

Written evidence submitted by Cranswick plc (LS0071)

Further to correspondence we have received from Charlie Dewhirst with regard to feedback on securing Butchers via temporary visas, I enclose the response from Cranswick below;

Cranswick plc are a large UK food manufacturer with an end to end supply chain, employing 13,500 people, of whom approximately 3000 are classed as Butchers. Overall we have a shortage of 1000 staff of whom at least 300 would be Butchers. We continue to work in our communities to recruit and develop local staff. While our rates of pay have increased significantly and we continue to offer additional benefits such as on the job training and additional staff benefits, we continue to experience limited applicants from our local populations.

Cranswick have been given access to 200 visas for Butchers, under the terms of the temporary Horticultural Workers scheme.

- We commenced talks with one of the 4 eligible Labour Providers (Proforce) in October. We did not have existing relationships with these Agencies and we are linked to the only one of the four with the expertise to recruit Butchers – albeit they haven't recruited Pork Butchers previously. We were not able to utilise the skills of our existing Agency Providers and therefore have had to engage in a third party supply agreement which is at an extra cost, in order to help us to manage the individuals when they arrive in the UK.
- Despite extensive advertising campaigns in EU countries, we will see only 15 Butchers arrive in the UK on 17th December - many of whom do not speak English and therefore integration in to our sites and the local community will be difficult.
- The system for processing the visas for Butchers is lengthy and complicated and we are having to pay wages in excess of what is an already competitive rate for our current staff, in order to attract individuals from overseas for the 6 month period, and just before Christmas. We are also required to cover the cost of the visa, transport costs and sourcing and paying for accommodation.
- We have been told that there are 50 Butchers in total currently being processed but are not optimistic that we will fulfil the 200 visas we have been allowed. The timing of the scheme has meant individuals do not want to travel, the scheme is only for 6 months and therefore the rates have to be disproportionately high in order to attract individuals for such a short space of time. This is a temporary solution for a permanent problem. We need Butchers on a full-time on-going basis not just for a fixed period and we have been asking for this support for the last 18months.

(We also have a sponsorship licence for 120 visas to employ Butchers under the Skilled Occupation List. This was obtained last month and we are utilising the services of a third party provider to assist us with sourcing Butchers from the Philippines under the Tier 5 scheme. Again this is a lengthy and complicated administrative process, which has been further hampered by the COVID travel restrictions. Processing applications can take up to 6 months and has a cost of £8,000 to employ an individual for 2 years. We hope to utilise all of the visas across the business depending upon availability of labour overseas.)

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards
Miranda