



IFA

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IFA Horticulture Chairman

My Experience of the Application Process as a Producer

16th January 2019

Keadeen Hotel

Newbridge

Co. Kildare

Background

- Business Established in 1983
- Predominant crop is Broccoli, some White Cabbage production to retain key staff
- Very Seasonal Labour Requirement
- Low Season Dec- Feb: 10 Labour units
- Mid-Season Mar – May 20 Labour units
- Peak Season Jun – Nov 60 Labour units
- Very Unbalanced
- Typical Pattern of most Horticulture Units

Business Challenges

- Availability of ANY Labour
- Retention of that Labour particularly key staff
- Not “Attractive work”
- Cost of poor staff
- Cost of Training and Recruiting
- Compliance with Labour regulation
- Compliance with Health and safety legislation
- Fulfilling customers requirements, factoring in daily differences promotional uplifts weather effects
- Perishability of our product

Experience as IFA Chair

- Constant topic of conversation among fellow growers
- Affordability is a key issue here
- Growers need to be more proactive
- Planning here is key (dwell time needs to be considered)
- Look at issues such as accommodation (no Mobile homes)
- Complaints about having to pay €1.00 per hr extra
- Be mindful of your current employees

Facing up to the Challenges

- Our labour costs are 38% of sales
- High turnover of staff 118 people for 60 positions
- Single biggest cost
- Most difficult to manage
- More variable than the weather
- Most of our staff are not on the Minimum wage
- We cannot function without them
- Incorrectly managed will close your business

Our Experience of the Process

- I decided we would try recruit 5 as a starting point
- Realized that these permits would arrive too late
- Decided to go ahead to learn from the process
- Registered the business as a preferred partner
- Did not advertise the positions correctly
- Realized this and it was then too late for 2018
- Difficulty in selecting candidates
- Screening these candidates
- Communicating with these people

My recommendation as a grower

- Stop complaining and do something about it
- 6 Month permits suit the seasonal requirement
- Look at Horticultural colleges outside EU for staff
- Do not confine your efforts to one country
- Look where there are similarities in work
- The permit offers stability of supply
- Work in groups
- Use it or Lose it



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Thank You