

Written evidence submitted by NFU Scotland (LS0082)

EFRA COMMITTEE LABOUR SHORTAGES INQUIRY

Supplementary evidence

1. NFU Scotland welcomes the opportunity to provide supplementary evidence to this enquiry. With over 8,500 members, NFU Scotland represents a significant proportion of Scotland's farming population
2. Scotland's horticultural sector accounts for only 1% of Scotland's land area but 16% of our agricultural output. Its ongoing success is wholly dependent on securing the necessary labour.
3. Labour shortages in 2021 (on farm, and in haulage, processing and packing) meant that some farmers lost their harvests. A lack of labour negatively impacted the necessary preparation work for next season, which will have knock-on implications for the 2022 crop.
4. While NFU Scotland welcomes the commitment from the Home Office to continue the Seasonal Workers Pilot (SWP) scheme it is disappointed that the number of worker places available has not expanded. Alongside NFU of England and Wales, NFU Scotland asked for the number of seasonal visas available to the UK in 2022 to be extended to 55,700.
5. NFU Scotland's horticulture members have reported it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers with EU Settled Status (SS), and that it continues to be extremely difficult to recruit and retain UK workers.
6. An expanded SWP scheme should account for workers that previously came from the EU under freedom of movement. The decision to taper the scheme down instead will significantly reduce the pool of available labour and negatively impact NFU Scotland members' businesses.

- 7. The UK Government’s stated intention to shut down the scheme in the years ahead is concerning. The seasonal workers visa scheme is an essential route to get the workers needed for fruit, vegetable, and ornamental sectors.
- 8. NFU Scotland is surveying its horticulture and potato members about their business plans for 2022 following the UK Government’s SWP announcement. The survey will close on the 28th January.
- 9. Our interim survey findings for the impact of the SWP announcement on planned production for 2022 (figure 1) are:
 - 4% of respondents stated they will be **exiting the sector**.
 - 33% of respondents stated they will be **reducing production**, with 78% of these stating this is due to the SWP announcement.
 - 56% of respondents stated they will be **maintaining production**, with 57% of these stating this is due to the maintenance of SWP numbers, indicating that production will reduce as labour availability decreases.



Figure 1: 2022 horticulture production intention

- 10. Our interim survey findings for the expected numbers of workers in 2022 compared to 2021 (figure 2) are:

- The number of **UK seasonal workers** employed in 2021 was a small proportion (6%) of the total workforce, and this number is expected to reduce in 2022.
- The number of **EU SS workers** employed in 2021 was a large proportion (47%) of the total workforce, and this number is expected to **reduce by more than half** in 2022.
- The number of **SWP workers** employed in 2021 was a large proportion (47%) of the total workforce, and survey respondents expect this number to increase significantly in 2022. There are several factors that indicate this is an unrealistic expectation: in 2021 Scottish horticulture businesses were short of workers all season (figure 3); the number of workers under the SWP will not be expanded in 2022; while the ornamental sector will be able to access SWP workers in 2022. The combination of these factors suggests these businesses will be significantly short of labour in the 2022 season.

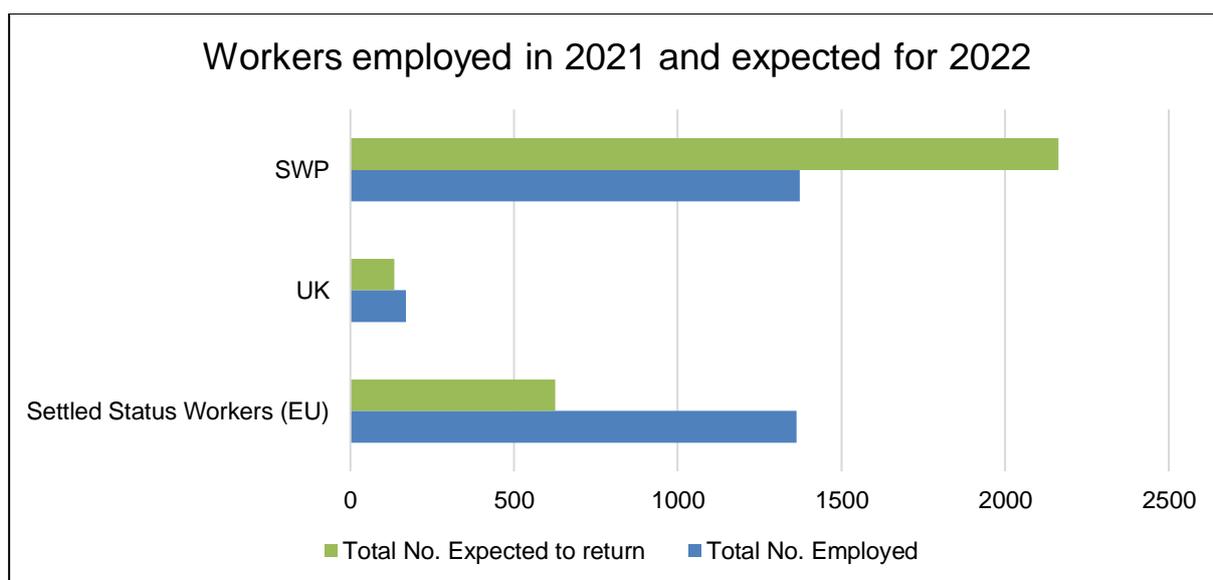


Figure 2 : Workers employed in 2021 and expected for 2022.

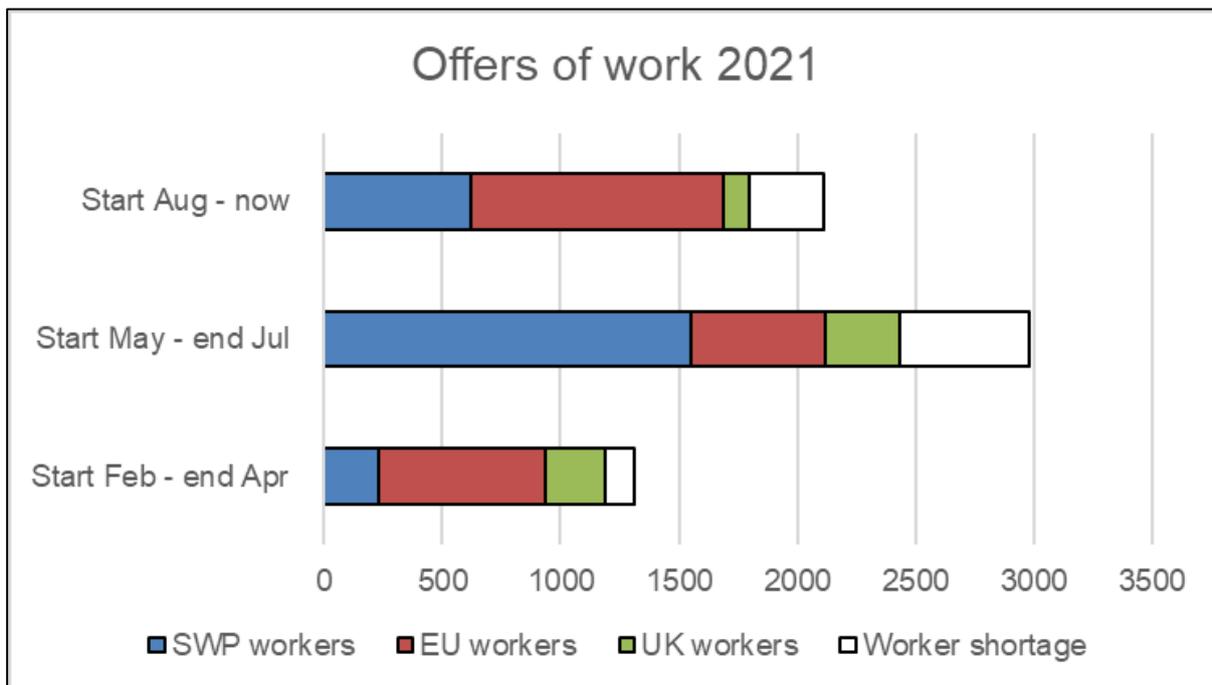


Figure 3 : Offers of work and worker shortages in 2021 (data from September 2021).

11. Failure to secure UK workers is not for want of trying. Our survey of fruit and vegetable members in September 2021 revealed a Scottish fruit and veg business had offered 100 contracts of employment to UK applicants; six accepted and only three turned up to work. Across all businesses that completed the survey in September, the retention rate for EU and other migrant workers was over 80% while the retention rate for UK workers was 32% (figures 4, 5, and 6).

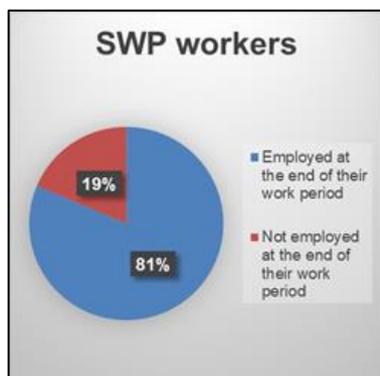


Figure 4 : SWP worker retention

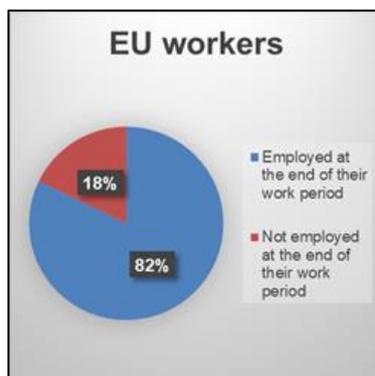


Figure 5 : EU worker retention

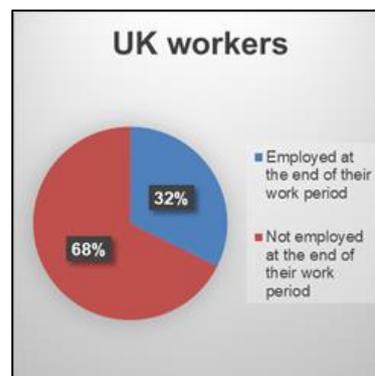


Figure 6 : UK worker retention