

News story: Seasonal workers pilot opens

The seasonal workers pilot, announced by the Home Secretary and Environment Secretary in September 2018, has now opened.

The pilot will mean fruit and vegetable farmers are able to employ up to 2,500 non-EU migrant workers for seasonal work for up to 6 months.

Two scheme operators – Concordia and Pro-Force – have been licenced to manage the pilot and will be responsible for identifying suitable workers and matching them to UK farmers. They will also be required to ensure the welfare of the workers whilst they are in the UK.

The first workers will arrive on UK farms this spring, subject to recruitment and visa application processes.

Commenting on the pilot, Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

Visiting a fruit farm last year, I saw first-hand how vital British produce is for our economy and listened carefully to the powerful arguments from farmers about the support they need.

The seasonal worker pilot shows this government not only listens, but is willing to take the necessary action to make sure our farms can continue to grow, sell and export more great British food.

The Home Office and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have worked closely to ensure the successful delivery of this pilot.

Food Minister at Defra, David Rutley said:

Our farmers and growers have been absolutely clear about the need for additional sources of labour to work on farms during the busy harvest months.

We have heard these concerns, which is why today we are opening this pilot to boost the workforce on farms this spring and summer and help farmers with their harvests.

This pilot, which will be closely monitored and reviewed, will help inform future policy as we look at how best to support the longer-

term needs of the industry outside the EU.

The pilot will test the effectiveness of our immigration system at helping to alleviate seasonal labour shortages during peak production periods, whilst maintaining robust immigration control and ensuring there are minimal impacts on local communities and public services.

The pilot will run until the end of December 2020. The pilot will be reviewed before any decisions are taken on running a future scheme.