



INFORMATION BROCHURE FOR WORKERS IN GREENHOUSE HORTICULTURE

(HARVESTING OF VEGETABLES: TOMATOES,
BELL PEPPERS, LETTUCES, ETC.)

(INFORMATION FOR VDAB EURES)

ACTIVITY

Description of tasks:

- **Binding and clipping plants:** guiding plants along an existing cord
- **Thinning:** removing unwanted shoots
- **Lowering:** lowering growing plants into the greenhouse with a rope structure
- **Pruning:** applying learned pruning techniques, maintenance and use of pruning equipment, attention to safety when pruning, working from heights (picking wagon)
- **Picking:** picking fruit without damaging it, recognising ripe fruit. Short, well-groomed nails are a must.
- **Sorting:** packing and labelling of fruit in the correct packaging, carrying out quality control
- **Working in sheltered conditions:** working in a greenhouse

*Picking activities are the most important work for seasonal workers.
The other work is done to a lesser extent by seasonal workers.*

REGION IN FLANDERS

Vegetable cultivation in greenhouses is mainly concentrated in the region around Sint-Katelijne-Waver and Hoogstraten, close to the auctions that specialise in greenhouse vegetables (BelOrta and Coöperatie Hoogstraten). There is also a concentration of greenhouse horticulture companies in the regions around Roeselare (REO auction) and Deinze.

ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR AND PERIOD OF WORK:

Work in the greenhouse (outside picking): binding, thinning, pruning and lowering of plants:

- Peak work between May and September

Picking, sorting, packing of fruit:

- Peak work between May and September

Seasonal workers are mainly needed for picking activities

JOB REQUIREMENTS

- No prior knowledge or studies required.
- Being flexible and motivated.
- Suitability for (often) repetitive physical work: picking especially requires a good physical condition.
- A sense of accuracy: an eye for quality and safety.
- Stick to rules and agreements - follow work instructions.
- Working in a team.
- Working with people from other origins/countries.
- The work is done in the open air or in a greenhouse.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

- This concerns employment as a seasonal worker (SW).
- In 2022, 100 working days are allowed for SW.
- This concerns day contracts.
- The minimum hourly wage in 2022: € 9.69 gross/hour.

A wage calculation is made per month. There is a tax deduction of 18.725%. This applies to non-Belgian residents. No additional tax will be payable on this amount afterwards.

As a seasonal worker, you receive a copy of the wage calculation (every month).

Note: if you have earned more than 70% of your total professional income (earned in Belgium and in your home country) in Belgium, it is in your interest to file a tax return in Belgium the following year. You will then receive a partial refund of the taxes already withheld.

- If a worker has worked more than 50 days, a year-end bonus of € 190 is paid by the Waarborg - en Sociaal Fonds voor het Tuinbouwbedrijf (Social Guarantee Fund for Horticultural Enterprises). This bonus is paid in the year following the season. Inform the Sociaal Fonds Tuinbouw (Social Guarantee Fund for Horticultural Enterprises) of your address in your home country.
- If a worker has worked more than 30 days for the same employer, a loyalty premium of € 0.50 per day is paid by the Waarborg - en Sociaal Fonds voor het Tuinbouwbedrijf (Social Guarantee Fund for Horticultural Enterprises). This premium is paid in the year following the season. Inform the Sociaal Fonds Tuinbouw (Social Guarantee Fund for Horticultural Enterprises) of your address in your home country.

WORKING HOURS

Working hours in the horticultural sector are normally 38 hours/week.

Seasonal workers work with day contracts.

More hours can be worked in season: up to 11 hours /day and up to 50 hours /week.

All hours worked are paid at the normal hourly wage.

SEASONAL WORK FORM

There is a seasonal work form for seasonal workers on which the days of seasonal work are noted. Seasonal workers can keep this form during the season.

LODGING

In many cases, the employer provides accommodation. The accommodation must meet certain standards (floor space, heating, sanitary facilities, etc.).

The employer may charge a monthly rent for the stay in the lodging.

Agreements on this should be made at the start of the season.

The rent could be around € 100-150 per month.

REGISTRATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY

You must be registered as a seasonal worker with the municipality where you are staying. The municipality will issue you with a residence document.

You will also get a social security ID number (or a BIS number) in Belgium.

SOCIAL SECURITY DECLARATION

The benefits are declared quarterly to the social security authorities in Belgium.

HEALTHCARE

Information related to healthcare in Belgium can be found on the website www.cm.be, www.kcgs.be, www.vdab.be, ...

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON STRAWBERRY PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM

Region and employment greenhouse horticulture (composition of the crops in 2021):

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| Fresh tomatoes: | Antwerp | 448.33 ha |
| | West Flanders | 82.87 ha |
| | East Flanders | 68.85 ha |
| Bell peppers: | Antwerp | 93.69 ha |
| Lettuces: | West Flanders | 84.41 ha |
| | East Flanders | 16.18 ha |
| | Antwerp | 22.29 ha |