

ALP calls on industry bodies to work together to secure labour supply

The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) has called on agricultural bodies to work together to ensure farmers and growers have enough seasonal labour in 2014 and beyond.

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) currently allows an annual quota of 21,250 Bulgarian and Romanian workers to enter the UK for a maximum period of six months and accounts for one-third of Britain's seasonal agricultural labour. It will close at the end of 2013 when nationals from Bulgaria and Romania gain free access to the European labour market.

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on 14th May in its report '[Migrant Seasonal Workers: The impact on the horticulture and food processing sectors of closing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and the Sectors Based Scheme](#)' concluded that British farmers should be able to recruit a sufficient number of seasonal workers in the first one to two years after working restrictions on Bulgarian and Romanian nationals are lifted. However in the medium to long term there is more uncertainty regarding the availability of reliable seasonal workers. The MAC said the government may wish to consider proposals for a replacement SAWS that targets workers from non-EU countries but it is ultimately for the Government to decide if this sector is a priority.

Says Association of Labour Providers Director David Camp, "The ALP supports the MAC conclusions which closely reflect the submission of evidence made by the ALP on behalf of its members. ALP labour provider members, including SAWS providers, supply the majority of seasonal workers into the UK food and agricultural sectors. Many British growers have come to rely on SAWS workers and the operation of the scheme has improved significantly in recent years. It is essential however that every horticultural business which relies upon seasonal workers plans now to secure their labour supply in 2014 and beyond. The last thing that anyone wants is for crops to remain unpicked due to a shortage of labour. To ensure we do not get to this situation requires early planning and may involve new ways of thinking and new models of supply. ALP members will support the industry, farmers and growers in meeting this challenge."

ALP Chairman Kevin Roberts adds, "I would call upon all the horticultural representative bodies to work together to support the industry in meeting its ongoing labour needs. I do not accept that we should contemplate a contraction of the horticulture industry due to labour supply shortfalls as some commentators have suggested."

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Notes to editors:

About the Association of Labour Providers:

The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) www.labourproviders.org.uk is the specialist trade association offering support and expert advice to organisations that provide and use workers within the food, agricultural and other GLA regulated sectors. Its members also include industrial labour providers. Established in 2004, the ALP's goal is for the provision of temporary labour to the UK food and agricultural sectors to be recognised as a model of good practice.

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