panel discussions, was attended by approximately 110 participants, including OKA Vice Commissioner Byeon Cheol-hwan, South Jeolla Province Deputy Gov. Kang Wi-won, members of the Overseas Koreans Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ), and representatives from small and medium-sized enterprises.

“The mission of the OKA is to connect the capabilities of the overseas Korean community to the overall capabilities of the Korean people,” Byeon said in his opening remarks. “In the economic sphere, we will support domestic companies in pioneering overseas markets by leveraging the networks centered around overseas Korean businesspeople.”

Kang emphasized in his welcoming remarks: “In a situation where traditional trade rules like FTAs and the WTO are being shaken and an uncertain new order is causing confusion, the role of partners who know the local market well becomes increasingly important as tariff barriers rise and regulations grow more complex. Support from overseas buyers and overseas Koreans with global influence is desperately needed for companies dreaming of global expansion.”

Professor Lee Jin-young of Inha University presented on the theme “From the Korean economy to the global economy: Building a Korean global network.”

“The global Korean economic sphere is a new ecosystem bound by economy, technology and creativity,” Lee said. “Strategic partnerships with overseas Korean businesses are needed, centered on K-food, a strength of South Jeolla Province.”

Danny Lee, head of the Americas at Juna (OK-BIZ committee



The 2025 2nd SME Export Consultation Fair

member), who presented on “Success strategies for Korean companies in the U.S. market,” advised: “Entering the U.S. market is not an area where results can be achieved in the short term; systematic preparation and a long-term perspective are required. The key lies in shifting from a product-centric to a program-centric mindset, creating transactional value, and ensuring continuous management and communication. Above all, the starting point must be a humble attitude that recognizes what one does not know and seeks to compensate for it.”

Yang Kyung-ho, head of the Global Business Division at the Korean American Chamber of Commerce USA, said, “Mutually beneficial partnerships are key,” during his presentation titled “Korean SMEs’ entry into the U.S. market through cooperation with U.S. local governments.”

“We must establish and jointly pursue a model where key stakeholders -- the Korean national government, local governments, institutions, SMEs, Korean American businesspeople in the U.S. and U.S. local governments -- all benefit together,” he said.

Kim Young-mi, CEO of Youngmi Beauty, shared in her presentation titled “Collaboration with overseas Korean business leaders: Success stories in overseas markets,” “The export preparation process takes a long time, three to five years, but



The 2025 2nd World Korean Business Forum

through consistent preparation, opportunities can be seized.”

Cho Hanna, deputy director of KOTRA's Gwangju-Jeonnam Support Headquarters, introduced support programs and utilization strategies for overseas Korean businesspeople and domestic SMEs to overcome uncertainty through her presentation titled “Growth exit strategy for the culture-leading K-food industry.”

The subsequent panel discussion focused on practical case studies and policy directions for Korean SMEs' overseas expansion strategies and localization approaches. Businesspeople with U.S. market experience, government officials and export support agency representatives participated, sharing diverse know-how and field insights.

70 companies and 30 overseas Korean buyers from 16 countries participated

The 2025 2nd Export Consultation Fair was held at the same venue on Oct. 22 to support the overseas expansion of domestic SMEs through collaboration with overseas Korean businesspeople.

Notably, 30 businesspeople from the Overseas Korean Business Advisory Group (OK-BIZ) were invited to conduct one-on-one customized consultations with 70 promising SMEs from the Jeonnam region. Consultation items ranged from beauty appliances to cosmetics, seafood and other consumer goods.

This event was planned with the goal of going beyond simple business matching to generate tangible contract results and establish mid- to long-term partnerships. Various ancillary services were provided free of charge on-site to assist participating companies with their consultations. Across 25 tables, over 100 domestic SME representatives and overseas buyers engaged in one-on-one export consultations in a lively atmosphere.

“We export seaweed, kelp and ‘kombu’ to seven countries, including the U.S., China and Canada,” said Jang Se-jong, director of Bada Myeongga Ltd. (Sejong Mulsan), headquartered in Wando, South Jeolla Province. “We participated in the consultation meeting to diversify our exports. We plan to produce eco-friendly organic dried kelp and other products to pioneer new sales channels.”

Park Yang-hwan, executive director of the abalone distributor Bada Sopoong, who attended the consultation meeting, said: “We export to China, Japan and Taiwan at an average monthly scale of 700 to 800 million won. We came for consultations around entering the Vietnamese market. Even when overseas orders come in, we face a dire situation where we can't export due to container shortages. We hope South Jeolla Province will support us so we can export abalone on time.”

South Jeolla Province companies join hands with overseas Korean business leaders

Lee Yoo-kyung, senior vice president of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations' (World-OKTA) New Delhi Chapter in India and an OK-BIZ committee member participating in export consultations, said, “It's regrettable that the product categories brought by domestic SMEs for consultation are mostly seafood, lacking diversification.”

This export consultation is part of the “Korean Business Network” initiative being promoted by the OKA. This initiative was officially announced at the 23rd World Korean Business Convention in Atlanta, the U.S., last April. It aims to strengthen ties between domestic companies and overseas Korean businesses to jointly respond to global economic uncertainties.

Considering the recent global popularity of K-food, the export consultation meeting primarily selected OK-BIZ members and SMEs related to K-food, providing them with opportunities to enter the global market.

Notably, over 30 of the 180 OK-BIZ advisory committee members appointed last August attended this day's consultation session. They actively supported the overseas expansion of outstanding local companies participating in the export consultation fair through one-on-one business meetings.

Additionally, on Oct. 23, OK-BIZ visited the 2025 South Jeolla Province International Gastronomy Industry Expo held at the Mokpo Culture & Arts Center, conducting business consultations and tours of the expo grounds with 42 participating companies. 🇯🇵