



INFORMATION BROCHURE FOR WORKERS IN THE HARVESTING OF VEGETABLES IN THE OPEN AIR

(CAULIFLOWER, LEEK, BRUSSELS SPROUTS,
ETC.)

(INFORMATION FOR VDAB EURES)

ACTIVITY: HARVESTING VEGETABLES IN THE OPEN AIR

REGION IN FLANDERS

Open air vegetable cultivation is mainly found in West Flanders and in the region around Mechelen. Here you will find crops such as leeks, cauliflowers, courgettes, Brussels sprouts, mushrooms, etc. There are also many farms that grow asparagus in the province of Limburg. Chicory is the main crop in Flemish Brabant.

PICKING ACTIVITY

The harvesting of the different types of vegetables is done in different ways and depends very much on the product.

Some examples

Harvesting the product:

- Cauliflower, cabbages, courgette: cut out and put on the belt or in the box
- Brussels sprouts: insert cut stems into the harvester

Sorting and market preparation

- Cauliflower/Brussels sprouts: remove leaves and product of inferior quality from the sorting belt
- Leek: peel leeks and place them in the box

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

JOB REQUIREMENTS

- No prior knowledge or studies required
- Flexible and motivated
- Suitability for 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 shed

PERIOD OF THE WORK

The work in vegetable cultivation depends on the crop. Below is an overview.

Courgettes	West Flanders	Planting, maintenance, harvesting and market preparation (= sorting by size, quality) and clearing up (e.g. plastic, T-tape, mini-domes, etc.)	Planting: April/May - Maintenance - Harvesting June to August/September
Cauliflowers (1st fruit)	West Flanders	Planting, covering and harvesting	Planting: April/May - Covering: end of May/June - Harvesting: June/July
Cauliflowers (2nd fruit)	West Flanders	Planting, covering and harvesting	Planting: June/July - Covering: September/October - Harvesting: end of September to end of November
Cabbages (white/red)	West Flanders	Planting, harvesting and market preparation	Planting: May - Harvesting: October/November - Market preparation: October/November (without storage), December/April (with storage)
Leeks (summer)	West Flanders	Planting, harvesting and market preparation	Planting: February/March - Harvesting: July/August
Leeks (autumn)	West Flanders	Planting, harvesting and market preparation	Planting: April/May - Harvesting: September to November
Leeks (winter)	West Flanders	Planting, harvesting and market preparation	Planting: May/June - Harvesting: December to April
Brussels sprouts	West Flanders	Planting, topping (maintenance), harvesting and sorting	Planting: May - Topping: September/October - Harvesting: November/December
Mushrooms	West & East Flanders	Harvesting (picking)	Peak around the holiday periods
Chicory	West Flanders and Flemish Brabant	Planting of carrots, harvesting and market preparation	Peak around the holiday periods (mainly October to March)
Asparagus	Limburg	Harvesting (digging)	Starts in early/mid-April Peak around May/June

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 VEGETABLE CULTIVATION IN BELGIUM:

Companies involved with vegetable cultivation in the open air often have several different crops per year for which seasonal workers are used.

COMPOSITION OF THE CROPS IN 2021

Fresh courgettes:	West Flanders	188.56 ha
	Antwerp	60.29 ha
	Flemish Brabant	20.43 ha
Fresh cauliflower:	West Flanders	257.60 ha
	Antwerp	178.93 ha
	Flemish Brabant	25.76 ha
Fresh leeks:	West Flanders	1,457.53 ha
	Antwerp	188.23 ha
	East Flanders	182.43 ha
	Limburg	53.84 ha
	Flemish Brabant	47.14 ha
Fresh Brussels sprouts:	West Flanders	228.56 ha
	Flemish Brabant	111.82 ha
	Antwerp	39.63 ha
Fresh chicory:	Flemish Brabant	38.35 ha
	West Flanders	19.83 ha
	Antwerp	11.07 ha

Asparagus:	Limburg	310.91 ha
	Antwerp	119.09 ha
	Flemish Brabant	28.05 ha
	West Flanders	26.66 ha
	East Flanders 2	5.06 ha