

Greenhouse worker



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



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ACTIVITEIT

Harvesting vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, head lettuce)

Description of duties:

- Tie up and clip plants: guide plants along existing cord
- Thieving: removing unwanted shoots
- Lowering: growing plants with string construction lowered into the greenhouse
- Pruning: applying learned pruning techniques, maintenance and use of pruning equipment, attention to safety when pruning, working from height (picking truck)
- Picking: picking fruits without damaging them, recognizing ripe fruits. Short groomed nails are a must.
- Sorting: packing and labeling fruits in proper packaging, performing quality control

Work in sheltered conditions: is work in a greenhouse

Picking activities are the most important work for seasonal workers. The other activities are done to a lesser extent by seasonal workers. These activities are done more by permanent workers.

Region in flanders

Greenhouse vegetable growing is mainly located in the region around Sint-Katelijne-Waver and Hoogstraten, close to the auctions that specialize in greenhouse vegetables (BelOrta and Coöperatie Hoogstraten). There is also a concentration of greenhouse horticulture companies in the regions around Roeselare (REO auction) and Deinze.

Activities throughout the year and period of work

Work in the greenhouse (outside the period of picking) : tying up, thieving, pruning and lowering of plants:

- Peak work between May and September

Picking, sorting, packing fruits :

- Peak work between May and September

Seasonal workers are mostly needed for picking activities

Job requirements

- No prior knowledge or study is required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Be fit to perform (often) repetitive physical labor: especially when picking, good physicality is needed.
- 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: 12.20 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 Government 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 will list all hours worked, total gross pay, withholding taxes and net pay.

There may be, in agreement with the employee, 65 euros paid in hand as an advance and this during 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 portion of the taxes already withheld.

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. 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. This premium is paid the year following the season. Give your address in your home country to the Horticultural 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 a 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 are made about this at the beginning of the season. In this case, a written agreement must be signed with the employee in a language that he understands and specifying the monthly rent.

Rent may be around 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 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 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, www.kcgs.be, www.vdab.be, www.boerenbond.be, www.cera.coop.

Safe and healthy work in greenhouse farming

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

See leaflet: 4a - safe and healthy harvesting of peppers

See leaflet: 4b - safe and healthy harvesting of tomatoes

Additional information on strawberry production in Belgium:

Region and employment of greenhouse horticulture (composition of crops in the year 2024):

- Tomatoes fresh:
- Antwerp
- West Flanders
- East Flanders
- 448.33 ha
- 82.87 ha
- 68.85 ha
- Paprika:
- Antwerp
- 93.69 ha
- Head lettuce :
- West Flanders
- East Flanders
- Antwerp
- 84.41 ha
- 16.18ha
- 22.29 ha