

## Written evidence submitted by Sofinafoods (LS0072)

Please find feedback on the temporary butcher visas scheme. At time of writing we have less than 20 potential candidates for temporary butcher visas. This is clearly well below our hopes when the scheme was announced.

1. The 4 service providers identified by the government were all focused on filling temporary poultry workers and HGV drivers. We did not have real engagement from the service providers until this campaign was finished (in the last few weeks).
2. The 4 service providers are not experienced in recruiting for skilled butchers and the numbers of candidates with appropriate skills is c20% of candidates put forward.
3. There are not skilled butchers available in any numbers at the moment – we are accepting minimum skilled butchers as long as their skills would be higher than the minimum salary rate for skilled workers. This is not plugging the gap for skilled workers to man the crucial roles in the abattoir & butchery
4. Finding temporary accommodation for 6 months is a real challenge – specifically in the locations we have abattoirs which do not have

We are doing everything we can to utilise the temporary visas up until Dec 31<sup>st</sup>. However, this is an initiative that came too late, without the specialist recruitment resource required with a too short time frame to complete.

As a company we are continuing to utilise the Skilled worker visa (3yr) to fill the gap. We have a significant number of candidates with skills & good English standards who can fill our gaps in our pipeline (c200). The timeline is much more drawn out (c3months) for these workers however they are a more sustainable solution for our factories.

Long term we must find domestic workers to fill our roles. This needs to be a coordinated effort from government and industry. But to put some context a skilled worker in our factories can earn over £45k p.a. – well in excess of the average wage. These are good, well paid jobs.

2 issues I believe should be addressed by government

1. **Tackle worklessness:** despite 1.2m vacancies, unemployment still stands at 4.3%. Latest data of sanctions for universal credit is only 0.78% - a long way to go to pre pandemic levels of c2.5%.
2. **Balance the school leaver supply:** The 50% target of school leavers to higher education does not match the supply of graduate jobs. Only 25% of graduates will pay back their student loans in full. We need to balance the school leavers supply across university, manual skilled roles and care giving. Unfortunately we have relied on imported labour for care and manual skills and left a huge number of graduates locked in low paying roles who will never pay off their student debt.

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