



A minimum five-year rolling seasonal worker scheme, with suitable length visas, no wage differential from the National Living Wage or unrealistic cap on worker numbers, and implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain.

Why it's needed

Accessing competent, motivated and skilled workers in the horticulture and agriculture sector has been increasingly challenging over the last ten years, due to a combination of the removal of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme in 2013, the ending of free movement following Brexit and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A joint industry report published in autumn 2021 estimated there were 500,000 vacancies across the food and farming industry. Labour availability is a significant barrier for many businesses across the sector and is restricting the opportunities for growth and often resulting in the contraction of food production. An immigration policy that is targeted at the skills required and is fit for the future of UK food production and processing is urgently required.

Seasonal labour shortages have been a significant factor in the fall in UK fruit and vegetable production, with some businesses cutting production by as much as 20-30% since 2020. It has also led to an increase in food waste – in 2022 an estimated £60 million of food was left to rot in fields due to a shortage of workers to pick and pack the crops.

These production losses not only have a detrimental impact on individual farming and growing businesses, they also have an impact on our food security and, consequently, on our national security.

