

The worker in various activities in arboriculture



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



ACTIVITEIT

Cultivation and harvesting tree nursery

The activity involves the various activities in the tree nursery.

Region in flanders

Arboriculture is fairly spread throughout Flanders, but has its concentration in East Flanders. In the region of Wetteren, Oosterzele, Laarne, Wichelen and Ledde, it is mainly ornamental trees. The forest tree cultivation is mainly in the region of Maldegem, Waarschoot and Evergem.

Activity

The essence of the work consists of harvesting work i.e. clearing trees, preparing them for sale, planting new plantings. Also the planting of new plantings with the follow-up activities of pruning trees, weeding, maintenance of plantations, ...

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

Period of work

- Harvesting operations: October-end December and early
- January-March New plantings: March-April

Job requirements

- No prior knowledge or study is required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Be fit to perform (often) repetitive physical labor: especially in harvest work, good physical fitness 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 an on-farm sorting area

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 is:
 - Forest tree nursery: 14.17 euros gross/hour
 - Tree nursery: 14.28 euros gross/hour

There is a payroll calculation per month. A deduction of 18.725% is made for taxes.

This is the withholding tax. This withholding tax is in principle liberatory. This means that no tax return needs to be filed in the year following the income year. The liberating character of the wage tax is linked to having a certificate of residence. In principle, no taxes have to be paid afterwards.

Non-state 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 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 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 tax refund.

- 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 the year following the season. Please provide your address in your home country and your account number to the Horticultural Social Fund if you wish to receive this premium.
- 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. This premium is paid the year following the season. Please provide your address in your home country and your account number to the Horticultural Social Fund.

Labor

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

Working hours in horticulture are normally 38h/week.

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. If you change employers you must bring this document with you. The employer must initial the noted performance once a week or 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 is to be agreed with the employer and may be 150 to 250€/month.

The agreed 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 where you reside. The municipality issues a residence document.

In most cases, an Attachment 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 (maximum 100 days of performance per calendar year).

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

Declaration to social security

You do not pay social security as a seasonal worker. However, your services are declared quarterly to social security in

Belgium by the employer.

Health concerns

As a seasonal worker in Belgium, you can enjoy free health care in the first two years you come to Belgium

comes. Make arrangements with your employer for this.

Information about health care in Belgium can be found on the website: www.cm.be, www.kcgs.be, www.vdab.be, www.boerenbond.be, www.cera.coop.

Safe and healthy working in tree nurseries

There is a separate information leaflet on working safely and healthily in arboriculture.

See leaflet: 8 - Grubbing of trees in arboriculture

Additional information on nursery production in Belgium

Tree nursery specific figures (2020):

- Area of tree nurseries: 5285 ha (BE) of which 4637 ha in Flanders
- Number of tree nurseries: 783 (BE) of which 679 in Flanders

In the tree nursery industry (2019), 274 employers employ about 1381 FTE workers of which about 510 FTE are active seasonal workers. However, these temporary workers are crucial on peak labor (during harvest and planting).

Arboriculture: distribution of total employment in Flanders:

- 55% East Flanders
- 9% Antwerp
- 15% West Flanders
- 17% Limburg
- 4% Flemish Brabant