

Policy Statement

10 POINT PLAN TO BETTER RECRUIT AND RETAIN WORKERS

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The voice of British farming

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People are the most important asset to any business, and farming is no exception.

National Living Wage, auto-enroll pensions, record low UK unemployment levels and increased competition for workers throughout Europe all add pressure to farm labour costs and availability. Throughout the food supply chain businesses are finding it more and more difficult to attract and keep the staff they need.

It's more important than ever to be the employer of choice and get the best from your workforce. With that in mind the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and Association of Labour Providers (ALP) have produced a 10 Point Plan of achievable activities to support employers, and agencies that source labour, to better recruit and retain workers.

1. SOURCING AND RECRUITING

The majority of farm businesses either rely on labour providers to fill their recruitment needs, or employ their workforce directly. In March, the NFU and ALP invited employers, labour providers and government to a roundtable to review new and innovative ways of sourcing and recruiting. Feedback suggests some strategies for recruiting workers are proving more effective than others, particularly in light of the uncertainty that Brexit continues to present to overseas workers.

Action: ALP will publish advice on how to source workers in the current climate, ready for the 2018 season.

2. ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Whether it's advertising job vacancies or promoting the benefits of a job in farming, the more targeted any advertising and promotion is towards the individual worker, the more successful it will be. The horticulture sector for example has a lot to offer, including:

- a. Guaranteed work and good rates of pay,
- b. Flexibility of hours, with permanent and temporary roles available,
- c. High standards of subsidised accommodation,
- d. Ethical employment environment.
- e.

Considering where and how workers find jobs will also improve the chances of adverts being responded to.

Action: The NFU has launched #peopleinfarming – a social media campaign that showcases the people in farming businesses and the variety of jobs available.

Action: Employers can review their websites and use of social media to promote the best image of the business and opportunities available, with up to date information about the job roles, facilities and benefits and a focus on “selling” the jobs.

Action: ALP will provide training and guidance on using social media to attract workers throughout Europe.

3. CONSIDER ALL AVAILABLE VISA PROGRAMMES

Employers looking to fill vacancies might consider the available visa programmes that enable sourcing of workers from overseas.

One example is the Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) visa, which allows Individuals to work in most jobs and enter and leave the UK at any time while the visa is valid. It is open to those who:

- want to live and work in the UK for up to 2 years
- are aged 18 to 30
- have £1,890 in savings
- are from [certain specified countries](#)¹, or have certain types of British Nationality.
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Action: NFU and ALP will provide links to Home Office visa information in its member communications.

4. GETTING THE BEST FROM THE TEAM

AHDB Horticulture's Lean Labour Tool is designed to help growers increase the productivity and efficiency of their workforce, which can lead to a reduction in the overall numbers of workers required. Getting the best from the team is the theme of AHDB Horticulture's programme of workshops, aimed at helping employers find solutions to labour challenges.

Action: AHDB is encouraged to extend its programme of workshops throughout 2018. NFU will help promote events to employers.

Action: ALP will provide training and guidance on lean recruitment models, with the first workshops set to take place this summer.

5. COLLABORATION BETWEEN FARMS AND PROVIDERS

An employer that is a registered licence holder with the GLAA can provide workers to other farms. This may help balance out peaks and troughs in hours on businesses within a locality (where members of the workforce may be 'under-employed' for a period of time). It could also create opportunities to extend seasonal work into full-time employment.

The scope for information sharing and collaboration between labour providers would further help maximise the available workforce across a larger number of businesses.

Action: Employers can find guidance on the provision of workers at gla.gov.uk

Action: ALP, with labour providers and employers, will work together to explore the demand for and benefits of a tool to facilitate collaboration and communication on labour demand.

¹ Australia, Canada, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Taiwan. Citizens of Hong Kong and the Republic of Korea must get a certificate of sponsorship reference number before applying, which includes information about the job they will do.

6. INCENTIVES TO RETAIN WORKERS

Employers are experiencing an increase in labour turnover, with more 'non-arrivals' of overseas workers and higher numbers of workers leaving their jobs early.

Paying the right rate of pay for each job role is important. Evaluating the job roles in a business can help to set appropriate pay scales that reflect the tasks, responsibilities and language skills required of individual members of a team.

Rewards for outstanding work, or to aid retention of staff can take the form of a bonus, or non-cash incentive; ranging from: bonuses, additional paid-leave, and reduced accommodation charges for example.

Action: Employers can consider the incentives and rewards they can offer their staff.

ACTION: ALP will research and produce guidance on worker retention – including how to carry out an effective job evaluation and incentive schemes.

7. FLEXIBLE WORKING PATTERNS

More people are seeking jobs that can offer a work/life balance to accommodate family commitments and lifestyle. Recognising this, where feasible, employers can review their workforce needs and identify operations that may be suitable for employees not requiring onsite accommodation, or looking for a more structured working week. It may be possible to attract more workers already living in the UK by offering flexible working patterns, where possible.

Action: Employers can review job roles, descriptions and hours for temporary and permanent work.

8. LABOUR PLANNING

Planning ahead and planning accurately for labour requirements can ensure that businesses have the right number of workers at the right time. Over or under estimating the numbers of workers needed, as well as having a 'just-in-time' policy for recruiting staff is a risky one. At the other end of the supply chain late or inaccurate orders, changes to volumes and contract specifications by processors and retailers make it harder for farmers to manage their staffing, and add to workforce pressures.

Action: Employers and labour providers can develop a 'labour plan' to improve labour forecasting and accuracy and identify any opportunities for efficiency gains or collaboration.

Action: Regular communication between farmers, growers and the retailer or processor can help manage labour supply and maximise workforce efficiency.

Action: ALP to develop guidance on better labour planning processes.

9. GIVING WORKERS A STRONG VOICE

Understanding the views of workers is so important for identifying and rooting out any problems, concerns and exploitation. It's valuable for workers to have a means of communicating with employers to provide feedback on the work environment, accommodation and any issues they may have.

Action: Employers can develop a communication plan, which includes conducting worker surveys, setting up an employee forum, offering staff the chance to raise issues anonymously and encouraging informal communication.

Action: Labour providers and employers can issue guidance to every member of staff on employee rights.

Action: ALP will lead a working group to review communication tools to encourage better dialogue between providers, workers and employers prior to arrival, to keep in touch on the worker's return home and to inform of additional work hours available.

10. WORKING AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Workers have more choice on where they work and who they work for than ever before. Rates of pay between most UK horticulture and agriculture businesses are not significantly different and this means that the working and living environment becomes a key deciding factor for workers. Treating workers as individuals, making them feel valued and important to the business will make a difference.

Action: View the working and living environment through the eyes of the worker and make changes that improve the way workers feel and are treated.

NOTES:

NFU Employment Service www.nfuemploymentservice.com offers support to businesses to take the hassle and complication out of complying with employment law and help employers understand the legal ramifications of any decisions it makes. From the point of recruitment to employment termination, the service offers advice, guidance and support to protect businesses from the risks of being an employer. Membership subscriptions are based on employee numbers, annual payroll and package taken. For further information or a quotation, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0370 840 0234 or email us at info@nfuemploymentservice.com.