United States Department of Agriculture
Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN
Global Agricultural Information Network

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution **Date:** July 17, 2026

Report Number: KS2026-0028

Report Name: Korea Seeks US Eggs to Meet Domestic Production Shortfall

Country: Korea - Republic of

Post: Seoul

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Retail Foods

Prepared By: Sunyoung Choi

Approved By: Zeke Spears

Report Highlights:

The Republic of Korea (ROK) plans to import approximately 210 million table eggs from the United States and Thailand in July and August, backed by KRW 99.7 billion ($67 million) in government support, to stabilize supply ahead of the Chuseok holiday. The spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the ROK in November 2025 and the subsequent culling of 11.3 million laying hens as well as a slow flock recovery have kept daily egg production between 46 and 47 million eggs a day, below the 50 million needed to meet demand.

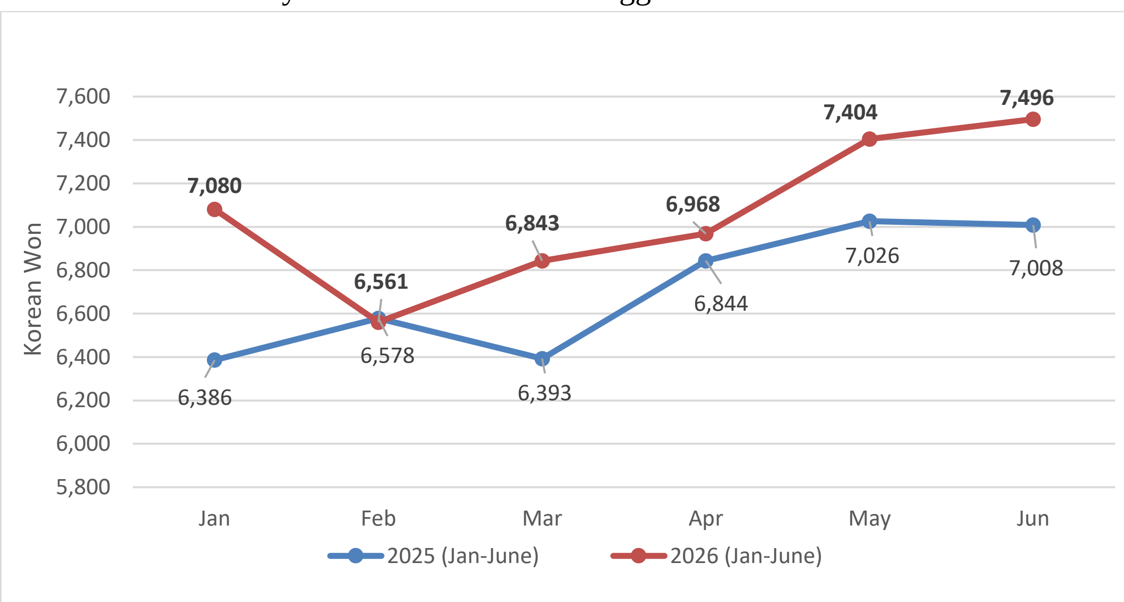
HPAI Drives Korean Egg Production Shortfall

Since the November 2025 HPAI outbreak in the ROK, the culling of approximately 11.3 million laying hens has severely cut domestic egg production. The culling at breeder farms, instances of wasting disease, and frequent livestock movement restrictions further compounded the supply shortage. Increasingly strict stocking-density regulations created additional production gaps. Even though the total number of laying hens increased year-on-year, daily egg production declined to approximately 46 to 47 million eggs. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Korean egg industry, production of least 50 million eggs per day is necessary to achieve a stable supply-demand balance. MAFRA anticipates that chicks placed in spring will mature into egg-laying hens by late July, allowing domestic production to gradually return to average levels starting in August.

The ROK Government Seeks to Address High Egg Prices with Imports

Tight table egg supplies have driven prices higher, see Chart 1. In the first half of 2026, the average monthly retail price for a tray of 30 extra-large table eggs rose 5.3 percent year-on-year to 7,079 Korean Won (KRW) ($4.80[1]). Beyond supply-side constraints, sustained demand, driven by rising prices of alternative protein sources such as beef, pork, and chicken, as well as school meal programs and broader food inflation, added further upward pressure on prices. The ROK government has sought to curb sharp price increases through a combination of consumer coupon subsidies and imports of foreign table eggs.

Chart 1: ROK Monthly Retail Price for 30 XL Eggs



Source: Korea Institute for Animal Products Quality Evaluation (KAPE)

In early 2026, MAFRA decided to import approximately 31.4 million table eggs, or roughly 2,000 metric tons (MT), from the United States, Thailand, and Brazil by early July, backed by 21.5 billion

[1] Six-month (Jan-June 2026) average exchange rate applied (Krw1483/US$)

KRW (approximately $14.5 million[2]) in government support to cover transportation and repackaging costs. The ROK successfully imported approximately 16.5 million table eggs, or roughly 1,059 metric tons, in the first half of 2026, sourced exclusively from the United States (775 MT) and Thailand (284 MT). Over the same period in 2025, the ROK imported negligible amounts of U.S. and Thai table eggs. However, as domestic egg production recovery proved slower than expected, the MAFRA decided to import an additional 210 million table eggs from the United States and Thailand during July and August to stabilize supply ahead of the Chuseok holiday peak season in September. The ROK government provided an additional 99.7 billion KRW ($67 Million[3]) to ease the burden on household budgets and grocery costs. This response mirrors the 2021 egg price crisis, also triggered by HPAI, during which the ROK imported approximately 380 million table eggs, the majority of U.S. origin.

Import TRQ

The MAFRA import program to stabilize domestic food prices, under which MAFRA designated a table egg tariff-rate quota item, authorizes private importers to either import directly or act as import agents. To receive the support, importers must first participate in and be selected through a competitive bidding process for Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation's (aT) "Table Egg Import Agency/Direct Import Support Project." When a winning importer successfully completes local procurement and customs clearance, the government reimburses a set percentage of air and sea transport costs, along with domestic repackaging costs, through the Agricultural and Fishery Products Price Stabilization Fund. ROK table egg imports rely on, and effectively only occur when, this government support makes them commercially viable, enabling selected importers to supply eggs to the domestic market at low cost.

Korean importers are targeting U.S.-origin eggs given the ample U.S. supply capacity and currently competitive prices. To export to the ROK, U.S. producers must first register and receive approval from the ROK Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) and the eggs must originate from HPAI free regions. For assistance registering with MFDS, please contact the Foreign Agricultural Service Seoul Office at agseoul@usda.gov. For information on animal health export restrictions, please reference the following APHIS webpage, which lists restrictions by locality and effective date: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-product-export/export-restrictions-us-animal-products-human-consumption/korea-export?page=1.

Attachments:

No Attachments.

[2] Six-month (Jan-June 2026) average exchange rate applied (Krw1483/US$)
[3] Six-month (Jan-June 2026) average exchange rate applied (Krw1483/US$)