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Russian Government Starts Free Land Giveaway in Country's Far East

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Russian citizens can now claim a hectare of free land in the country's remote Far East in a bid to rejuvenate the sparsely-populated region.

Free plots of land are on offer in the Kamchatka, Primorye, Khabarovsk, Amur, Magadan and Sakhalin regions, the republic of Sakha, or the Jewish and Chukotka autonomous districts.

The land can be used for any "lawful purpose" but can only be rented, sold or given away after an initial five-year waiting period.

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The flagship program has been gradually rolled out since June 2016, when local residents could apply for plots of land in select "pilot areas" and then across the region. Feb. 1 2017

marks the first day that Russians from across the country will be eligible to apply.

Alexander Galushka, minister of development in the Far East, claimed that 14 percent of Russians surveyed by the government were interested in taking part in the program.

“Even taking the 6.2 million people in the Far East into account, that's still a lot of people,” he told the Interfax news agency.

The program is one of a number of initiatives aimed at boosting the economy in Russia's Far East, including the construction of the new Vostochny cosmodrome. A recent deal also saw a number of Chinese companies set on relocating to the area.

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