



James Lynch and co-signatories
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20 September 2023

Dear Mr Lynch,

Thank you for your letter of 4 August in response to my letter of 14 June concerning the Seasonal Workers route. I trust you will share this response with your co-signatories.

The Home Office keeps the Seasonal Worker route under close ongoing review. This includes ongoing monitoring of the route's performance, regular communication with scheme operators and ongoing compliance monitoring which is underpinned by compliance visits to both operators and growers. We are therefore unclear as to why you believe the route has not been reviewed since 2019. The Home Office routinely places facts and figures regarding the operation of the Seasonal Worker route into the public domain and information for 2020 and 2021 will be published in due course. However, there are no plans to publish standalone reviews of the type published in 2019 for the years in question. Such set piece reviews are of limited value where ongoing close monitoring is already in place as there is inevitably a significant time lag between information being gathered and its publication, with that information already having been considered and acted upon as appropriate.

We note your comments regarding an earlier Home Secretary's statement made to the Home Affairs Select Committee on 27 November 2018. The Home Office takes its responsibilities to prevent Modern Slavery extremely seriously. However, the then Home Secretary's comments related to the initial pilot of the Seasonal Worker route, and in no way committed the Home Office to producing ongoing reports in perpetuity. This is demonstrated on page 47 of the Home Affairs Committee Oral Evidence Transcript (underline our emphasis):

Q673: Alex Norris: When you evaluate the pilot, will you commit to saying how—in choosing your intermediaries—you know that debt bondage was not involved?

Sir Philip Rutnam: Your point about evaluation of the pilot is also very well made. Obviously, we will be evaluating the pilot for a number of things, including the effectiveness of delivering the labour market goals, but also exactly the points about well the scheme has worked as a means of protecting people who could be really quite vulnerable.

Q674 Alex Norris: Is that a yes, Home Secretary, that in that evaluation we will see something about debt bondage?

Sajid Javid: Yes.

Alex Norris: Thank you very much.

Sajid Javid: That is the Permanent Secretary's way of saying yes.

UKVI agreed to the ICIBI's recommendation to improve communication in the sector. As well as monthly engagement with the sponsors, UKVI is undertaking quarterly engagement with a number of sector stakeholders; this will also include government departments and national agricultural bodies. This will include a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and offers another route for these groups to raise concerns.

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) is a Non-Departmental Public Body. As such any requests for the publication of Memoranda of Understanding signed by the GLAA would need to be made to the body in question. The Home Office is not a party to the Memorandum of Understanding referred to, and as such this is not a matter for Central Government.

We note your further comments on your proposal that seasonal workers should be permitted to switch between scheme operators. As we have set out previously, we do not agree with your analysis that such a change would be beneficial to seasonal workers or to the good governance of this immigration route. There are no plans to amend the Seasonal Worker route in the manner you propose.

We are unclear why you consider that the Home Office is not well positioned to monitor welfare, and it has not been our experience that migrant workers are unwilling to raise any concerns they may have with Home Office compliance officers. The ability of workers to raise complaints and escalate them to the sponsors themselves if the farms do not resolve them has been a topic discussed during engagement with the sponsors and the Home Office is satisfied that suitable processes are in place.

We are surprised to hear that you feel that NGOs have not been made aware how to report concerns of non-compliance to the Home Office. This information has been routinely provided in numerous forums, including the now closed Vulnerability Advisory Group, of which a number of your signatory organisations were members. However, for the avoidance of doubt, full details of how to report information to the Home Office are available on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime.

As stated in our published guidance, scheme operators are required to provide workers with a guaranteed minimum number of 32 hours' paid work each week. This is a compulsory minimum base rate that must be paid to workers each week regardless of the type of contract a worker is on or how they perform on piece rates. This requirement is closely monitored by both the scheme operators and the UK Visas and Immigration Compliance Team.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration