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SK bioscience joins Korea's national initiative to develop Avian Influenza Vaccine

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To build a national pandemic preparedness and response system for potential next-pandemic avian influenza



SK bioscience, a global innovative vaccine and biotech company committed to promoting human health from prevention to cure, has been selected for the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA)'s *Priority Infectious Disease Pandemic Preparedness Rapid R&D Support Programme*.

This government-led initiative aims to develop vaccines against avian influenza – identified as a high-risk candidate for the next pandemic. SK bioscience was chosen for its proven technological capabilities as the only domestic company to have commercialized cell-culture-based vaccines for both influenza and COVID-19.

Under the program, SK bioscience and KDCA will co-invest approximately KRW 5.25 billion ($3.7 million) in early-stage development. The company will initiate development of a cell-culture-based avian influenza vaccine, aiming to enter Phase 1/2 clinical trials in the second half of next year.

Furthermore, the company plans to foster international collaboration alongside its vaccine development to enhance global public health as the threat of avian influenza is not confined to a single region or country.

Unlike traditional egg-based vaccines, cell-culture-based vaccines offer greater effectiveness in pandemic response. Egg-based vaccines can face significant challenges during avian influenza outbreaks, as mass culling of poultry may limit access to uninfected fertilized eggs, making timely and large-scale vaccine production difficult and less responsive to emerging viral mutations.

In contrast, cell-culture-based vaccines are produced using animal cells in advanced aseptic facilities, minimizing the risk of contamination or infection. This method enables rapid, large-scale manufacturing and allows for quicker adaptation to evolving virus strains.