



INFORMATION BROCHURE FOR WORKERS IN STRAWBERRY CULTIVATION

(INFORMATION FOR VDAB EURES)

ACTIVITY: PICKING STRAWBERRIES

Picking strawberries is done in the open air or in a greenhouse.

In the open air, picking is done on the ground.

In a greenhouse, picking often takes place at a height of 1.7 metres.

REGION IN FLANDERS

There is a high concentration of strawberry cultivation in the province of Limburg, in Noorderkempen (Hoogstraten region). Strawberries are also grown in West and East 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 WORK

Strawberry picking is done outdoors from April to July and from April to October when cultivating in a greenhouse.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

- No prior knowledge or studies required.
- Being flexible and motivated.
- Suitability for (often) 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%. 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

Production mainly takes place in the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg.

In Flanders, there are 530 strawberry companies on 733 hectares in the open air and 454 hectares under cover.

They supply more than 45,000 tonnes of strawberries to the cooperatives every year.

PERIOD OF THE YEAR

The strawberry season (open ground) starts at the end of spring and the beginning of summer, which creates a significant demand for pickers.

Composition of the crops in 2021 (strawberry production):

Antwerp	547,36 ha
Limburg	280,29 ha
West Flanders	172,38 ha
Eest Flanders	86,91 ha
Flemish Brabant	57,03 ha