

# Soft fruit picking worker



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



## ACTIVITEIT

### Picking soft fruits (berries, raspberries, blackberries)

The activity involves picking soft fruits (berries, raspberries, blackberries,...).

### Region in flanders

Soft fruit cultivation is located throughout Flanders with clusters in northern Antwerp, southern Limburg and scattered throughout East and West 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.

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

### Period of work

Soft fruit picking takes place from the month of April to the month of October. Crops under glass can offer fruit for a longer period. Outdoor crops harvest mainly in the summer months of May-August. Most plants, also outdoors, are under hoods to protect the fruit from direct rain and hail impacts.

## 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 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: 12.64 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-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 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 to be agreed with the employer is 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 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. Make arrangements for this with your employer.

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) .

## Healthy and safe soft fruit picking

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

See flyer: 6 - Harvesting soft fruit

## Additional information on growing soft fruit

### Region

Soft fruit cultivation is located throughout Flanders with clusters in northern Antwerp, southern Limburg and scattered throughout East and West Flanders.

In Flanders, about 135 hectares of raspberries, 118 hectares of blueberries, 48 hectares of blackberries and another 100 hectares of other berries (prickly pears, currants and others) are grown.

### Period of the year

Soft fruit picking takes place from the month of April to the month of October. Crops under glass can offer fruit for a longer period. Outdoor crops are mainly harvested during the summer months of May-August, depending on the species and variety. Most plants are, also outdoors under covers to protect the fruits from direct rain and hail impacts.

### Employment fruit sector

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

