

# Written evidence submitted by The Association of Labour Providers (LS0053)

**October 15 2021**

## **The Environment, Food And Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry: Labour Shortages in the Food and Farming Sector**

### **Evidence Submission by the Association Of Labour Providers**

#### **Contact**

David Camp, ALP Chief Executive and Gillian Haythornthwaite, ALP Head of Policy

#### **Inquiry**

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee's inquiry [Labour Shortages in the Food and Farming Sector](#) invited evidence by 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021 as follows:

1. What is the extent and nature of labour shortages currently being experienced in the food supply chain?
2. What are the factors driving labour shortages in the food supply chain?
3. What is the outlook for the labour shortage situation in the coming months and years?
4. What other issues are affecting the food supply chain?
5. What impact will the timetable for introducing physical checks at the border on food and live animal imports from the EU have on the current issues being experienced by the UK food supply chain?
6. What measures has the Government taken to alleviate the problems being faced by the food supply chain this year? To what extent have they been successful?
7. Does the Government need to take further steps to support the food supply chain?

#### **The Association of Labour Providers**

Established in 2004, ALP ([www.labourproviders.org.uk](http://www.labourproviders.org.uk)) is a not for profit, member funded trade association promoting responsible recruitment and good practice for organisations that supply the workforce to the food supply chain, in particular edible horticulture and food processing. Members also supply the wider consumer goods manufacturing, warehousing and distribution sectors.

The ALP is providing evidence on behalf of its members. ALP members predominantly provide unskilled and lower skilled workers. ALP's 350 labour provider members supply approximately 75% of the temporary contingent workforce into the food growing and manufacturing supply chain. Many of these workers progress to form the permanent workforce for UK industry.

All organisations that supply labour into these sectors are required to be licensed by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA).

## Evidence Submission

### 1. What is the extent and nature of labour shortages currently being experienced in the food supply chain?

1.1. The ALP has conducted separate surveys of labour providers and of food growers & manufacturers since 2016 to provide data and trends to inform access to labour policy and priorities for the UK food supply chain. Our latest surveys ran between 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The Labour Provider Survey had 129 responses and the UK Food Supply Chain had 192 responses. The survey outcomes paint a bleak picture and are appended in full to this submission.

1.2. Labour providers reported that:

- 99% of labour providers were unable to meet all their clients' requirements for food workers during summer 2021
- 31% of labour providers said they had short supplied their clients by over 50% of their requirement for food workers
- 81% said that the quality of labour (English language, productivity, reliability etc) was down on last year

1.3. Food growers and manufacturers reported that:

- Around 85% of food businesses experienced shortages of lower and unskilled workers
- Around 65% of food businesses stated they had experienced chronic shortages of lower and unskilled workers - four times those with shortages in higher skilled roles
- Businesses experiencing chronic shortages of lower and unskilled workers is rapidly accelerating - the 65% is up from 35% in May 2021 and 16% in November 2020.
- The full picture of labour availability over summer 2021 is detailed below:

Food growers and manufacturers - throughout the last 6 months, how was your site with regards to availability of the following types of labour/skill level?

<b>Workforce RQF (Skill) level</b>	<b>Did not Recruit</b>	<b>Fine, No problems</b>	<b>Just Ok</b>	<b>Intermittent Shortages</b>	<b>Chronic Shortages</b>
Highly-skilled: Degree level and above e.g. Engineers, Directors etc. (RQF 6 and above)	41%	14%	16%	13%	15%
Skilled: Requiring a degree & experience e.g. Production /Operations/HR Managers, (RQF 6)	33%	16%	20%	20%	11%
Semi-skilled: Requiring experience & training e.g. Skilled trades (RQF 3-4)	24%	5%	14%	34%	23%
Lower-skilled Permanent: Requiring some training/experience e.g. Process operative, skilled field worker (RQF 2)	9%	1%	8%	26%	56%
Lower skilled temporary / agency / seasonal	6%	0.5%	6%	20%	67%
Unskilled: Requiring minimal training /experience, e.g. Elementary roles, picking, packing etc. (below RQF 2)	3%	2%	8%	16%	72%
Unskilled temporary/agency/seasonal	8%	1%	6%	15%	70%

## 2. What are the factors driving labour shortages in the food supply chain?

2.1. The factors driving labour shortages in the food supply chain are:

- A better than forecast post pandemic jobs recovery
- The post Brexit immigration rules which allow no ongoing general or sectoral low skilled immigration routes. There was no evidence led phased transition for essential UK industry sectors such as food and drink. As of the date of submission, the edible horticulture seasonal worker pilot has not been confirmed for 2022 and the poultry and HGV visas are defined as 'one-off'.
- An exodus of EU workers, including those with pre/settled EUSS status who have left the UK as a consequence of Brexit and Coronavirus and have decided not to return.
- EU nationals who chose not to, or failed to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme or those who entered during the grace period and were unable to apply.
- The absence of a coherent post Brexit domestic workforce and skills strategy.
- The ineffectiveness of government initiatives on return to work and employment support schemes such as the Apprenticeship Levy, Universal Credit, Kickstart scheme and Plan for Jobs.
- The inherent nature of the work and perceived attractiveness of the sector and shortfall in Defra and the food industry achieving the Food and Drink Sector Council vision of “A secure supply of skilled and seasonal labour, driving productivity gains and continuing to produce world-class products for domestic and international markets” and objective of “Securing a world-class workforce capable of enabling the food and drink industry to continue to be world-leading producers of quality, affordable and sustainably-produced food and drink.”

## 3. What is the outlook for the labour shortage situation in the coming months and years?

3.1. In the ALP October 2021 survey labour providers reported that:

- 91% of labour providers do not expect to meet client demands for food industry seasonal workers for the 2021 autumn and Christmas peak
- The large majority of labour providers expect to significantly under supply their customers' requirements for seasonal workers

We expect to short supply our clients by 20-30%	11%
We expect to short supply our clients by 30-40%	19%
We expect to short supply our clients by 40-50%	14%
We expect to short supply our clients by over 50%	47%

3.2. Around three quarters of food growers and manufacturers expect their own sites to struggle or be in crisis recruiting for lower skilled permanent or temporary workers over the forthcoming autumn and Christmas periods:

Workforce RQF (Skill) level	We will be fine	We should be just Ok	We will struggle	It will be a crisis
Lower-skilled Permanent: Requiring some training/experience e.g. Process operative, skilled field worker (RQF 2)	12%	18%	43%	27%

Lower skilled temporary/agency/seasonal	9%	16%	41%	35%
Unskilled: Requiring minimal training/experience, e.g. Elementary roles, picking, packing etc. (below RQF 2)	9%	15%	43%	33%
Unskilled temporary/agency/seasonal	10%	18%	39%	34%

3.3. Over half of food growers and manufacturers expect to rationalise/reduce their output over the next 3 months as a consequence of labour shortages:

Rationalise/reduce our output	52%
Automate to reduce reliance on skills and labour	45%
Increase proportion of permanent workforce and use less agency labour	38%
Use more agency labour to meet the shortfall	37%
Our business is likely to become unviable	16%
Move part of our growing/production overseas	13%
Move all of our growing/production overseas	1%
No impact expected	10%

#### 4. What other issues are affecting the food supply chain?

4.1. The food industry is facing significant inflationary challenges in terms of feed, transport, fuel, energy, CO2, packaging.

The actions food growers and manufacturers who responded to the ALP survey are taking over the next 6 months to secure a workforce will increase employment costs:

Increased wage rates, bonuses and incentives	66%
Improve worker retention activities	66%
Improve worker sourcing methods	54%
Focus on being a better place to work	52%
Increased hours and overtime of current workers	46%
Access harder to reach groups in the local labour market	37%
Introduced guaranteed hours for agency workers	24%
Paid for/subsidised daily travel to work	16%
Improve standard of existing accommodation	14%
Paid for/subsidised travel to UK	12%
Provide new accommodation	10%

#### 5. What impact will the timetable for introducing physical checks at the border on food and live animal imports from the EU have on the current issues being experienced by the UK food supply chain?

No response

#### 6. What measures has the Government taken to alleviate the problems being faced by the food supply chain this year? To what extent have they been successful?

6.1. Of those labour providers that have sought to work with their local Jobcentre, 86% found them of no help in finding workers.

- 6.2. Only 3% of labour providers find government employment support schemes helpful in supporting workers into work; 34% find them of limited use and 63% find them of no use.
- 6.3. ALP has invested significant time and effort into working with the Department for Work & Pensions on a collaborative national programme with industry representatives to promote the agricultural and food processing sectors to a domestic workforce. This will require significantly enhanced commitment from DWP to deliver any results.
- 6.4. The T5 (Temporary Worker) Seasonal Worker Extended Pilot in Edible Horticulture

In December 2020 the pilot scheme was extended for a further year, with an increase to 30,000 workers and two additional labour provider operators. The Extended Pilot is managed by the Home Office under the [T5 \(Temporary Worker\) Seasonal Worker](#) immigration route and Defra is the endorsing government department.

- The T5 (Temporary Worker) Seasonal Worker Scheme is essential to ensuring that UK fresh produce can be grown, picked and packed. In September 2018, the MAC in its report [EEA migration in the UK](#), said, *“The labour market for seasonal agricultural labour is completely separate from the market for resident workers in a way that is unlike any other labour market. According to the ONS, 99 per cent of seasonal agricultural workers are from EU countries and it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which this workforce can come from the resident labour market.”*
- The 2020 collaborative government and industry programme [pickforbritain.org.uk](#) was helpful during the pandemic in focusing attention on the critical role undertaken by seasonal agricultural workers in keeping our nation fed. There was no public report on the number of individuals who obtained seasonal work through [pickforbritain.org.uk/](#) or quantitative evidence that compares performance or reliability of workers recruited through the [pickforbritain.org.uk/](#) website compared with seasonal migrant worker recruitment. There are a number of reports of grower’s experience in the October 2021 ALP Food Supply Chain Labour Survey Results attached with this submission. Government took the decision not to run [pickforbritain.org.uk/](#) in 2021.
- There is no transparency in how the number of 30,000 workers is arrived at.

In 2017, the EFRA Committee inquiry [Feeding the nation: labour constraints](#) concluded: “It is apparent that the statistics used by the Government are unable to provide a proper indication of agriculture’s labour needs. These statistics and their utility for measuring supply of, and demand for, seasonal labour must be reviewed by the end of 2017 to give the sector confidence in the adequacy of the official data on which employment and immigration policies will be based for the period after the UK leaves the EU.”

Four years later, this remains the case. There is still no commonly developed and agreed analysis of UK agriculture’s or the wider food supply chains labour needs. Despite repeated industry requests to Defra and offers to collaborate, the EFRA Committee’s recommendation above has not been actioned. The sector cannot have “confidence in the adequacy of the official data on which employment and immigration policies will be based” because no official data is shared or published.

- The decision to extend the pilot for a further year was announced on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. The two additional scheme operators were appointed in May 2021. This was too late for farms who had an early season need for labour. It has put intense pressure on the new Scheme Operators to ramp up their businesses to source and supply the required number of workers.
- The scheme rules are detailed in the Home Office guidance [Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors - Sponsor a Seasonal Worker](#). They were updated in 2021 apparently responding to adverse media focus [Brexit: the low paid migrant workers 'trapped' on Britain's farms](#) following the FLEX report [Assessment of the Risks of Human Trafficking for Forced Labour on the UK Seasonal Workers Pilot](#).

The scheme rules go beyond UK employment law in a number of areas, in many cases are nebulous and there is no evidence that Home Office has collaborated with technical experts in their drafting. Their legal status is not clearly made.

ALP has published the following policy papers to the Home Office and Defra:  
[Building a Model Seasonal Workers' Scheme - July 2017](#) which informed the design of the pilot

[Achieving a Successful Seasonal Workers Scheme - July 2019](#) which detailed the successes and challenges in the delivery of the first year of the pilot

The Multi-Stakeholder Working Group [Seasonal Workers' Scheme - Recommendations for future scheme design - June 2020](#)

In October 2021 (attached to this submission), ALP issued to the Multi-Stakeholder Working Group a draft "Seasonal Workers Scheme Good Practice Guide for Scheme Operators". This details practical guidance and actions to ensure the Scheme is attractive and rewarding for workers, expectations are managed, workers receive what they are entitled to and are protected from exploitation.

6.5. The introduction of the [poultry worker and HGV food driver temporary visas](#) is welcome, but too little, too late and too temporary. It does show the ability to extend the T5 system where the evidence and politics drive the policy change.

## **7. Does the Government need to take further steps to support the food supply chain?**

The food industry does not currently have access to the labour it needs and there are no signs that it will do for the foreseeable future. The consequences of these shortages are appearing daily in the media and include restrictions in output – both volume and variety, reduced exports, increasing empty shelves, increasing food waste, food inflation and risks to animal welfare.

The only short term option to address labour shortages is to extend the T5 visa routes.

### **7.1. The T5 (Temporary Worker) Seasonal Worker – Edible Horticulture**

- The [Temporary Worker - Seasonal Worker Visa \(Tier 5\)](#) should be established as an ongoing recruitment route into UK edible horticulture.
- There should be a transparent process to determine how many workers are required. Defra Access to Labour Team collaborating with key industry representative bodies should implement the 2017 EFRA Committee recommendation and develop a "proper indication of agriculture's labour needs" on which all agree and which provides the sector with the "confidence in the adequacy of the official data on which employment and immigration policies will be based".
- The Home Office should collaborate with Defra and key industry representative bodies to better define the scheme rules guidance [Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors - Sponsor a Seasonal Worker](#).
- The Home Office and Defra should engage with the industry Seasonal Workers Scheme Multi-Stakeholder Working Group around the [Seasonal Workers' Scheme - Recommendations for future scheme design - June 2020](#) and October 2021 draft "Seasonal Workers Scheme Good Practice Guide for Scheme Operators" to support scheme operators and users meet the required standards and to enable continuous improvement to protect and enhance worker welfare.
- The number of Scheme Operators should be increased and put to tender. Only Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) licensed labour providers should be appointed Scheme Operators. There are many persuasive reasons:

- Tying a worker's visa to a single employer risks the Seasonal Workers' Scheme being regarded as no more than an "official bonded labour scheme" with workers bound by visa restrictions. This runs counter to current government modern slavery policy and the January 2016 UK ratification of P029 – Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.
- Labour providers are licensed and regulated by the GLAA whereas end user employers are not covered by the licensing requirements. Utilising GLAA licence holders as scheme operators ensures an already established and effective regulatory environment.
- Labour providers ensure the best opportunities for seasonal workers. Under the old SAWS scheme, individuals were in the main bought into the UK to complete a season on one farm or site. If there was no or little work, then SAWS workers, being on zero hours contracts, did not work or earn money. Labour providers are best positioned to transfer seasonal workers between Scheme Users as the season progresses and thus:
  - Source alternative seasonal work for any seasonal workers for whom there is no longer any or insufficient work with a particular Scheme User and seek to ensure that workers obtain a reasonable amount of work within a season by managing supply and demand between a number of Scheme Users.
  - Provide seasonal workers with the opportunity to leave a particular Scheme User and seek employment elsewhere if that worker is not suited to the work and/or environment of the employer they are placed with.
  - Provide Scheme Users with the best mechanism to engage seasonal workers for the period and hours that they require.
  - Make the maximum use of the seasonal workers' time in the UK. By using the same workers to fulfil a number of seasonal roles at different Scheme Users across the calendar year, labour providers reduce recruitment requirements and the number of individuals being bought into the UK to meet the requirements across all crops and products.

## 7.2. T5 (Temporary Worker) Seasonal Worker – other food supply chain sectors

- Sector and role based schemes should be extended for temporary lower skilled workers into COVID-19 [essential and critical](#) sectors including food production and distribution where there is an evidence based need. Such schemes satisfy the dual objectives of meeting industry's urgent need for a workforce without increasing net migration flows. Evidence shows that seasonal workers return to their home nation at the end of the season of work.
- The Home Office should task the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to develop a national workforce shortage evidence framework to facilitate consistent intelligence gathering, analysis and reporting.
- The MAC should, on an annual basis, make evidence-based recommendations (taking account of and balancing a wide range of economic and social factors) to government on sectors, roles and thresholds for T5 sector quota schemes for essential and critical sectors that can evidence a seasonal or peak worker requirement which cannot be met through the domestic workforce.
- Eligibility to be a licensed sponsor under any extension of the T5 (Temporary Worker) visa route in food processing should remain with GLAA licence holders.

- T5 sector-based schemes should have worker welfare, good work practices and protection of workers designed in and at their core. Lessons learned from the Seasonal Workers Pilot are detailed in the ‘Seasonal Workers’ Scheme Code of Good Practice Multi-Stakeholder Working Group’ [recommendations](#) and draft “Seasonal Workers Scheme Good Practice Guide for Scheme Operators”

7.3. Government must urgently adopt a radically new, coherent and comprehensive national strategy to enable all industry sectors to access the workforce required at all skill levels.

This is detailed further in the attached June 2021 ALP report [Addressing UK Food Industry Labour Shortages](#) and should include policies to:

#### 7.3.1. Reduce unemployment

Government must now accelerate policies to incentivise individuals claiming unemployment benefit to return to work and for businesses to reintegrate long term unemployed into the world of work.

- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) should work at a national strategic level with industry sectors. For the food supply chain, there should be a dedicated access to employment website for each sector i.e. Agriculture, Food Manufacturing, Logistics operated in partnership with sector bodies. Activity with the food supply chain should be coordinated through the Food and Drink Sector Council Workforce and Skills Group.
- DWP account managers should work together at a local level with employers to proactively provide work opportunities within the local community, to access untapped sectors of the labour market.
- Government should enable employers, recruitment businesses and labour providers to use the Apprenticeship Levy to fund retraining and access to work payments for the long term unemployed and for those on national programmes providing work opportunities to harder to reach sectors of the community.
- The rigidity of the UK benefits system dissuades many unemployed people from taking up irregular work or increasing their hours. The Universal Credit being rolled out across the UK over a period of years is designed to address this by introducing flexibility and to ensure that increased work undertaken means increased pay. It needs to deliver this.
- Government should address how the National Minimum Wage Regulations constrain the availability of work, particularly with regards to accommodation and transport to work

#### 7.3.2. Increase the economically active population

There are 8.7 million economically inactive people aged 16 to 64 not in the labour force. Economic inactivity measures those people without a job but who are not classed as unemployed because they have not been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and/or they are unable to start work within the next two weeks. These comprise:

- Young workers and students (over 2 million):

Government should continue to develop and implement policies which promote a broader proportion of young people to start their working careers at an earlier age, whilst continuing their educational development, such as apprenticeship schemes and apprenticeship degree schemes.

The private recruitment sector should be engaged to readily offer work to young people aged above 16 and through their student years.

Perceived barriers should be addressed. The most significant impact of young persons' health and safety legislation appears to have been to deter employers from employing young people. Gov.UK websites should clearly state the legal position regarding employing young workers which varies through the devolved administrations. The Education and Skills Act 2008 (ESA) requires young people in England to continue in education or training until the age of 18. However, Chapter 3 of the ESA has not been enacted and remains provisional, meaning it does not apply to private sector employers. This is commonly misunderstood.

- Early retirees (over 1 million):

Policies to extend working life such as delaying access to state pensions and removing the state retirement age have been successful, though not always popular. Research identifies that 73% of employees expect to work beyond the traditional retirement age. Activities to promote employment of older workers such as second career schemes should continue and be enhanced.

- Long-term sick (over 2 million) and temporary sick (160,000):

The 2019 DWP consultation [Health is everyone's business - Proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss](#) sought views on ways government and employers can take action to reduce ill health-related job loss. Proposals need to be implemented.

Government reports that there are a further 1.4 million more disabled people in work than in 2013, with more than 16,000 employers signed up to the [Disability Confident Scheme](#).

Further action is required to support people with work limiting health conditions or disabilities who, with the right level of support and reasonable accommodations from an employer, are able to work.

- Looking after family/home (nearly 2 million)

The Northern Ireland '[Enabling Success](#)' strategy identified lone parents and carers who are currently in receipt of out-of-work benefits and would be better off in work but are unable to make the transition due to a lack of support and/or opportunities.

Government and [Working Families](#) (the UK's work-life balance charity with a mission to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face to create a flexible, high-performing workforce) should collaborate to develop and implement a national strategy.

- Living off wealth, supported by a partner, career break etc. (nearly 1 million)

Government should instigate a wide ranging and pioneering programme of social policy initiatives to drive community cohesion. A fundamental foundation of such a strategy, and one which will also increase the available workforce is the ability to speak English of all non-UK born nationals who have been given permanent leave to remain; those seeking residency and those EU nationals with pre-settled status. Funded ESOL courses should be available for all those who need them.

### 7.3.3. Reduce underemployment and increase hours worked

- Government should research why the UK has one of the highest rates of underemployment in the EU28 with around 1 in 5 people working in elementary occupations underemployed. From this, government should develop, consult on and implement a range of strategies to reduce this underemployment.
- Government should accelerate the rollout of the Universal Credit and ensure that the benefits system rewards rather than discourages those who work extra hours. Increased work undertaken should mean increased pay.

- Government should implement a work tax and national insurance strategy which:
  - does not disincentivise businesses from providing full time work. It is cheaper for businesses to employ part time workers due to the employers' thresholds.
  - does not disincentivise workers. Currently, due to the NI free limit, workers can work full time for around half the year at the national living wage rate without incurring any national insurance costs. Hitting the threshold acts as a catalyst for a proportion of workers to cease working and return to their home countries.

#### 7.3.4. Regularisation of UK resident undocumented nationals

The September 2020 [Public Accounts Committee report on Immigration Enforcement](#) headlines that *“Despite years of public and political debate and concern, the Department still does not know the size of the illegal population in the UK. It does not know what harm the illegal population causes. It does not know how many people come to the UK legally and do not renew their visa, or how many deliberately come illegally. The Home Office has not estimated the illegal population in the UK since 2005.”*

London School of Economics research put the size of the illegal population in the UK at the end of 2007 at 618,000, with a range of 417,000-863,000. A June 2017 Civitas report, [The Politics of Fantasy](#), authored by a previous Deputy CEO of the UK Borders Agency and Director General of Immigration Enforcement estimates that 150,000 additional illegal migrants enter the UK each year. Around 10,000 people each year are returned from the UK to another country.

Whilst many countries have minimum rights for undocumented workers such as to be paid the minimum wage for all hours worked, in the UK such workers have virtually no employment protection rights and consequently are vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery.

Currently there is a policy vacuum on the “*illegal population*” and this should be addressed.

- Government should develop a balanced strategy and policies to regularise and enable access to work for a proportion of those individuals that have entered or remained in the UK without the legal right to do so and for whom there is no reasonable prospect of agreed deportation.
- Asylum Seekers are not permitted to work in the UK. They can only apply for permission to fill a shortage vacancy if they have been waiting for over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim. [Lift the Ban](#) is a multi-stakeholder campaign to give people seeking asylum the right to work. Government should provide refugees and asylum seekers with a route to work legally.

**This is the end of the evidence submission**

## Introduction

The [Association of Labour Providers](#) (ALP) has conducted separate surveys of labour providers and of food growers & manufacturers since 2016 to provide data and trends to inform access to labour policy and priorities for the UK food supply chain.

Both surveys ran between 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The Labour Provider Survey had 129 responses and the UK Food Supply Chain had 192 responses.

These are the first surveys run since the end of the grace period on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and the end of free movement for workers from the EEA. The responses reflect the challenges this and the coronavirus pandemic has created, and the impact on the economy and the labour market.

## Headlines

- Current chronic food industry labour shortages are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.
- Over half of food growers and manufacturers report that they are reducing or rationalising their output due to labour shortages in the next three months.
- The majority of food growers, manufacturers and labour providers are calling for a visa system for essential lower skilled food supply chain workers.
- There is a fourfold increase in the number of food growers and manufacturers concerned they may become unviable
- Significant numbers of labour providers report Jobcentres and government employment support schemes are not supporting workers into work.
- Labour shortages have impacted almost all labour providers and a growing number are concerned about survival.

## Respondent Comments

Labour Providers

*".... Over the last 18 months we have undertaken over 40 tender processes - all boil down to lowest price. This cultural mindset needs to shift because lowest price does not result in best service.....workforce now is in such short supply, agencies and candidates will choose who they want to work for, leaving organisations fixated on lowest price behind....."*

*"....Ending freedom of movement has shown us that low or unskilled vacancies cannot be filled with home grown UK labour. There are not the volume of applicants to cover the number of vacancies....."*

*"....Incentivise people to work and reduce the UK spend on benefits and social support. Match unemployed proactively with open job opportunities across the UK marketplace..."*

Food Growers and Manufacturers

*"....Right now we are in a crisis situation, running a vacancy rate of 15-20% across our sites. This is despite recent investments in wages, staff facilities & staff retention. It is limiting our ability to supply fresh, healthy British food to UK consumers....."*

*"....The Seasonal Worker pilot scheme needs to be confirmed for 2022, without it our business will not be viable. We are already in crisis mode...."*

*".....The food industry in the UK is in crisis because of the severe shortage of staff to pick and pack food. Added to this is the crisis with the hauliers. Short term visas are not the answer because we need staff to stay long term. We need access to a labour force that want to come to the UK and make it their home...."*

## Labour Provider Survey Summary

### 2021 Experience

- 2021 has been a year of growing crisis for labour supply. 99% were unable to meet all their clients' labour requirements during summer 2021 while 31% said they had short supplied their clients by over 50%.
- 89% report that clients have had to increase wage rates yet 81% said that the quality of labour (English language, productivity, reliability etc) was down on last year
- 91% have had to invest more money and resources into sourcing workers but only 37% have been able to pass on the increased costs of recruiting and supplying labour to their clients.
- 57% are consolidating their client base and choosing carefully who to supply
- 88% said that the labour shortages were having a significant or major impact on their business with 12% saying they may not survive

### Immigration System

- Only 25% were seeing a lot more applications from UK resident workers
- 79% said without a lower skilled immigration route the food supply chain would not have enough workers and would contract, close or relocate overseas

### Government support

- Of those that have sought to work with their local Jobcentre, 86% found the Jobcentre of no help in finding workers
- Only 3% of labour providers find government employment support schemes helpful in supporting workers into work. 34% find them of limited use and 63% find them of no use.

### 2021 Autumn and Christmas Expectations

- 91% do not expect to meet client demands for the 2021 autumn and Christmas periods
- 47% expect to short supply their customers by over 50%

## Food Growers and Manufacturers Survey Summary

### 2021 Experience

- Around 85% of businesses experienced shortages of lower and unskilled workers
- Around 65% of businesses stated they had experienced chronic shortages of lower and unskilled workers.
- The chronic shortages increased at all skill levels but were four times as high in lower and unskilled roles as they were in higher skilled roles

### Government support

- 94% of businesses want a temporary/seasonal/guest worker visa route to be introduced
- 92% of businesses want UK residents to be encouraged to take up jobs within the food sector
- 92% of businesses want to be able to use the apprenticeship levy more flexibly for training
- 87% of businesses want the benefit system to support flexible working
- 82% of businesses want asylum seekers to have the right to work whilst their application is being processed

### 2021 Autumn and Christmas Expectations

- Around 74% expect their own business to struggle or be in crisis recruiting for lower skilled permanent or temporary workers
- 16% of businesses said that they are concerned that they will become unviable due to labour shortages - a fourfold increase since May 2021
- Nearly 97% said that the food supply chain will need to make changes to their business in order to address the forecasted labour shortages
- 66% of businesses have increased wage rates, bonuses, benefits and incentives to secure labour
- The most common actions businesses will take to address labour shortages are:
  - Rationalise/reduce our output (52%)
  - Automate to reduce the reliance on skills and labour (45%)
  - Increase proportion of permanent workforce and use less agency labour (38%)
  - Use more agency labour (37%)
- Most common changes expected to be made to address forecasted labour shortages:
  - Increase wage rates, bonuses and incentives (66%)
  - Improve worker retention activities (66%)
  - Working more closely with labour provider (59%)
  - Improve labour sourcing methods (54%)

## Labour Providers October 2021 Survey Results

A total of 129 labour providers completed this survey, slightly more than the May 2021 survey. 40% supply workers to horticulture & agriculture, 86% to food processing & packing and 64% to food distribution & logistics.

Labour Providers: During the 2021 summer peak, did you meet your clients demands for workers?	Nov 2020	May 2021	Oct 2021
We have met all our clients demand	23%	21%	1%
We have short supplied our clients by 0-10% of their demand	11%	15%	1%
We have short supplied our clients by 10-20% of their demand	22%	21%	9%
We have short supplied our clients by 20-30% of their demand	22%	20%	20%
We have short supplied our clients by 30-40% of their demand	9%	7%	25%
We have short supplied our clients by 40-50% of their demand	3%	4%	13%
We have short supplied our clients by over 50% of their demand	10%	12%	31%

Labour Providers: Has the quality of labour (English language, productivity, reliability etc) been:	Nov 2020	May 2021	Oct 2021
Better than this time last year	7%	1%	3%
About the same	45%	29%	16%
Down on this time last year	48%	70%	81%

Labour Providers: To source sufficient workers over the last 6 months:	Nov 2020	May 2021	Oct 2021
We have not had to do anything differently	12%	3%	2%
We have had to invest more money and resources into sourcing workers	77%	90%	91%

# ALP Food Supply Chain Labour Survey Results – October 2021

# ALP

Association of Labour Providers

<b>Clients have had to increase wage rates to attract workers</b>	45%	73%	89%
<b>Existing workers have had to work extra hours and overtime</b>	54%	61%	74%

**Labour Providers: Have you passed on the increased recruitment costs due to labour shortages to your clients?:** **Oct 2021**

<b>We have not had any increased costs</b>	3%
<b>We have not attempted to pass cost increases on to our clients</b>	18%
<b>We tried, but most clients have not covered our increased costs</b>	27%
<b>No, and clients have generally demanded rate reductions to support their own cost increases</b>	15%
<b>Yes, most of our clients have accepted a rate increase</b>	37%

**Labour Providers: How are labour supply issues affecting your business's ability to charge a commercially available charge rate to your clients?:** **Oct 2021**

<b>We have increased our margins across the board</b>	7%
<b>We have been able to increase margins at some clients</b>	50%
<b>We have not been able to increase our margins</b>	32%
<b>Our margins are reducing</b>	11%

**Labour Providers: What is the impact of labour shortages on your business?:** **Oct 2021**

<b>No impact – we are not suffering from labour shortages</b>	1%
<b>Minimal impact – we are working harder to keep our current clients happy</b>	11%
<b>Significant impact - we are consolidating our client base and choosing carefully who to supply</b>	57%

# ALP Food Supply Chain Labour Survey Results – October 2021

# ALP

Association of Labour Providers

<b>Significant impact - We are losing clients because we are unable to supply them, but will continue at a reduced scale</b>	19%
<b>Major impact – we are struggling to source and supply workers and don't know if we will survive</b>	12%

**Labour Providers: For the 2021 autumn and Christmas peaks, how much do you expect to short supply your clients? Oct 2021**

<b>We expect to short supply our clients by 0-10%</b>	0%
<b>We expect to short supply our clients by 10-20%</b>	8%
<b>We expect to short supply our clients by 20-30%</b>	11%
<b>We expect to short supply our clients by 30-40%</b>	19%
<b>We expect to short supply our clients by 40-50%</b>	14%
<b>We expect to short supply our clients by over 50%</b>	47%

**Labour Providers: For the autumn and Christmas peak in labour demand:**

	<b>Mar 2020</b>	<b>Nov 2020</b>	<b>May 2021</b>	<b>Oct 2021</b>
--	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

<b>We are confident we will have enough high quality workers</b>	10%	14%	3%	1%
<b>We expect to have just enough workers but the quality will not be so high</b>	56%	47%	19%	9%
<b>We do not expect to be able to source and supply sufficient workers</b>	29%	39%	78%	91%

**Labour Providers: What do you think will be the impact on the food supply chain of having no ongoing immigration route for lower-skilled workers? May 2021 Oct 2021**

<b>No real impact as there will be enough workers to meet the food supply chain's needs due to high unemployment levels and EU pre/settled status workers</b>	4%
<b>The food supply chain will need to improve pay and other terms and conditions to attract enough workers</b>	54%

<b>The food supply chain will need to improve its sourcing and retention strategies, be more open to attracting a wider range of workers and invest in training staff to attract and retain enough workers</b>	56%	53%
<b>The food supply chain will not have enough workers who want to fill these types of jobs and will contract, close or (where feasible) relocate overseas</b>	75%	79%

- Other – please describe**
- Never mind crippling inflation on FMCG
  - Imports will grow by 200%
  - The food supply chain already does not have enough workers. It needs to become more attractive as a workplace
  - Treat existing and new workers with respect. They are not ciphers they are human beings
  - We need to re-join the EU
  - The labour pool is diminishing. Wage inflation and shortages of staff are inevitable
  - To look at automating the food process as much as possible which obviously will require a lot of funding

<b>Labour Providers: How would you rate your local Jobcentre?</b>	<b>Oct 2021</b>
<b>We have never or not recently worked with our local Jobcentre</b>	21%
<b>We tried to work with our local Jobcentre but they were of no help</b>	68%
<b>We work with our local Jobcentre and they provide useful support</b>	11%

- Please provide further details**
- I'm always ringing to tell them we are recruiting but they never ring me
  - They were of help to an extent in that they tried to provide workers but they were not satisfactory
  - People from the Jobcentre looking for work only want to tick the box on the benefit/universal credit form. They don't ever turn up to work. They're a waste of my time attempting to recruit.
  - They try, but they can't drag people in to register. That said, we have tried Jobcentres for older workers - they tend to use them, as opposed to agencies.
  - No help whatsoever
  - Too bogged down with political status issues and not on the sharp of end of getting people in to work
  - Very low quality of referrals
  - Honestly impossible to deal with, no engagement or return of calls/outreach attempts.
  - Don't understand skills required for the sector

- The downside with the Jobcentres is that they are trying to get the long term unemployed into work as opposed to the recently unemployed.
- Our experiences show that Jobcentre applicants are not serious or committed to any job application.
- The JCP is not fit for purpose at all
- They aren't getting registrations from people with relevant skills in the sectors required
- Anyone who wants work is in work. Jobcentres largely represent people who are not #workready and who have not been for a long time
- We do work with our centres - they are helpful, however their candidates are not interested in our roles.
- In the past, our experience of recruiting from the Jobcentre has been dreadful.
- Our experience varies dependant on geography. Some are very useful and some no help
- Jobcentre is a hub for those who don't want to work but must be seen as trying. We locally recruit with social media posters and employ a person to work Indeed and other platforms to very little success but more than we do with the Jobcentre sadly . Kickstart has also been of no help to date and this is with starting hourly rates of £11-£13.50 per hour
- Historically we have found the Jobcentre to be of little help and difficult to contact. In the past we have found that generally speaking they just don't have enough candidates who are interested in the job roles we recruit for.
- People in the Jobcentre are not motivated to start work
- Useless
- We work in 4 local Jobcentres and they are not allowed to sanction no shows still, and are being threatened by some job seekers which I have seen first hand

## Labour Providers: What is your experience of government employment support schemes?

Oct 2021

<b>We find them of no use in supporting workers into work</b>	63%
<b>We find them of limited use in supporting workers into work</b>	34%
<b>We work closely with government employment support schemes and find them helpful</b>	3%

## If you work with a scheme(s) which do you find helpful and why?

- Another tick in the box, ill-conceived and thought out ideologies
- Too many hurdles and caveats in them to actually work. The government need to stop listening to civil servants and listen instead to the "Coal Face"
- We haven't yet leveraged any significant activity
- Due to agriculture wages board we find it harder to attract government funding-Kickstart etc
- No success from any of these schemes to date

- Kickstart - gave us a range of candidates
- Kickstart - got rejected for no reason then applied again 6 months later then accepted - provided no useful candidates so advertised for NMW worker and hired on our own
- The Kickstart scheme has been helpful for some roles but not particularly in this sector
- Useless

**Labour Providers: Are you seeing a change in the types of workers applying for jobs? Oct 2021**

<b>No change – same as before, mostly EU workers</b>	30%
<b>Some changes – similar but with a few more UK resident workers</b>	45%
<b>Very different – a lot more UK resident workers, many new to the sector</b>	25%

**Labour Providers: Other than introducing a low skilled immigration route, what should the government be doing to help the food supply chain to address labour shortages? Oct 2021**

**Immigration**

- Reverse the rules regarding the freedom of movement with EU workers
- There is no other way
- It's not low skilled, it's SEASONAL
- All they need to do is re-open the borders and that will resolve the issue.
- Allow foreign workers to come across as before – pre-Brexit. My business and many others are suffering because of this. Production costs are increasing but the price of food isn't, the farmers aren't making the money from food production. I hope there is a food shortage to make the government realise what a disaster nationally this is. It's not just food production taking the hit either.
- I believe that the government should relax the border rules and let more EU workers back into the UK
- Grant licenses to more labour providers to source their own labour from abroad
- Enable workers to enter the UK for all types of workers where there are shortages, maybe on a limited visa?
- As industry has been working with overseas workforces for 30-years now, the interest in these types of work are not of interest to the UK population. We do not encourage people to do manual labour anymore and it is a direct effect to the situation we are in. The institution is geared to upskill everyone and this means ignoring the very important elements that we need for everyday life. What we need to is rethink the whole structure. In short we won't replace 500,000 people from this industry area(s) in the next 10-year unless the ability to have gradual change is the preferred options!

- I think the immigration route is the key as the role is not attractive enough for UK nationals to take up one
- We need the low skilled immigration route or the government need to look at the benefit system and getting people back in to work!
- Re-join the EU
- Ending freedom of movement has shown us that low or unskilled vacancies cannot be filled with home grown UK labour. There are not the volume of applicants to cover the number of vacancies and the attitude and work ethic is sorely lacking.
- Increase the length of visa schemes
- Unless they open the doors to the EU government have always proven useless so nothing else will be sufficient.
- Allow 2 year worker visas worldwide. No benefit entitlements, need to renew before 2 years have finished, only if they are working
- Immigration is the overriding factor however there needs to be a minimum margin for supply that is regulated and therefore no supplier can go under this. Our costs are spiralling out of control including the salaries of our perm staff making supply unsustainable.
- I feel that I am speaking on behalf of most labour suppliers in saying that we heading towards a very difficult winter for both labour suppliers and users. At this stage the only option that will help labour shortages within the food supply chain is an entry route for low skilled immigration. I do feel that lobbying or campaigning for anything other than this is a complete waste of time for all parties.
- Re-join the EU and provide freedom of movement
- 1 or 2 year working student visas
- The government should be offering 6 months on arrival visas to Europeans to work and visit with no access to public funds, and must have health insurance and to leave the UK within 6 months before the visa expires and update the again on re-entry.
- There is no other sustainable solution but to introduce a low skilled immigration route for a minimum of 6 months at each visit.
- Provide a working visa to new recruits to allow them to enter the UK with an offer of permanent employment, when an employer has vacancies and posted them through DWP consistently with no recruitment success No social security access until visa employees have been working in the UK for a minimum of 2 years Have an insurance scheme in place with employers to ensure health care costs are met for new overseas employees
- As far as I am concerned there is nothing else the Government can do that will be really effective.
- Just by introducing a low skilled immigration route would help.
- Relax the immigration visa

## **Unemployment**

- Scrap the benefits, offer more support to employed people!
- Supporting the supply chain, starting with getting people back into work that are capable of working even if it's temporary. A lot of Jobcentre's do not actually push temporary work
- Stop supporting people on benefits and invest these money in our children, sport, apprenticeship, help elderly to pay for care, help young families

- Identify the unemployed who are actually keen and able to work and remove the others from the stats.
- It needs to be more attractive to workers - better pay, better hours/shifts, development/progression opportunity, innovate/automate
- They should offer incentives for people going back to work part-time for those with families, say if they work 3 days the government could offer a higher amount of financial support.
- Stop benefits and get those able to work into the sectors that are struggling
- They need a reality check! The furloughed workers that are back in the workforce are unlikely to want to work in these sectors however perhaps the benefits system needs to be looked at to encourage people to work?
- Revamp the UK benefit system to encourage the resident workforce to work in the food sectors, better pay and conditions that offer a better standard of living for those willing to work.
- Stop giving too much benefit
- Encourage individuals receiving benefits to work, however managing individuals not really interested in work will create new and different issues.
- Changing the benefit system, some have no intention of working due to the Universal Credit scheme they can earn more than they can on a decent paid 40 hours per week job. They also need to invest more in training, the Kickstart scheme was a joke.
- Restructure the benefits system to encourage more people to apply for alternative work to their norm, even if not in their chosen sector. If needs be, where pay rates are less than their usual work, benefits to be added to 'top up' wages to their normal pay rate (with an upper, sensible limit). Topping up will be cheaper than paying a full benefit claim, the person will be earning and therefore paying tax & national insurance rather than simply being a drain on the tax payer, will be productive and contributing, be filling a vacancy and helping the economy and will be #workready for more work rather than get out of the habit of working and possible mental health issues
- Incentivise people to work and reduce the UK spend on benefits and social support. Match unemployed proactively with open job opportunities across the UK marketplace
- Amending unemployment benefit to allow ability to work seasonally.
- Incentivise people currently on benefits to work. Penalise them if they commit to a job then don't turn up or stick it out.
- Cut benefits
- Stop benefits to the job seekers that do not show for appointments or work
- Pushing unemployed into more low grade roles
- Very little candidates coming looking for work. No English labour. Return to work scheme useless and none of the candidates who receive benefits are prepared to work in factories.
- Encourage training schemes for UK workers
- Reduce benefits for the fit and healthy . Run back to work programs fully funded with local companies with the aim of full time employment after 4 weeks . this will encourage companies to use schemes
- Encourage unemployed to work, allow seasonal worker visa for food production and packing

- Well , healthy people on benefits to fill gap . Gov to set higher min wage for industry and force factories to have set start / finish times with a percentage being family friendly ie- school hours . Many of these jobs are rural where house prices are expensive ; improve public transport or offer financial assistants towards cost of transport

## Worker attraction

- Make the positions more attractive. Looking at increasing the pay and conditions. Review working patterns and conditions
- Pay increases, this is one of the lowest paid market areas
- Look to try and make 'the next stage' more attractive - make the industry more appealing by adding genuine promotion opportunities.
- Encouraging more young people to get into food supply chains and explaining better how starting at a lower level / lower paid job role can lead to greater opportunities. Many of the senior managers we work with started out on a production line.
- Ensure factories are offering a good working environment, salary is often very low within the food supply chain sector for low skilled workers so improvements need to be made both on wages but also incentives to stay long term. Better working hours.
- Re-train staff from other industries particularly those who have been on furlough. Lots of workers available who because been on benefits due to furlough and not working due to Covid need forced to work.

## Supply chain

- Nothing. It is for business to sought this out. The government's strategy is clear. Accept it and get on with it.
- Prices will have to increase for the ultimate product. Margins are too tight to support the risk taken on my primary production.
- Punish or regulate better supermarket giants for their underhanded profiteering and the way they treat all supply chain suppliers
- The government should help farmers and the food supply chain by making sure the supermarkets pay a higher and fairer rate for their produce. This money should then filter down to the workers, to allow the hourly rate to be competitive, in an attempt to entice further workers to the industry.

## Miscellaneous

- Grants to help cover increased cost of staffing
- Working directly with businesses and cutting out local council who make process harder when trying to attract young people
- Engage more with recruiters to understand the trends and challenges.
- Work with businesses to ensure they understand the situation with regards to short supply of staff, unbelievably some clients whilst unable to recruit their own staff DEMAND us to find workers for them!
- Help get those people jobs who are unskilled
- They need to start listening, ignorance is not bliss.
- Funding for training and increased wages
- The government could also help the smaller agencies that are trying to source workers and supply the food chain industries, with possible grants of around 10k a year. The labour

providers are expected to take the lack of staff due to Brexit on the chin. In reality, we are all struggling to source workers and need help and time to adjust.

- Reduce or remove tax on labour supply or at least a break. Remove the apprenticeship levy that is an unwanted and unused tax in the unskilled sector
- Automate the businesses
- Allow agencies to use the apprenticeship levy for upskilling current workers - FLT / HGV / I still find it outrageous that temp payroll is included in qualifying but you can't use it on temps - failing that remove the temp payroll from the qualifying criteria and we would then have more money to invest in this training ourselves

**Labour Providers: Are there any other comments that you would like to add:**

**Oct 2021**

- Pray!
- I find the ALP very supportive and feel they have their finger on the pulse in all necessary areas
- Persuade the government to allow EU workers to come across. Cut benefits so English HAVE to find a job and go to work regularly.
- Keep providing the stats - be even more vocal and yank some chains through lobbying and challenging the Govt and related weak and disorganised bodies - like the GLAA . Force the Govt reps out of their seats, by asking questions they can't ignore. What's to lose now?
- Offer more employment support routes and advertise companies that can support through means of media
- Continue to lobby the government to introduce a sensible immigration system based on reality rather than a 'high skill, high wage' delusion.
- Put more pressure on the government to allow unskilled workers to come, work and pay their tax. They have done nothing wrong by working hard, paying tax and going home to their families.
- Lobby government to allow labour providers more access to foreign labour
- Get LP's together to fight the inequity and probable illegality of the SAWS scheme
- Look at the membership costs and create a cheaper one for companies in difficulty, maybe at a reduced level of service/information. I am no longer a member as I cannot afford to be, but some information on the site might be useful to help us stabilize again.
- Start looking after the labour providers better by stronger lobbying into government and meaningful dialogue on our behalf. A good start would be to get ministers or secretaries from government departments to meet the front line and listen properly to what happens in reality not the political rhetoric we have all the time.
- Data and pressure on the government which I know you already do.
- Facilitate conversation between food production organisations and responsible labour providers. Over the last 18 months we have undertaken over 40 tender processes - all boil down to lowest price. This cultural mindset needs to shift because lowest price does not result in best service. And the candidate workforce now is in such short supply, agencies and

candidates will choose who they want to work for, leaving organisations fixated on lowest price behind.

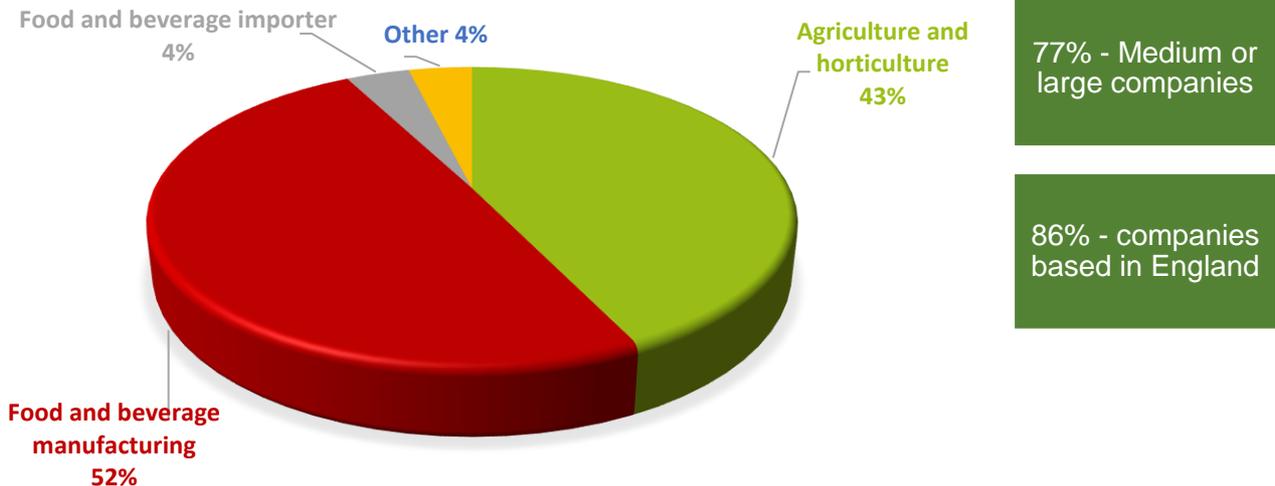
- Continue to lobby the supermarkets etc to push government to look at relaxing immigration rules
- A more balanced outlook. Industry have brought a lot of the problems on themselves by failing to plan for change and blame the government. For many industries there are solutions out there but they cost money and take time to implement.
- Just keep pushing the voice of business, we need support more than ever before and government just don't seem to be listening!
- Don't just concentrate on the GLAA market there are many other major labour shortages in other industries from logistics to print
- Very happy with the support we are getting. The issue is more around candidate availability and reliability
- Unless you can rustle up a lot of willing workers which I know is impossible I think that you are doing everything that you can. Thank you for your support.
- Continue doing what you do.
- Keep up the surveys and discussion with relevant government departments.
- Hold a conference with the government and food manufactures that is televised/ highly publicised so that the general public can see what a shambles has been made of the labour market and hopefully shame the government into taking some positive decisive action instead of the "you voted for it so you have got to make the best of it" attitude they currently endorse.
- Keep pressing on the government to act before it's too late. If something is not done within the next two weeks, it will be too late and the damage might be irreparable.
- Keep banging the drum...
- Push harder on UK GOV to act now
- Enforce minimum margins to suppliers from the supermarkets into manufacturers and in turn have a minimum margin for supply of agency staff written in law! We are treated as a hindrance and a necessary evil, despite working tirelessly to support our clients.
- Advise farmers to increase the percentage rates. They are lower now than ten years ago
- Lobby harder for an immigration route open to low wage workers where the key shortages are.
- Continue to make as much noise as possible but unlikely to gain any traction with the deaf ears in Government
- Great opportunity to get UK staff trained but need training providers and testing for certificates to be significantly fast tracked - current system too slow and not fit for purpose
- Create forums to industrial food agency users to EDUCATE them. Now more than ever our relationship should be a priority to supply. We are not non-profit organisations or charities!
- Surveys are great! I wonder who this information is presented to other than ALP members?
- More help and support on training and young UK workers, there is a lot of focus on immigration and foreign help but we have a huge number of 16-21 year olds unemployed
- Revert Brexit!!!!
- The ALP could give free membership or part membership(access to the webinars on playback) for LP's and LU's in the food industry that are under a certain turnover, for example 350k a

year. The ALP do a fantastic job but times are hard right now and many of us don't have the extra funds available for membership. The cost is now being used to advertise and source for workers.

- Nothing that it is not already doing.
- Nothing can really be done.
- Continue the hard work but look at more support for the labour provider and systems we can improve on instead of workers' rights as we should be the people managing this and if not we should not be licenced
- We are starting to hear about larger agencies utilising LTD contractor HGV drivers again (as well as some small ones). This obviously helps them keep a lower charge in place. XXX took a decision before April 2021 to disengage with LTD contractor drivers. It seems larger agencies are taking a stance that outside IR35 determinations for HGV drivers are justified in a large part due to mutuality of obligation and right to replace clauses. Whilst I know the ALP cannot offer specific legal advice regards to status determinations I wondered if the ALP could lobby the Govt for much clearer guidance as to whether or not a HGV driver can be a LTD contractor via a temp agency as we are scared to go back to LTD drivers but do see the benefits (to driver and end hirer) of doing so.
- Push GLAA and government to create new Min wage for industry including set basis overtime premiums that must be payable from day 1 not just after 12 weeks .
- Provide weekly updates zoom from here on regarding Xmas routes for labour to ensure we are all up to date on government comms and changes expected or made. Thanks
- News coverage
- Help us find labour?
- What can the ALP do to support our business. Can they help the DWP stop the benefits to no shows? Can we introduce a payment from a worker for not showing for work?

## UK Food Supply Chain Summary of October 2021 Results

A total of 192 companies completed this survey, more than double the numbers that completed the survey in May 2021.



### Food Growers and Manufacturers: What size (at peak) is the site you are answering these questions about?

	Nov 2020	May 2021	Oct 2021
Micro business (0-9 full time equivalent FTE employees)	3%	2%	4%
Small business (10 – 49 FTE employees)	15%	15%	18%
Medium business (50-249 FTE employees)	45%	44%	44%
Large business (250 + FTE employees)	36%	39%	33%

### Food Growers and Manufacturers: Where is the site?

	Nov 2020	May 2021	Oct 2021
North West	10%	6%	6%
North East	1%	1%	2%
Yorkshire and Humberside	7%	10%	9%
East Midlands	11%	12%	9%
West Midlands	14%	9%	13%
East of England	16%	16%	21%
South West	5%	6%	5%
South East	17%	20%	15%
London	3%	2%	2%
Northern Ireland	1%	3%	4%
Scotland	12%	11%	12%
Wales	1%	3%	2%

# ALP Food Supply Chain Labour Survey Results – October 2021

# ALP

Association of Labour Providers

**Food Growers and Manufacturers: Which recruitment methods do you use to source your temporary and/or seasonal workers (tick all that apply)?**

**Nov 2020      May 2021      Oct 2021**

<b>Labour provider – temporary agency worker supply model</b>	62%	69%	68%
<b>Direct recruitment</b>	64%	59%	77%
<b>Labour provider – recruitment only/direct employment model</b>	50%	51%	56%
<b>No need</b>	2%	19%	24%

**Food Growers and Manufacturers: Throughout the last 6 months, how was your site with regards to availability of labour of the following types of labour/skill level?**

	Did not Recruit	Fine, No problems	Just Ok	Intermittent Shortages	Chronic Shortages
<b>Highly-skilled: Degree level and above e.g. Engineers, Directors etc. (RQF 6 and above)</b>	41%	14%	16%	13%	15%
<b>Skilled: Requiring a degree &amp; experience e.g. Production /Operations/HR Managers, (RQF 6)</b>	33%	16%	20%	20%	11%
<b>Semi-skilled: Requiring experience &amp; training e.g. Skilled trades (RQF 3-4)</b>	24%	5%	14%	34%	23%
<b>Lower-skilled Permanent: Requiring some training/ experience e.g. Process operative, skilled field worker (RQF 2)</b>	9%	1%	8%	26%	56%
<b>Lower skilled temporary / agency / seasonal</b>	6%	0.5%	6%	20%	67%
<b>Unskilled: Requiring minimal training /experience, e.g. Elementary roles, picking, packing etc. (below RQF 2)</b>	3%	2%	8%	16%	72%
<b>Unskilled temporary/agency/seasonal</b>	8%	1%	6%	15%	70%
<b>Got Significantly Worse*</b>	<b>Got Worse</b>		<b>Stayed the Same</b>		<b>Got Better</b>

(\*Large increase)

## Food Growers and Manufacturers: What actions do you think the government should take to address labour shortages?

	Strongly Support	Support	Against	Strongly Against
<b>Introduce a temporary/seasonal/guest workers' route</b>	70%	24%	4%	2%
<b>Allow asylum seekers the right to work whilst their application is processed</b>	41%	41%	13%	5%
<b>Allow undocumented workers (those present in UK, but without the legal right to work) to work with limited rights in essential industries</b>	27%	27%	25%	20%
<b>Encourage UK residents to take up jobs within the food sector</b>	57%	35%	4%	4%
<b>Allow apprenticeship levy funds to be used for more flexible types of training across the sector</b>	49%	43%	7%	1%
<b>Ensure that the benefits system supports flexible working</b>	46%	41%	11%	3%

## Food Growers and Manufacturers: Over the forthcoming autumn and Christmas peaks how do you foresee the position of your site with regards to recruiting the following types of lower skilled labour/skill level.

	We will be fine	We should be just Ok	We will struggle	It will be a crisis
<b>Lower-skilled Permanent: Requiring some training/experience e.g. Process operative, skilled field worker (RQF 2)</b>	12%	18%	43%	27%
<b>Lower skilled temporary/agency/seasonal</b>	9%	16%	41%	35%
<b>Unskilled: Requiring minimal training/experience, e.g. Elementary roles, picking, packing etc. (below RQF 2)</b>	9%	15%	43%	33%
<b>Unskilled temporary/agency/seasonal</b>	10%	18%	39%	34%
<b>Got Significantly Worse*</b>	<b>Got Worse</b>		<b>Stayed the Same</b>	<b>Got Better</b>

(\*Large increase)

# ALP Food Supply Chain Labour Survey Results – October 2021

# ALP

Association of Labour Providers

<b>Food Growers and Manufacturers: Over the next 6 months, what changes do you expect to make to address any skills and labour shortages?</b>	<b>Nov 2020</b>	<b>May 2021</b>	<b>Oct 2021</b>
Increased wage rates, bonuses and incentives	34%	44%	66%
Improve worker retention activities	50%	52%	66%
Working more closely with labour provider	61%	66%	59%
Improve worker sourcing methods	49%	49%	54%
Focus on being a better place to work	45%	58%	52%
Improve labour planning	58%	56%	49%
Increased hours and overtime of current workers	29%	18%	46%
Focus on UK resident recruitment			41%
Access harder to reach groups in the local labour market	29%	36%	37%
Introduced guaranteed hours for agency workers	14%	17%	24%
Paid for/subsidised daily travel to work	6%	11%	16%
Improve standard of existing accommodation	19%	21%	14%
Paid for/subsidised travel to UK			12%
Provide new accommodation			10%
No action – do not expect shortages	7%	10%	3%

<b>Food Growers/Manufacturers: Over the next 3 months, how is your business planning to respond to forecasted labour shortages (choose all that apply)</b>	<b>Oct 2021</b>
Rationalise/reduce our output	52%
Automate to reduce reliance on skills and labour	45%
Increase proportion of permanent workforce and use less agency labour	38%
Use more agency labour to meet the shortfall	37%
Our business is likely to become unviable	16%
Move part of our growing/production overseas	13%
No impact expected	10%
Move all of our growing/production overseas	1%

**Food Growers and Manufacturers: What extra costs has your business experienced because of labour shortages?** **Oct 2021**

- Increased recruitment costs, new advertising channels, higher base rates, increased overtime costs, increased spend on retention activity e.g. improved staff facilities, opening of staff shop, free breakfasts, new staff canteen, free buses for travel to work retention bonuses, increased waste as unable to run at full capacity, plus inflation costs in produce, transport and accommodation

## Food Growers and Manufacturers: Are there any other comments that you would like to add:

Oct 2021

- The Seasonal Worker pilot scheme needs to be confirmed for 2022, without it our business will not be viable. We are already in crisis mode.
- As a business we have found the past 6 months to be very difficult, we have 3 seasonal periods where we would normally take in about 80 low skilled agency staff, the latest season we managed to get 12!! the agency we use just couldn't get the staff from the local area and due to the required people being low skilled the normal Eastern European staff didn't meet the required criteria for a seasonal visa. The government must expand the T5 seasonal visa to include more industries not just fruit pickers, we have tried to attract local people to come and work for us but unfortunately there are a proportion of them that don't want to work as they get given enough money and benefits from the government to stay at home!! until that system changes that situation won't change.
- EU seasonal workers have to be allowed to work in UK farming sector without any visa.
- Need visas very quickly
- Because we have a lack of staff - others are willing to do more overtime - we do not make it compulsory, but I am worried about burning staff out due to the shortages. Unfortunately you cannot stop fruit ripening to give everyone a day off or a break.
- As a company we are committed to investment in technology. We have very high levels of automation across our sites including robotic pickers, fully automated warehouses and ERP systems. Across our UK sites we have an ambitious 2-year, £70 million investment plan to further automate our production, improve efficiencies across our production lines and enhance staff facilities. However, this innovation pipeline works on a medium-term timeframe, and as such we do still have a need for staff on the factory floor. Right now we are in a crisis situation, running a vacancy rate of 15-20% across our sites. This is despite recent investments in wages, staff facilities & staff retention. It is limiting our ability to supply fresh, healthy British food to UK consumers. Without urgent intervention and access to a wider labour pool we will be unable to meet the requirements of UK consumers for fresh British food this Christmas.
- Labour shortage is not a new thing in the food industry. It is stigmatized and organizations have to work hard to help people develop pride in work in such important sector. Society put various sportsmen and women, wealthy individuals and celebrities on the pedestal and general public aspires to such positions, not to work in this important industry. This is not new and this will not easily change
- Something needs to be done to encourage those unemployed and on benefits to actually make the effort to work. European barriers of workforce need to be reviewed to allow more workers to come from abroad
- The cost and availability of labour is putting our business at serious risk
- We are at crisis levels for workers our order book is full, full, full and we can't produce the sales for lack of labour in the work place. Unfortunately in the food industry we have relied on minimum wage migrant labour for the last 20 years as the end user both retail and foodservice have not allowed the luxury of paying people higher wages thus keeping price inflation extremely low. Going forwards if higher wages are to be paid then this must flow through to the end consumer. My belief currently is that there are not the people in the system to work so even considering paying higher rates won't have an effect if you can't get people into the factories in the first instance.

- There is no answer we can give to Question 8 as we cannot afford anything that involves spending extra money - our margins are so low.
- The impact of labour shortages will lead to more illegal gangmasters being active within agriculture and food manufacturing. The government keeps saying that "we should pay more" so we attract more British workers in to the industry. That statement alone goes to show how out of touch this government is with its electorate at the moment. Do they not realise that we are already paying more, in less than 9 months the NMW/NLW has become redundant, market forces are driving up the wage rates, if you want to attract and/or retain workers you have to pay more. I have seen Broccoli harvest jobs advertised at £30 per hour, most factory jobs are now £9.50 - £12.50 and yet the British workers are still not applying for the work.
- Promptly require government support to ease labour challenges
- The mass exodus of EU workers has caused a chronic staffing issue
- It's very hard to understand why there are predictions about high unemployment after the end of furlough, given the availability of so many jobs. There needs to be a joined up strategy that recognises that we have turned off the supply of labour from Europe, therefore continuing to pay the same rates of unemployment benefit as before Brexit makes no sense. Employers in this sector don't work on high margins so simply increasing rates of pay again and again is not sustainable.
- We are fully utilising all possible recruitment sourcing channels to attract UK based labour, however we are finding there is a reluctance to work in the meat sector.
- SAWS workers were a huge important impact on our recruitment due to the lack of settled and pre-settled workers who returned along with the MASSIVE lack of British workers applying to work in agriculture. We have very few applicants from British citizens every year probably due to the seasonality of our work and difficult weather conditions. We do not know why British workers don't want to work on farms as they can earn good money, however, this has been the case for decades. The UK government expects us to employ the unemployed, however, the British unemployed are very reluctant to give up benefits for a short time do take on a seasonal job that is outdoors in all weather conditions. We have very little unemployment in our local area, therefore we would never fill a quarter of the seasonal jobs in our local area. We are constantly told to pay higher wages, however, many of our workers earn way above the minimum wage due to bonuses for over achieving targets. This is hard manual work often back bending in strawberry fields which the Brits do not see as attractive. We also have an issue with public transport for locals taking on work with us as we start picking at 4am in the morning, there is not a public transport service available to these potential British workers.
- We desperately require access to labour across borders. It is no good the government saying that industry needs to pay more - in the end we will have to relocate abroad and that will cost UK jobs and tax revenues.
- As an importer of a certain fresh product we tend to be quiet during the summer. Our business starts to ramp up from October through to June. We started to look for key permanent staff/ fixed term staff during August to replace people we lost during the summer (got other jobs) and to have them in place and trained for the next busy season. This is proving to be very challenging. We have also been in discussion with our temporary labour suppliers and they all tell us there is an acute shortage of staff for packing and warehouse jobs in our sector. Our industry is in competition with some major businesses that have a higher attraction. The knock on effect is to look at pay rates which is fine if this can be negotiated with selling prices, which will ultimately result in higher food costs and the cycle starts again. We find people are just not keen to work in this industry. We are looking at, and have been over the last couple of years

certain automation options, which can be costly. However some of our tasks can only be done by hand.

- We aren't using agency to fill gap as they have no staff availability either. In total we are approx 35% down on required labour numbers and expect this to impact on our ability to supply customer demand for Christmas products (most financially important season of year). Labour shortages are exacerbated by chronic delays in packaging (especially cartonboard) and raw material supplies meaning due to late delivery we are unable to get ahead before the Christmas peak. Haulier issues mean that some customers have not had any deliveries for over 1 week as the haulier went into administration and no alternatives can be sourced
- Our recruitment team has gone from 0 to 5 people. This is not viable and something needs to be done to address the shortages in the industry. As a business we cannot continue to sustain this
- The government must act now to have even a small chance of making an impact by Christmas 2021
- The real issue at play here is that retailers have been allowed too much market share, effectively leaving a fragmented supply base. Part of the labour issue is low pay, but as farmers, we are restricted on how much we can pay before our business becomes unviable due to artificially low prices paid by retailers. If prices could increase, so too pay, and this would encourage more domestic workers. Whilst cheap food may be a vote winner for parliament, the current state of affairs is leaving agricultural businesses fighting for survival, and with importation of food slower and more costly this seems a very dangerous and irresponsible way to handle the nation's food supply.
- We have already chosen to not plant part of our growing area. I am expecting next summer to have business threatening levels of staffing unless we increase our wages above £10. The cost of which currently cannot be passed on to the customer
- Xmas is not a peak season for us apart from 1 week where we can move staff around our facilities to cover. We are already paying max overtime hours for all of our staff who want it. The government should also look at making people work when they receive unemployment benefit
- As an industry we are becoming less competitive vs the EU therefore losing market share. Agree as a nation the UK needs to move away from cheap food, but the increase should be focused on the improving the quality of what we consume. Prices are increasing but quality is not improving.
- Unless something is done quickly to rectify these shortages a lot of businesses will suffer & close down because it just won't be viable to continue. Labour providers are continually increase costs & bringing in unnecessary costs because they know businesses have no choice but to pay them but customers e.g. supermarkets are not willing to pay anything extra for the products being supplied.
- As an agent we aren't experiencing the same challenges around unskilled labour however the number of sites that we work with are experiencing huge issues with labour availability, retention and also providing the ethical requirements alongside the logistical and production demands needed at this time. This has been seen at our UK manufacturing partners and overseas, we are trying to provide as much information and support as we can to guide them but the UK retailers must also work with us to understand the impact within their supply chains and products. We are facing into factory closures and unviable businesses as a result of these factors.

- Availability of more workers is critical. Easier routes of entry required so friends and family of existing workers can come to UK to work for up to 8 months of the year. More direct means of recruitment so we don't have agency audit costs and weekly recruitment costs to pay.
- The SAWS Scheme needs to be extended to include non-edible horticulture
- I don't know where to start. Our desire to work in the agricultural industry is massively in crisis
- If the company does not start to reward the staff with better overtime as the agency are getting to many that can't speak English its getting hard with health and safety and getting the work done.
- The situation is only going to get worse, the government focus on the highly skilled sectors but the end of the day we all need to be fed and cannot all be brain surgeons, we still need foot soldiers. They are deluded if they think that anyone is going to swap the benefits system for manual labour.
- The Government needs to wake up to the problem - I voted to stay in!
- It's becoming impossible to fill all jobs available - massive stress on current workforce due to long hours to fulfil customer orders. Business affected more than we ever expected, spent in last 2 weeks almost £250K on staff wage increases just to retain the workforce we have. Massive shock to the system in business overall.
- There is a serious shortage of labour in the food Industry. Applying band aid solutions is not the answer. There is simply not enough available labour in the country and food companies need to be able to access labour pools from outside the UK on a long term basis and not on a short term visa scheme. Food companies need employees who will stay with the company for years so they can deliver a safe quality product to the market place. Turning over staff every 6 months means you lose all the experience required to deliver a safe quality product.
- An unexpected medical emergency occurred within our group of 4 Eastern European workers (UK residents ) who are partially family based unit. If we had lost this group as a result of this issue I am sure from my contacts and their recent experiences that we would be unlikely to be able to replace them, and certainly not with staff with the same work ethic and reliability.
- Shouldn't need to use an agency, should have freedom to choose employees and employees to choose employers.
- We have almost 100 vacancies, which is 20% of our workforce missing which we cannot fill.
- We are a highly automated food manufacturing business. We have very high levels of automation across our sites including robotic pickers, fully automated warehouses and ERP systems. We have a dedicated innovation team working with manufacturers and programmers to bring the latest technology into our factories, and plan to make significant further investments over the next 5 years. Despite this we are currently running a vacancy rate of 10-15% which is impacting our ability to service our customers with healthy, fresh British food. There is a significant gap in the local labour market - we are simply not getting enough applications to fulfil vacancies. We are very worried about the shortfall in staff for the Christmas production period.
- As a food manufacturer we are really struggling to get agency workers from the EU - this was never a problem before and we are finding that a lot of our staff are returning back home.
- It is clear that the food production industry has worked hard to automate and invested heavily in the equipment to do this. this will never solve all of the problem though. In areas of high employment where the opportunity to recruit UK workers in lower skilled roles does not exist then this labour must be allowed to come from Europe or other locations.

- This is a crisis ! Brexit was a ridiculous idea. The current government is Brexit centric and will not admit that Brexit is the problem. I have worked for 45 years to build the business up, I feel we are now going to close the doors at some point.
- We are a seasonal business that will reduce staff to skeleton staff after November. We are expecting recruitment issues with staff for next season ( February onwards ) and are working closely with our main provider of seasonal migrant staff. Wage costs have increased dramatically this year and we are expecting the same issues for the 2022 season. In previous years the majority of our staff have been employed directly by us however this is becoming increasingly difficult even with higher wages being offered. We are currently using an agency who is on the seasonal worker pilot who have provided the majority of our staff and will be using them for recruitment next year too.
- We are experiencing a high demand in the need for our stock but having to reduce the production due to lack of staff. UK residents do not want to work outside
- The UK economy needs people from abroad to work here, and when they do they are model citizens and contribute hugely to society. It is unnecessary, discriminatory and immoral to exclude people from the UK because of their nationality.
- UK born labour are not attracted to seasonal labour work; if they do it they are very unproductive and not available all year around. UK educated labour with qualifications will not work in field operations or chilled primary food processes involving manual labour
- There is a considerable shortfall of available labour - never seen before in our area . The development of large multi nationals has dominated the market with advertising and incentives that cause considerable issues for independent entrepreneurial companies such as our whereby we cannot compete . The larger companies dominate and stifle the smaller ones . In addition some families have no incentive to work as they get more money from the welfare state by not working .
- As a very large farm who have always recruited directly, we would like to see a number of seasonal worker visas coming directly to us to allow us to continue recruiting directly. We are held to ransom by the current operators as they have the monopoly in bringing people to this country. It is extremely expensive and we have no control over the people that come to our farm and many come with very different expectations of the job! Communication between the agency and the worker is practically nil and often a worker is being told what they want to hear. We have also had reports of workers having to pay agents in their own country large amounts of money to get a visa. They should not have to pay any more than the visa itself. Often they are getting into enormous debt to come and work in the UK to do a different job that they were 'sold' by the agent in their country. The seasonal workers operators seem to have no knowledge of this??? Surely their agents should at least be audited?
- The implementation of the 3 month visa falls far short of the measures the government has to make to attract people to the UK. It should never be more financially beneficial for someone to be on benefits than working - it's insulting to the people who work hard day in day out to support their families and support UK businesses. Costs are spiralling in every direction and the UK businesses are just expected to soak it up. Action needs to be taken to stabilise the UK economy.
- 2020 Feed the Nation Campaign. XXX received 7,500 applicants that we looked through each one and replied to each one. 150 people were then shortlisted, 85 offered jobs, 58 accepted the position (27 didn't answer), 48 turned up, 32 left after one week, 24 after two weeks, 5 after three weeks, 1 after four weeks who then left after that week. Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme a. Needs to be changed from a Pilot scheme to a definite future proof scheme that meets the needs of the industry. b. 2021 Pilot scheme new agencies confirmed could supply the workers to the industry where only given their license at the end of April. Access to systems for visas

only given mid-May. Workers all needed by mid-May. The turnaround is minimum of 6 weeks for such a worker so the earliest anybody got these workers was beginning of July by which time the peak of the season had passed and fruit was left in field to rot. c. 2022 scheme not yet confirmed, WHY? What will the numbers be for 2022? Recruitment Agencies need to know ASAP so they can recruit suitable good quality people. d. Workers on scheme should be exempt from auto enrol pension schemes as they have no ability to access it in the future and by the time, they do any payments will be swallowed up by annual pension operator fees. Impossible to opt-out as nothing translated so can't understand website or call to opt-out and we as their employers can't help them. Association of Labour Providers (ALP) are lobbying the government for the following and they are being considered??? a. Want growers to pay for workers Visas, Travel Costs, Pre-departure COVID Tests and airport transfers either side of their journey. This will be approximately £1,000 per worker. If you need 200 workers that's a lot of strawberries that need selling. b. Introducing a minimum working hour of 30 per week for workers on the Scheme. I can't imagine the UK domestic market will be happy with this. c. Support ethical requirements that workers only work a 48-hour week as the norm and 60 in an exceptional week. They do not accept that extreme weather fluctuations count as exceptional circumstances. The UK maximum working week is 72 hours. Therefore, the number of workers needed is extra to meet the needs of the seasonal business.

- In the current climate, we cannot see the long term strategy that the government are trying to implement. 12 week solutions are not enough, this is not just about Christmas 2021. The food industry needs to do more to promote the range of jobs that are available within it, it is as challenging as the automotive industry but far less glamorised. The retailers have to be prepared to pay more for product and to increase prices and focus on quality rather than price. margin differential between retailers and suppliers is too large. We don't believe this is sustainable in the long term.
- We as food producers need more SAWS visas and to know we will get these staff in 2022. Our returning staff from Bulgaria and Romania are less and less each year and we do not get local staff wanting seasonal work outside in all hours.
- This is an extremely exciting time for our business with great opportunity to growth which we are unable to leverage due to lack of available labour. We are trying to recruit local labour but there are not sufficient numbers of people that want to work in the food industry within our local area. As other businesses are facing the same challenges, wage rates continue to rise placing additional burden on our budgets to increase rates of pay. This situation is urgent.
- Production lines are at risk of being made non-operational due to a lack of workers which could lead to significant disruption and lack of orders being sent out. High staff turnover could lead to higher employment costs and lower productivity, due to the time to train and develop workers so that they can effectively contribute to the production, but then don't turn up as they have been offered higher wages elsewhere. The government needs to take much further steps to support the food supply chain as this is vital to the economy and wellbeing of farmers, producers, manufacturers, consumers etc. The government needs to have "worker schemes" in place so that persons from other countries can work in the Food sector for a period of time so as to learn new skills etc. Back to work schemes for the unemployed, the government need to promote the food sector with incentives etc. Temporary worker visas to enter into the UK to undertake seasonal work.
- Increase the number of SAWS permits. Increase by 30% with a review next year. Increase the duration of a permit to 9 months. As a control this should be done as an extension to a workers original 6 month permit, once they have established their credibility as a bona fide employee i.e. already complete 5 of their 6 month placement. Open up permits so the actual employers of the worker can directly recruit and issue working visas. Initially need to meet a threshold of

above 500 employees. In what other industry do the actual employers have to answer to a third party organisation with a vested interest in sitting between the Gov.

- Our industry is in crisis
- The food industry in the UK is in crisis because of the severe shortage of staff to pick and pack food. Added to this is the crisis with the hauliers. Short term visas are not the answer because we need staff to stay long term. We need access to a labour force that want to come to the UK and make it their home.
- The food manufacturing sector has had some significant challenges throughout the pandemic and during lockdown we were seen as 'Heroes, feeding the nation'. This sector is massively ignored yet the demands on us are very real and increasing on a daily basis.
- What changes do we expect to make in the next 6 months - we are already doing all of these, they are not changes we will make in next 6 months, they are changes we have already made.
- We have spent an unprecedented amount of time, resources and money to try and ensure we have enough labour to meet demand, and most other similar employers are doing the same so we are competing for the same people. It is not sustainable in the long term.
- Government delays in confirming the SWP licences caused extreme difficulties early in the season and this has continued to cause issues over supply. Recruiting from the UK has been extremely unsuccessful.
- Whilst this questionnaire is welcome the questions are rather simplistic. We already do all that we can to encourage and maintain workers be it via agency or local. We have a parents and carers line and have tried over numerous years to employ local people but there is virtually no uptake as the industry cannot afford to pay the rates that all outside of the horticulture and Agri sectors can. We are faced with continued increases in costs with little price increases for sale. The UK do not pay for the cost of food, food is cheap and often below cost of production and yet we are expected to invest and increase pay rates. AI /Tech is still too far away and cost prohibitive. The industry is not attractive to UK residents. There will be food shortages and a significant number of businesses will not have the resilience to survive. Brexit should have been a resurgence for UK food production but it has had completely the opposite effect. To call our labour requirements unskilled is offensive, the teams we require in the packing facility and on farm require significant skill. The workforce is less productive as the quality of the people that we now have to recruit is reduced and we know that they will move company for pennies....which we do not have. We are being abandoned for warehouses such as Amazon who are paying huge salaries and we cannot compete. We are in crisis.
- There needs to be permanent access to unskilled workers from overseas. There is very limited availability within the local rural population of people suited to production environments. We are also finding that alcohol, drug and mental health problems are a major problem in retaining local staff. Smaller companies are especially vulnerable as they do not have the resources that larger companies have for recruitment and staff retention incentives.
- The chronic shortage of labour at the entry levels and the unwillingness of local unemployed to actually work is creating significant shortages in our deliveries to customers. The situation is worsening over the last three weeks from an already dire position.
- The situation is dire. We currently have nearly 20% vacancies and cannot get enough agency workers to plug the gaps. We could be selling 550 tonnes a week but due to labour availability and skills shortages we can only sell 350 tonnes. As a result we are consistently running at a loss which is not sustainable for the long term. We are exploring more automation but the equipment is on a 6-9 month lead time and even then that will not completely reduce our need for labour.

- We have also experienced increased costs due to overtime rates. Coupled with constant changes to the plan due to raw material shortages as a result of the wider supply chain issues this has led to inefficiencies and therefore increased the cost of production further.
- The government needs to let eastern Europeans into the country more easily, when are you going to understand they were here in the first place because in the agriculture/horticulture sector our unemployed feel the jobs are beneath them. We employ six English people in our business, the rest are foreigners, this is not by choice. In the Spalding area there is no unemployment, just local unemployable people that have an easy life on benefits.
- We tried recruiting British labour last year. It doubled our labour costs and the average length of stay was 2 weeks - a complete waste of time, money and effort.
- There needs to be a link to people on benefits and actively engaging with them to return to work. We introduced an attendance bonus but some workers asked not to be paid it as affects benefits
- The government need to seriously look at how they can resolve this issue. Whilst the pandemic has played a small part there is more that the government could do to get people back into work: Driving licence fiasco for the HGV drivers - get those licences out and set up a priority list. Get their workers back in the offices processing what they are paid to be processing Extend the seasonal agricultural workers visa to food production Encourage EU citizens to come back to the UK
- I support the NFU's asks and consider the following as being critical to the future of our industry: - The introduction of a 12-month Covid-19 Recovery Visa which would enable all involved throughout the supply chain to recruit critical roles, such as HGV drivers, as a short-term response to labour shortages. - Commitment to a permanent, revised and expanded Seasonal Worker Scheme for UK horticulture to ensure it is flexible and large enough to meet the industry's workforce needs. - An urgent review by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on the impact of ending free movement on the food and farming sector, in the same way it is doing for adult social care. I would go further on point 3. It is critical that we have an ability to recruit non-management level (i.e. supervisory level) overseas staff on a Skilled Workers Visa. The current points based system is too narrow, too complicated and far too restrictive particularly around language. The SWP scheme is excellent but 6 months is too short for supervisory level staff, they need to be permanent employees in order to help us manage new nationalities entering and leaving our businesses on 6 month visas. The current COS system is not fit for purpose in that it is failing UK food and farming as well as many other industries. We need an ability to at least build a back bone to our businesses while we automate them.
- We are currently in the process of dramatically reducing production plans for 2022. We can't risk committing to grow crops and buy planting material if we can't guarantee we will have access to labour to harvest and process them. The lack of a reliable pool of seasonal labour is an existential threat to the UK industry. Local people just don't want to fill seasonal roles and in many cases see the roles as beneath them. Pay and conditions are not the issue, pay rates are already well above minimum wage and with overtime starters can earn £26k p.a. in basic picking/ packing roles.
- Current situation is untenable. Labour shortage is having negative impact on wellbeing of remaining employees. Irregular customer demand especially as a result of Covid 19 and short shelf life perishable products has resulted in significant increases in food waste. It's all well and good Government messaging on climate change but with simple attention and action on labour shortages we can make significant impact. Since 1950's UK have depended on migrant labour for their workforce, why do the Government now believe this to be any different? Our migrant labour are hardworking, committed, dependable and dedicated people who we

completely rely on for our just in time deliveries, 7 days a week. It's about time Government started recognising they are not idle, lazy people taking advantage of benefits system. Other than supervisory management all staff are migrant labour, not by choice or selection. Local people are not interested in hard work and effort even if normal working hours which unfortunately is not to support 7 day opening sanctioned by Government.

- We are seasonal strawberry growers so need no staff other than the people we currently have until 1st Feb next year. We focus strongly on returnee workers every year. In our experience UK resident do not see horticulture as a long term option and are always looking for a better option.
- I like the idea of employing more UK residents but we try every year and they don't stand the pace!! They just don't want to work the hours we demand when it gets cold wet and muddy in a broccoli field
- Young people don't want to work in farming / food sectors. Benefits are too high and people don't want / need to work. Food is far too cheap, when compared to European countries.
- Support services are unable to cope with limitations on consistent labour to meet business needs
- The trite comments by ministers show how little they understand the real world. Retrain the UK workforce? They are unemployable. We put an advert on Indeed, had 15 with UK sounding surnames booked in for interviews, only one turned up. I guess they ticked the jobseekers requirements for continuation of benefits. All of those with Eastern European names turned up. We have a whole generation of unemployables thanks to the benefit system. I do not understand why we are complicit in continuing to pay benefits to these completely idle layabouts.
- This is by far the worst recruitment climate we have ever experienced. The lack of EU workers, rising costs of living and lack of interest by British citizens in our industry is hugely alarming.