



INFORMATION BROCHURE FOR SOFT FRUIT PICKING WORKERS

(BERRIES: CURRANTS, BLUEBERRIES,
BLACKCURRANTS, RASPBERRIES,
BLACKBERRIES, ETC.)

(INFORMATION FOR VDAB EURES)

ACTIVITY: SOFT FRUIT PICKING (BERRIES, RASPBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES)

REGION IN FLANDERS

The cultivation of soft fruit is located all over Flanders with clusters in the north of Antwerp, the south of Limburg and spread over East and West Flanders.

PICKING ACTIVITY

The essence of the work is to harvest the fruits without damaging them. It is important to recognise ripe fruits and pick them.

The picked fruit should be placed in a box.

It is very important to carefully follow the producer's instructions!

PERIOD OF THE WORK

The picking of soft fruits takes place from April to October. Crops grown in greenhouses can provide a longer period of fruit. Open air crops are harvested mainly in the summer months of May-August. Most of the plants are under covers, even in the open air, to protect the fruit from direct rain and hail.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

- No prior knowledge or studies required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Suitability for repetitive physical work: a good physical condition is required, especially when picking from the ground.
- 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%. No additional tax will be payable on this amount afterwards. Unless this is interpreted differently by your employer.

As a seasonal worker, you will 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.

- If a worker has worked more than 50 days, a year-end bonus of € 200 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 and your bank account number if you want to receive this premium.
- 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 and your bank account number.

WORKING HOURS

Seasonal workers work with day contracts.

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

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. If you change employers, you must take this document with you.

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.

Rent is to be agreed with the employer and can be up to € 250/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

You do not pay social security as a seasonal worker. Your benefits will be declared quarterly to the social security authorities in Belgium by your employer.

HEALTHCARE

As a seasonal worker in Belgium, you can benefit from free health care during the first two years that you are in Belgium. Make arrangements for this with your employer.

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SOFT FRUIT CULTIVATION

REGION

The cultivation of soft fruit is located all over Flanders with clusters in the north of Antwerp, the south of Limburg and spread over East and West Flanders.

In Flanders, approximately 135 ha of raspberries, 118 ha of blueberries, 48 ha of blackberries and 100 ha of other berries are grown (gooseberries, currants and others).

PERIOD OF THE YEAR

The picking of soft fruits takes place from April to October. Crops grown in greenhouses can provide a longer period of fruit. Open air crops are mainly harvested in the summer months of May-August, depending on the species and variety. Most of the plants are under covers, even in the open air, to protect the fruit from direct rain and hail.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE FRUIT SECTOR

- Permanent employment in Flanders: 976 FTE in 2020
- Seasonal employment: 4777 FTE in 2020 (30,997 persons)