

Hard fruit picking worker

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



ACTIVITEIT

Picking hard fruit (apples and pears)

- The activity consists of picking pears and apples.

Region in flanders

- there is a large 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 is also an area specialized in growing pears. More and more hard fruit is also found in West and East Flanders.

Picking activity

- the essence of the work is to pick the fruit without damaging it. With apple and the colored pears, it is important to recognize the ripe fruits and pick them. Picking from the tops of trees is done with ladders or from a picking truck. The picked fruits are collected in large wooden boxes.
- It is very important to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully!

Period of work

- pear picking takes place in August/September. Apples are picked in the months of September/October/November. There are also early and late varieties that are picked (just) outside these peak periods.

Job requirements

- no prior knowledge or study is required
- Being flexible and motivated
- Be capable of performing (often) repetitive physical labor
- 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
- The work takes place outdoors

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 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 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 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, 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.

In this case, a written agreement should be signed with the employee 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-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 where you reside. The municipality issues a residence document.

In most cases, an Attachment 3TER (declaration of arrival) is delivered. Often this is a 3TER season. This document provides legal residency for as long as the seasonal work lasts (maximum 100 days 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. Make arrangements for this with your employer.

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.

Picking fruit safely and healthily

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

See flyer: 5 - Harvesting hard fruit

Additional information on hard fruit production in Belgium

Region

There is great concentration of hard fruit (apples and pears) cultivation in the south of the province of Limburg and the east of Flemish Brabant (Hageland). Moreover, the Waasland region is also an area specialized in growing pears.

- There are some 16 000ha of apples (5 500ha) and pears (11 000ha) in Flanders. Increasingly, apple plantations are being replaced by pear plantations. Annually this accounts for 200 000 tons of apples and 320 000 tons of pears.

Period of the year

the greatest demand for labor is during August/September and also October when the fruit is picked. Pruning is done in the winter, and pears are also thinned in the summer.

From harvest until about June, the fruit that was kept in cold storage is also sorted.

Employment fruit sector

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