



INFORMATION BROCHURE FOR HARD FRUIT PICKING WORKERS

(PEARS, APPLES, ETC.)

(INFORMATION FOR VDAB EURES)

ACTIVITY: PICKING HARD FRUITS (APPLES AND PEARS)

REGION IN FLANDERS

There is a high concentration of hard fruit (apples and pears) cultivation in the south of the province of Limburg and the east of Flemish Brabant (Hageland). The Waasland region is also an area that specialises in the cultivation of pears.

PICKING ACTIVITY

The essence of the work is to harvest the fruits without damaging them. When it comes to apples and coloured pears, it is important to recognise the ripe fruit and to pick it. Ladders or picking trucks are used to pick from the tops of the trees. The picked fruits are collected in large wooden crates.

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

PERIOD OF THE WORK

Pears are picked in August/September. Apples are picked in September/October. There are also early and late varieties that are picked (just) outside of these peak periods.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

- No prior knowledge or studies required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Suitability for (often) repetitive physical work
- 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

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 75% 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 HARD FRUIT PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM

REGION

There is a high concentration of hard fruit (apples and pears) cultivation in the south of the province of Limburg and the east of Flemish Brabant (Hageland). The Waasland region is also an area that specialises in the cultivation of pears.

In Flanders, there are about 16 000 ha of apples (5500 ha) and pears (11 000 ha). Apple plantations are increasingly being replaced by pear plantations. This accounts for 200,000 tonnes of apples and 320,000 tonnes of pears annually.

PERIOD OF THE YEAR

The greatest demand for labour is in August/September, as well as October when the fruit is picked. Pears are pruned in winter and thinned in summer.

From the harvest until about June, the fruit stored in the cold stores is also sorted.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE FRUIT SECTOR

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