



UK berry growers having trouble finding seasonal workers

Three out of five British berry growers say it has already become more difficult to recruit seasonal workers from the EU, a situation that puts them at risk of failing to meet consumer demand. British Summer Fruits (BSF), which accounts for 95% of all UK-grown berries supplied to British supermarkets, said 61% of growers are having trouble recruiting and 63% have reported a drop in applications for seasonal work.

As a result of uncertainty about access to skilled agricultural workers, four out of five growers (78%) expect to produce less fruit in future, while 32% have already made the decision to reduce investment in their businesses in future.

BSF chairman Nick Marston said: “British growers are dependent on seasonal agricultural workers from the EU. Without them we cannot cultivate and harvest the volumes of berries – strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries – currently produced in the UK and continue to meet consumer demand. Any fall in home-grown production not only increases our dependence on imported fruit, but it will inevitably lead to significant price rises, too.”

Last year, the Andersons’ Brexit & Seasonal Labour Report commissioned by BSF estimated that consumers would have to pay between 35% and 50% more for strawberries and raspberries if Britain could not secure access to seasonal workers.

According to newsshopper.co.uk, BSF along with the National Farmers’ Union has been calling for the reintroduction of a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) to maintain production.

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