



Home Office

Home Secretary

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House of Commons
Houses of Parliament
London
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21st March 2019

Dear Colleague,

On 6 September last year, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and I announced that our departments would implement a nationwide pilot to enable non-EU migrant workers to work on UK farms, commencing in early 2019 (HCWS940).

We are now pleased to announce that the 'Seasonal Workers Pilot' commenced operation on Wednesday 6 March 2019.

The Seasonal Workers Pilot will operate in the edible horticulture sector, to support farmers growing UK fruit and vegetables. This is the sector of agriculture which has been experiencing the most severe seasonal labour shortages, and which the pilot aims to support.

The Horticulture sector is of course a particular UK success story, with soft fruit production having grown by 131% in the last 20 years. Seasonal migrant labour has played an important role in helping soft fruit farmers to grow, sell and export more great British food. We therefore believe that it is the right sector to host this pilot.

This pilot will enable growers to employ up to 2,500 non-EU migrant workers for seasonal work for up to 6 months. We anticipate that the first workers will start to arrive on UK farms before the end of April.

Two scheme operators – Concordia and Pro-Force – have been licenced to manage the pilot and will be responsible for identifying suitable migrant workers and matching them to UK growers. They will also be required to ensure the welfare of migrant workers whilst they are in the UK. We will be working closely with the scheme operators and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority to ensure that work rights of participating migrant workers are protected.

This is a UK wide pilot and we have placed a specific duty on the scheme operators to ensure that all regions of the UK are able to benefit.

The pilot will run until the end of December 2020 and will be monitored closely by the Home Office and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. We will of course keep you apprised as to the outcome of this evaluation.

As we indicated in the Immigration White Paper published on 19 December 2018, we recognise the particular challenges which the agricultural industry faces. The future immigration system needs to support the UK economy and be business friendly. A full assessment of the outcome of the pilot will help us to determine whether the scheme should be rolled out more widely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP