

# Strawberry worker



A project by Boerenbond & Kenniscentrum  
Groene Sectoren with the support of Cera



## ACTIVITEIT

### Picking strawberries

Picking strawberries can be done outdoors, in a greenhouse or under plastic covers. Picking when growing in open ground is done on the ground. A cultivation on substrate is picked at altitude.

### Region in flanders

The cultivation of strawberries is concentrated mainly in the province of Limburg, in the Noorderkempen (Hoogstraten region) and in West- and East Flanders.

### Picking activity

The essence of the work is to pick the fruit without damaging it. It is important to recognize the ripe fruits and pick them.

The picked fruit should be placed in a box.

There is a separate document related to working safely in strawberry farming.

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

### Period of work

Picking of strawberries takes place mainly from April to July when picked outdoors and from April to October when grown under glass.

### Job requirements

- No prior knowledge or study is required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Be fit to perform (often) repetitive physical labor: especially when picking on the ground, good physicality is required.
- Sense of accuracy: an eye for quality and safety
- Following rules and agreements - following work instructions
- Working in a team
- Working with persons from other origins/countries
- Work takes place outdoors or in a greenhouse
- WORKING CONDITIONS
- It involves employment as a seasonal employee (SWN).
- By 2024, 100 working days are possible for SWN.
- It's about day contracts.
- The minimum hourly wage in 2024 will be: 12.64 euros gross/hour

There is a payroll calculation per month. A deduction of 18.725% is made for taxes. This is the professional withholding tax. This withholding tax is in principle liberatory. This means that a tax return no longer needs to be filed in the year following the income year. The liberating character of the withholding tax is linked to having a certificate of residence. In

principle, no taxes have to be paid afterwards. Non-residents are not eligible for the application of a tax-free allowance.

For State residents, such as Belgians, the withholding tax is 11.11% and does require a tax return to be filed in the year following the income year. For national residents, there is a tax-free allowance.

As a seasonal employee, you will receive a copy of the wage calculation (each month). This lists all hours worked, total gross pay, withholding taxes and net pay.

There may be, in agreement with the employee, 65 euros/week paid in hand as an advance and for 8 weeks per calendar year. An agreement must be drawn up in the employee's language and a discharge for receipt.

Note: If you 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 qualify for the tax-free allowance and get a portion of the taxes already withheld back.

- If more than 50 days have been worked, an end-of-year premium and a purchasing power premium of 227.43 euros is paid the following year by the Guarantee and Social Fund for Horticulture. This premium is paid in the year following the season. Give your address in your home country to the Horticultural Social Fund.

- If more than 30 days have been worked for the same employer, a loyalty premium of 0.5 euros per day is paid by the Guarantee and Social Fund for Horticulture.

These premiums are paid in the year following the season. Please provide your address in your home country to the Horticulture Social Fund.

## Labor

Working hours in horticulture are normally 38h/week.

Seasonal employees work on daily contracts. The contract starts over every day.

In season, more hours can be worked: up to 11 hours /day and up to 50 hours /week. All hours worked are paid at the normal hourly rate.

## Opportunity form

For seasonal employees, there is an occasional form on which the days of seasonal work are recorded. The seasonal employee can keep this form during the season. The employer must initial the noted performance once week otherwise the employee's entries will be considered correct.

## Logement

In many cases, the employer provides housing. Housing must meet certain standards (area, heating, plumbing, etc.).

The employer may charge a monthly rent for lodging. Arrangements will be made for this at the beginning of the season.

A written agreement should be signed with the employee in this case in a language he understands, stating the monthly rent.

The rent can be about 150 to 250 euros/month.

The agreed-upon rent can be deducted from net pay when calculating wages.

## Registration with the municipality

You must be registered as a seasonal worker with the municipality of residence. The municipality will issue a residence document.

In most cases, a Schedule 3TER (declaration of arrival) is issued. Often this is a 3TER seasonal labor. This document provides legal residence for as long as the seasonal work lasts (a maximum of 100 days of performance per calendar year).

You also get a National Register number (or a bis number) in Belgium.

## Declaration to social security

Benefits are declared quarterly to Social Security in Belgium.

## Health concerns

Information about health care in Belgium can be found on the website: [www.cm.be](http://www.cm.be), [www.kcgs.be](http://www.kcgs.be), [www.vdab.be](http://www.vdab.be), [www.boerenbond.be](http://www.boerenbond.be), [www.cera.coop](http://www.cera.coop).

## Working safely in strawberry farming

There is a separate information leaflet on safe and healthy strawberry picking.

See flyer: 1 - Picking strawberries safely and healthily

## Additional information on strawberry production in Belgium

### Region

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

In Flanders, there are 530 strawberry farms at 733 hectares outdoors and 454 hectares under shelter.

Each year they supply more than 45,000 tons of strawberries to cooperatives.

## Period of the year

At the end of spring and beginning of summer, the strawberry season kicks in, creating a significant demand for pickers.

Crop composition in the year 2024 (strawberry production):

- **Antwerp** 547.36 ha
- **Limburg** 280.29 ha
- **West Flanders** 172.38 ha
- **East Flanders** 86.91 ha
- **Flemish Brabant** 57.03 ha