



MAC Seasonal Workers Call for Evidence: Representative Organisations

1. Introduction

What is the Seasonal Worker visa?

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme closed in 2013. The Seasonal Workers Pilot began in 2019 and has subsequently turned into the Seasonal Worker visa. The Seasonal Worker visa is a route by which migrant workers can come to the UK to do seasonal horticulture work and poultry production work. Workers on this route for horticulture can stay for a maximum of six months in a 12-month period, with a six-month 'cooling off' period required. Workers on this route for poultry work can stay from the 18th of October until the 31st of December each year.

The Seasonal Worker visa is not a route to settlement, and migrants coming to the UK are not able to bring dependants. To be eligible, you must: be 18 or over, have a certificate of sponsorship, and have enough money to support yourself (unless exempt).

The scheme is administered in the UK by scheme providers, who act as sponsors for the purposes of the scheme and then match migrants with employers in the UK. More information on the route can be found here.

About this project:

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is exploring views on and usage of the Seasonal Worker visa, and how well the route meets the needs of employers, employees and other stakeholders. We are interested in views on anything to do with the Seasonal Worker visa route, for example the economic impact of the scheme, how well the scheme works for employers, how well it protects the welfare of migrants, how the scheme is organised and anything that could be improved about the scheme. One of the ways we will look at this is through this Call for Evidence (CfE). There are three different questionnaires aimed at:

- Employers of migrant workers
- Representative bodies and other organisations (for example research organisations, academics and associated businesses such as supermarkets) and
- Individuals (for example current/previous employees)

Alongside information we get from this CfE we will look at other data relating to the route, speak to stakeholders, and compare the Seasonal Worker visa to similar routes operating in other countries.

How can you respond?

Our preferred way of receiving your response is through the online version of this questionnaire (this Word version is provided for reference). However, alternatively you can email the MAC inbox mac@homeoffice.gov.uk with your views. If you are emailing the MAC inbox, it would be helpful if you could look through the questionnaire first to see the issues we are interested in. We are also interested in receiving any additional information you would like us to see – either as an attachment at the end of this questionnaire, or emailed directly to the MAC inbox. Many of the questions in this questionnaire are not compulsory and should only be answered if you wish to do so.

This questionnaire will remain open until **Tuesday 19th September 2023**. We really value your input and would find it helpful if you could respond as soon as possible so that we can start considering your views and information.

It may be helpful to share a version of this questionnaire on our webpage with other people in your organisation, to collate your response before completing the online questionnaire.

All identifying and personal information will remain confidential, however aggregated and anonymised information in the form of summary statistics will be published as part of our final report. We will ask your permission to quote from your response, but this will be on an opt-in basis. You can view a full description of our personal data policy here. At any point you may save your response to continue later before submitting.

Nothing you say in this CfE will affect any dealings you may have with the Home Office or any other government departments. The MAC is not an enforcement body and does not share information on who has responded outside the MAC team.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Migration Advisory Committee
mac@homeoffice.gov.uk

This paper version of the questionnaire is set up with instructions to guide you to the most relevant questions depending on which response you choose – please follow the guidance within the questions. The web version of this CfE will take you to the correct pages automatically.

2. About you and the organisations you represent

1. What is the name of your representative organisation?

2. What is your email address?

3. How many organisations or members do you represent?

4. Which of the sectors below best describes the organisation/members you represent? Please select all sectors that apply.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Manufacturing (including poultry processing)

Other (please specify):

5. Can you give us some more detail about what the organisation/members you represent do?

6. In which region / country of the UK are organisations/members you represent concentrated? Please select all that apply.

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East
- South West
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- All regions/countries

3. Use of the Seasonal Worker visa

7. Do the organisations/members you represent use the Seasonal Worker route?

- All or almost all of them do (continue)
- Most of them do (continue)
- Around half do and half do not (continue)
- Most of them do not (continue)
- None or almost none of them do (continue)
- Don't know (skip to Section 13)

4. Roles used for, and thoughts on worker retention and costs

8. Which job titles do the organisations/members you represent use the Seasonal Worker visa for? For each job title please also describe: the education level needed, training required, main tasks of the job, and if there is responsibility for others.

9. What has the retention of employees during the 6-month period of the Seasonal Worker visa been like for the organisations/members you represent? Where possible, please cite dropout rates and reason, e.g., people let go, and/or choosing to move on.

10. Thinking about the costs involved with bringing a worker to the UK, do organisations/members you represent commonly pay for any of the following? Please select all that apply.

- Travel from country of origin
- Travel in UK
- Accommodation
- Visa cost
- None of the above. They do not pay any of the costs associated with bringing a seasonal worker to the UK
- None of the above. None of them use the Seasonal Worker Visa
- Do not know
- Other (please specify):

11. Do you have any views on the costs of using the Seasonal Worker visa? In your response, please specify which costs, how much and who pays these.

12. To what extent, if at all, do you think the organisations/members you represent would be able to pay some of the costs associated with using the Seasonal Worker visa that are currently paid by the employee, or additional costs to support external monitoring/oversight of the scheme, if they had to do this to be able to continue to access the Seasonal Worker Scheme?

13. To what extent are the organisations/members you represent able to guarantee employees work for the full duration of their visa?

14. What happens when there is not enough work to give Seasonal Worker visa employees?

5. Reasons for not using the route

15. If any organisations/members you represent have stopped using the route, please tell us why? If no organisations/members stopped using the route, please put N/A.

16. Why have any organisations/members you represent that have not used the Seasonal Worker visa, not done so? Please select all that apply.

- Do not need to hire outside of the domestic workforce
- Hire migrant workforce through other means
- They cannot recruit the people they need through the Seasonal Worker visa
- Not eligible to use the Seasonal Worker visa
- Have reduced the need for staff through mechanisation/automation
- None of the above. They all use the Seasonal Worker scheme
- Do not know
- Other reason (free text)

17. Please tell us anything further about your answer to the question above.

6. Thoughts on visa length

18. The maximum visa length for the Seasonal Worker visa is six months for horticulture and 18th October - 31st December for poultry. How well/not well do you find the Seasonal Worker visa length works for the organisations/members you represent? Please select one.

- Much too long
- Too long
- Suitable length
- Too short
- Much too short
- Do not know

19. Why do you say this?

7. Ease of compliance, finding out information and of planning ahead

20. How easy/difficult do the organisations/members you represent find it is to comply with the Seasonal Worker visa scheme rules? Please select one.

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neutral
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- No opinion
- Not applicable- none of them use the Seasonal Worker scheme
- Do not know

21. Why do you say that? Please be specific about the rules the organisations/members you represent find particularly easy or difficult to comply with and why.

22. How easy/hard is it for the organisation/members you represent to find out information about the scheme or ask questions if they need to? Please select one.

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neutral
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- No opinion
- Not applicable- they have not needed to find out information or ask a question
- Do not know

23. Which months in the year do the organisations/members you represent currently use seasonal workers? Please select all that apply.

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December
- None of the above (they would not use the Seasonal Worker visa)
- Do not know

24. And how well does this fit with the needs of the organisations/members you represent?

25. How accurately are the organisations/members you represent able to plan ahead when using this scheme?

8. Thoughts on experience of using the scheme

26. How has the experience of using the scheme been for the organisations/members you represent? Please select one.

- All organisations/members have found it positive
- Most organisations/members have found it positive
- Around half of organisations/members have found it positive
- Most organisations/members have not found it positive
- No organisations/members have found it positive
- Not applicable- they have not used it
- Do not know

27. Why was this their experience?

9. How well the scheme meets employers' needs

28. Do you/the organisations/members you represent believe that the roles currently covered by the Seasonal Worker visa meet the needs of employers? Please tell us why/why not.

29. How many of the organisations/members you represent are able to recruit the number of workers they need through the Seasonal Worker visa? Please select one.

- All or almost all (continue)
- Most (continue)
- About half (continue)
- Some (continue)
- None or almost none (continue)
- Do not know (Skip to Section 13)

10. Impact of being able/not being able to recruit as many people as needed

30. If any of the organisations/members you represent are not able to recruit people/as many people as they need through the scheme, why is this?

31. For any organisations/members who are not able to recruit as many people as needed, what impact (if any) does this have? Please select one.

- Considerable impact
- Some impact
- Not very much impact
- No impact at all
- Not applicable- they have all been able to recruit as many as needed
- Do not know

32. For any organisations/members who are not able to recruit as many people as needed, what do they do in response? Where possible, please tell us: impacts on their products and services; the impact on their existing workers; and the impact on their approach to recruitment.

33. For any organisations/members who are able to recruit as many people as needed, what impact (if any) would it have if they were not able to do so? Please select one.

- Considerable impact
- Some impact
- Not very much impact
- No impact at all
- Not applicable- none of the organisations have been able to recruit as many as needed
- Do not know

34. Could you tell us more about your response? For example, if you have said there would be an impact on businesses, please tell us how they would be affected, or if you have said there would be no impact then please tell us why not.

11. Thoughts on recruitment strategies

35. Have the organisations/members you represent tried any of these alongside the Seasonal Worker visa? Please select all that apply.

- Recruiting British workers
- Recruiting EU workers who are already living in the UK
- Recruiting Non-EU workers who are already living in the UK
- Reorganising the job (for example changing shift patterns)
- Reducing the need for staff through mechanisation/automation
- Increasing pay or benefits to help recruitment
- None of the above
- Do not know
- Other (free text)

36. Thinking of the recruitment strategies used alongside the Seasonal Worker visa by the organisations/members you represent, how well have they worked? Where possible, please think about whether they achieved the volumes of workers they sought; and their experience of using these channels.

37. Thinking about the organisations/members you represent who do not use the Seasonal Worker visa, what do they do instead? Please select all that apply

- Recruiting British workers
- Recruiting EU workers who are already living in the UK
- Recruiting Non-EU workers who are already living in the UK
- Reorganising the job (for example changing shift patterns)
- Reducing the need for staff through mechanisation/automation
- Increasing pay or benefits to help recruitment
- None of the above
- Do not know
- Not applicable- they all use the Seasonal Worker visa
- Other (free text)

38. Thinking of the recruitment strategies used by the organisations/members you represent who do not use the Seasonal Worker visa, how well have they worked? Where possible, please think about whether they achieved the volumes of workers they sought; and their experience of using these channels.

39. What would the organisations/members you represent do if they were not able to use the Seasonal Worker visa at all?

12. Thoughts on re-recruiting

40. How important, or not important, is it to the organisation/members you represent to be able to re-recruit Seasonal Worker visa employees (to return to the UK in subsequent years)?

- Very important
- Important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant
- Not applicable- none of them use the Seasonal Worker visa
- Do not know

41. Why do you say this?

42. To what extent (if at all) are the organisation/members you represent able to re-recruit workers (to return to the UK in subsequent years)? Please select one.

- Very easily
- Fairly easily
- With some difficulty
- With a great deal of difficulty
- Do not know
- Not applicable – the organisations have not used/have not tried to re-recruit seasonal workers

43. Why do you say this?

13. Thoughts on automation and labour augmentation

44. To what extent is automated or labour augmentation technology that reduces the need for labour or makes it easier, available and/or accessible to businesses like those you represent?

45. And thinking about the next five years, how far (if at all) do you expect such technology to become more available and/or accessible to businesses like those you represent?

14. Views on how efficiently the scheme is organised

46. How efficiently do you think the scheme is organised by the government, which sets the overall rules and numbers for the Seasonal Worker visa route? Please select one.

- Very efficiently
- Quite efficiently
- Neither efficiently nor inefficiently
- Quite inefficiently
- Very inefficiently
- No opinion
- Do not know

47. Why do you say that? Please be specific about any improvements you would like to see.

48. How efficiently do you think the scheme is administered by the scheme providers who allocate workers to employers? Please select one.

- Very efficiently
- Quite efficiently
- Neither efficiently nor inefficiently
- Quite inefficiently
- Very inefficiently
- No opinion
- Do not know

49. Why do you say that? Please be specific about any improvements you would like to see.

15. Thoughts on welfare, effectiveness, timelines and scheme rules

50. How do you as a representative organisation work with employers to help them meet labour/production needs? Where possible, please tell us about: how you work with employers to improve attraction/retention/training of workforce and how you help employers consider any plans for automation.

51. How well do you think the Seasonal Worker Scheme in its current form safeguards the welfare of workers?

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Neither well nor badly
- Fairly badly
- Very badly
- Don't know

52. Why do you say that? Please be specific about any improvements you would like to see, for example new rules/requirements or improving the enforcement of existing rules.

53. Do you have any views on how well/not well the current complaints process for employees works? Please be specific about any changes that could be made (for example to make employees who have complaints more likely to come forward, or to enable problems to be resolved more quickly).

54. The scheme is currently guaranteed until 2024. What (if any) are your views on this?

55. The rules of the scheme are that you must be over 18 to use the route, and you cannot bring dependants. You must have enough money to support yourself in the UK (usually at least £1,270) and there is no English language requirement. Once Seasonal Worker visa employees return to their home country they must spend at least 6 months there before they are able to return to the UK. Do you or the organisations/members you represent have any views about these rules?

56. The scheme currently allows employees to change employer over the course of their stay in the UK. Do you have any views on this?

57. To what extent (if at all) do you think it will be possible to fill the jobs currently being done by seasonal workers from the UK workforce in future?

58. How well/not well do you think the Seasonal Worker visa route currently works for employers? Please give us as much information about your views as you wish.

59. How well/not well do you think the Seasonal Worker visa route currently works for those who come to the UK as a seasonal worker? Please give us as much information about your views as you wish.

16. Any other information

60. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your views, or the views/experiences of the organisations/members you represent on the Seasonal Worker visa? For example, if there is anything that could be improved about the scheme.

61. If you have any other documents or information you would like to send us, please attach any files you wish to here, or email these to mac@homeoffice.gov.uk

17. Closing questions

We have a few questions which ask about how we use your response to this questionnaire and about contacting you in the future for follow up research.

62. Would you be happy for us to quote anonymously from your response to this CfE?

- Yes
- No

63. Would you be happy for us to name your organisation in the published report?

- Yes
- No

64. Would you be happy for us or Revealing Reality, who are independent research contractors appointed by the MAC, to recontact you in the next 12 months to invite you to take part in follow-up research regarding similar issues covered in this questionnaire?

- Yes
- No

65. And would you be willing for us to contact you if we needed to clarify or supplement responses you have given in this questionnaire?

- Yes
- No

66. Would you like to be invited to any future stakeholder events the MAC may hold?

- Yes
- No