



An Roinn Fiontar,  
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta  
Department of Enterprise,  
Tourism and Employment

# Evaluation Report of the Seasonal Employment Permit Pilot 2025

Summary Report  
June 2026

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## Summary

The 2025 Seasonal Employment Permit (SEP) Pilot was designed as a controlled test of Ireland's first regulated, rights-based seasonal employment migration pathway for non-EEA workers. Although the conceptual and legislative framework proved robust, the pilot's implementation revealed significant vulnerabilities, particularly relating to employer due diligence, recruitment practices, and compliance with essential safeguards.

## Uptake

- Despite initial interest from 12 employees, only two employers completed the Approved Seasonal Employer (ASE) process. Of 33 Seasonal Employment Permits granted, only 23 workers ultimately arrived in the State. The Change of Seasonal Employer mechanism could not be tested with one participating ASE.

## Employer Due Diligence

- The majority of failed arrivals stemmed from visa refusals, linked to inadequate employer oversight/ due diligence of the recruitment agents they selected and poor agency practices in source countries.

## Visas

- These failed visa applications raised serious concerns regarding the integrity of recruitment channels. Notably, the **visa system played a crucial protective role**, successfully identifying these irregularities and thereby preventing the entry of individuals who may have been at risk of exploitation or potential smuggling-related abuse. The pilot's experience confirms that the visa assessment function is an indispensable safeguard within seasonal migration mechanisms.

## Single Application Procedure

- Despite engagement and communication on the topic, employers often viewed employment permit approval as equivalently guaranteeing visa approval, resulting in unrealistic planning, and delayed recruitment. The forthcoming *Single Application*

*Procedure* is expected to reduce these issues; however, improved employer guidance, clearer accountability, and potential pre-departure (at sending country) controls are also recommended.

## Compliance

- Compliance monitoring uncovered operational risks and failures. While employment-related obligations such as remuneration, working conditions, and role alignment were reported as compliant on the day of the Workplace Relations Commission inspections, accommodation oversight emerged as a significant risk area.
- The sole pilot ASE had relocated SEP workers to a new accommodation during the pilot without notifying the Department. The employer had also failed to register either accommodation with the Residential Tenancies Board, which caused issues and delays. Ultimately, these shortcomings resulted in the Local Authorities being unable to conduct the required inspections. During this period of unauthorised relocation, the State effectively did not have accurate knowledge of worker's whereabouts, representing a substantive threat to the pilot's integrity. These issues demonstrate that, without strict enforcement mechanisms and pre-approval of accommodation, critical protections cannot be assured.

## Conclusions & Recommendation

Despite the existence of operational and compliance issues, the pilot has reaffirmed the underlying value of a structured, rights-based seasonal migration route. Cross-departmental cooperation was strong, and the ASE framework proved conceptually sound.

Nevertheless, due to the limited participation, the recruitment failures, and the significant compliance breaches, the SEP scheme has not been adequately tested. The Department therefore recommends a **second pilot phase**, with stricter controls, and early roll out times. This phase should begin in Q3 2026 for deployment in the 2027 season and should incorporate:

- Stricter employer due diligence requirements, including mandatory vetting and approval of recruitment agencies
- Robust pre-departure verification processes
- Mandatory accommodation pre-inspections and automatic prohibitions on relocation without prior approval
- Earlier ASE registration to allow for meaningful recruitment planning

- Consideration of a bilateral agreement with a sending country to ensure ethical and controlled recruitment pathways

The Department has already begun engaging with international organisations such as the ICMPD, the ILO, and the IOM, to strengthen policy development in this space.

# Section 1: The Pilot

An IOM<sup>1</sup> working definition of Circular Migration is relied upon in this pilot and this paper:

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*“Circular Migration is the fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or more permanent movement which, when it occurs voluntarily and is linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination, can be beneficial to all involved.”*

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## Introduction

The 2025 Seasonal Employment Permit (SEP) Pilot was created to test whether a regulated, rights-based seasonal employment migration route could address recurring labour shortages in Ireland’s horticulture sector. Limited to 200 workers and 6 employers, the pilot was deliberately designed as a small, closely monitored test of the new permit model. The pilot examined how employers were selected, how the scheme operated across a single season, and how effectively it supported seasonal labour needs while safeguarding worker rights.

Ireland remains an outlier within the EU in not having a dedicated seasonal migration pathway, despite evidence of acute labour demands during peak harvest periods. The SEP pilot was grounded in the principle of sustainable circular migration and supported by strong human-rights and labour-rights protections. Its design drew heavily on international best practice, and the EU Seasonal Workers Directive. It incorporated lessons from other countries’ schemes, including risk-mitigation measures to prevent exploitation, human trafficking, and labour abuses.

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<sup>1</sup> IOM No.12 International Dialogue on Migration. Making Labour Mobility a Catalyst for Development [idm\\_12\\_en.pdf](#)

The pilot's rationale stemmed from acknowledged gaps in Ireland's migration framework. The 2018 Review of Economic Migration Policy highlighted the need for a time-limited permit for lower-skilled seasonal roles. The Employment Permits Act 2024 responded by establishing the legal basis for seasonal work permits, employer pre-approval as ASEs, multi-month permissions, and mechanisms allowing workers to change ASE employer. The SEP regulations launched in early 2025 with a view towards creating a pilot in a controlled environment to assess the scheme's operational viability and to gather evidence for future policy development in this area. While short-term General Employment Permits (GEPs) remain available, the SEP offers a more structured, safeguarded pathway tailored specifically to the realities of seasonal work.

## Design and Implementation

The Pilot was designed as a controlled test of a regulated seasonal employment migration model focused on Ireland's horticulture sector. The scheme allowed non-EEA workers to take up short-term roles for 3–7 months within an April–November window, with strong protections around pay, accommodation, training, and health insurance. Employers were required to register as ASEs, complete a Labour Market Needs Test, and comply with conditions aligned with EU and international labour standards.

The pilot operated on a tight timeline, beginning in early 2025 with ASE approvals beginning in Q1 and workers arriving between June and July. Participation was intentionally limited, with a maximum quota of 200 permits and eligibility confined to soft fruit and vegetable growers. Despite 12 expressions of interest within which 8 eligible employers were identified, only two employers ultimately registered as ASEs. In total, the two employers secured 33 seasonal employment permits. This resulted in 23 seasonal workers entering the State.

A multistakeholder Advisory Group was established to oversee the pilot. It consisted of relevant Departments, bodies, sectoral representatives, and civil society provided oversight throughout the pilot. Feedback from the pilot, along with compliance data, contributed to evaluating the scheme's effectiveness in supporting seasonal labour needs, administrative efficiency, and worker protections. While the pilot demonstrated the strengths of Ireland's immigration and permit safeguards, the small participant base limited a full test of the SEP.

## Governance and Oversight of Pilot

The pilot Advisory Group acted as the primary governance and oversight body for the SEP Pilot. It brought together a range of relevant stakeholders to ensure the scheme operation was effective and delivered the policy objectives.

The group was made up of representatives from key stakeholders, such as the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (DJHAM), the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Teagasc, the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), and Unite the Union.

The Advisory Group convened for the first time on 26 November 2024. It met regularly, to monitor implementation, provide insights, and respond to emerging policy challenges. The Group gave observations on the pilot which then supported the shaping of the evaluation framework and final recommendations. The collaborative nature of the group ensured that both worker protections and sectoral needs were balanced in the development of the SEP.

The Advisory Group's Terms of Reference are provided in the annex of this paper. They include ensuring the scheme was rights-based, sector targeted, and operationally viable. The group was tasked with reviewing pilot progress, identifying challenges, and shaping recommendations for future iterations of the SEP.

Discussions within the Advisory Group covered key policy and operational issues such as immigration permissions, change of seasonal employer procedures, health insurance, and safeguards against recruitment fees. A major point of debate was the Minimum Annual Remuneration (MAR) requirement of €30,000 pro rata, which was set above the National Minimum Wage to protect workers, prevent labour market distortion, and uphold long-standing economic migration policy principles. While some growers argued this rate affected competitiveness relative to other EU schemes, the group recognised that maintaining strong worker protections was essential to the integrity and sustainability of the SEP model.

## Policy Objectives

The SEP pilot was established to conduct a controlled, evidence-based test of the SEP migration model. A central objective was to assess whether a seasonal permit could support sustainable circular migration within existing legal and administrative frameworks, while addressing labour shortages in horticulture through a dedicated temporary route. The pilot offered an opportunity to examine how the SEP's time-limited design functioned in practice and whether it met the seasonal workforce needs identified by the sector.

A core focus of the pilot was ensuring strong worker protections. The scheme was built around rights-based principles, including fair pay, safe accommodation, health insurance, and full protection under Irish employment law. The SEP provisions include safeguards against exploitation, reflecting both international concerns and lessons from other countries' seasonal schemes. The ASE system adds an additional layer of oversight by requiring annual employer registration, with compliance records affecting future participation.

Finally, the pilot tested the administrative feasibility of delivering a SEP within existing systems. This included assessing the effectiveness of ASE registration, the permit application process, and coordination with other government Departments. Feedback from employers and stakeholders provided insights into operational planning, administrative burden, and overall scheme usability, which formed the evidence base for decisions on whether and how the SEP model should evolve.

## Data Collection and Evidence Sources

The SEP pilot incorporated several compliance checks to assess whether the scheme's safeguards functioned effectively in practice. Local Authorities were engaged to inspect employer-provided accommodation to ensure compliance with rental standards.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) conducted inspections as part of the compliance framework. A risk-based inspection at Company 1 verified that on the day of inspection all SEP workers were employed in the correct roles, at the approved location, and receiving the proper remuneration. No breaches of employment permit rules were identified, offering an indication that worker protections were upheld during the pilot.

Additional data sources included monitoring of Employment Permit processing volumes and an Advisory Group survey. While the small number of applications made administrative tracking manageable, it also highlighted the resource demands of processing even limited pilot-scale activity. Feedback from Advisory Group members indicated broad support for the pilot's structured, rights-based approach, noting strong departmental engagement, clear processes, and a stable recruitment pathway as key strengths.

## Section 2: Evaluation

### Uptake and Participation

#### Pilot Composition

Twelve employers expressed interest to participate in the pilot scheme. Of these, eight growers were identified as eligible to proceed through the ASE process. Ultimately, two growers Company 1 and Company 2 completed the registration and participated in the pilot, meeting the pilot requirements.

The pilot scheme set a quota of 200 SEPs. A total of 33 SEP applications were successfully processed and granted. These were 25 for Company 1 and 8 for Company 2 representing just over 16% of the available quota.

Following the issuance of 33 SEPs under the scheme to two ASEs, a final number of 23 workers participated in the pilot. The full complement of 8 individuals with SEPs for Company 2 were unsuccessful in their visa application. This resulted in Company 2's engagement with the pilot ceasing from this point.

#### Duration And Type of Employment Contracts

Employment contracts under the SEP pilot ranged from 3 to 7 months, designed to fit within the seasonal window of April to November. Despite timely issuance of permits in April, standard EP processing, visa processing and the expected logistical arrangements involved in labour mobility, such as recruitment processes, flights, etc, meant that many workers did not begin employment until June, reducing the effective work period and impacting productivity for participating employers.

## Compliance and Safeguards

The SEP pilot placed obligations on employers to ensure fair treatment and safe conditions for seasonal workers. Employers were required to provide formal employment contracts, guarantee a minimum of 30 hours per week, pay at least €30,000 (pro rata), and supply suitable accommodation and health insurance at no cost to workers. These obligations were monitored through the ASE process, WRC oversight, and accommodation checks.

Worker protections were central to the scheme's design. SEP holders received clear information on their rights, working conditions, and access to support, with all documentation translated into relevant languages. This rights-based approach was aligned with the EU Seasonal Workers Directive and aimed to prevent exploitation by ensuring workers understood their entitlements. However, significant issues arose in practice around accommodation oversight. The sole pilot ASE employer relocated workers without notifying the Department, resulting in a period during which their whereabouts were unknown. It emerged that despite efforts Local Authorities could not conduct inspections due to the unforeseen relocation, and a lack of RTB registration at both accommodation sites. This outcome highlights a major compliance risk and the need for stricter pre-approval and non-relocation rules.

The WRC found no compliance issues with employment-related requirements on the day of inspection. This indicates that workers were employed in the correct roles, on approved terms, and receiving the appropriate remuneration.

These findings demonstrated that the rights-based framework can function effectively but also underscored the importance of stronger accommodation controls and more robust monitoring in any future phase of the SEP scheme.

## Section 3: Future of the Scheme

The SEP pilot encountered significant limitations, chiefly the low number of workers who secured both permits and visas. Weak recruitment practices and limited employer due diligence undermined uptake, and concerns emerged around opportunistic behaviour by agents. Delays in employer engagement and visa processing compressed timelines, while attempts by stakeholders to revisit fixed scheme conditions, particularly pay, highlighted the need for clearer advisory group parameters. These challenges constrained the pilot's ability to fully test the SEP.

Operational issues, especially the absence of physical accommodation inspections, posed risks to worker wellbeing and demonstrated gaps in compliance oversight. While interdepartmental cooperation between DETE and DJHAM was strong, the separation of the permit and visa processes may have created confusion for employers and workers, despite significant engagement on this topic. This issue is expected to be resolved through the forthcoming *Single Application Procedure*. Despite these difficulties, the scheme's rights-based design was widely recognised as a strength, with requirements covering accommodation, health insurance, training, and accessible documentation contributing to high worker satisfaction. The GEP was also identified as an interim route for addressing short-term labour needs.

Looking ahead, any future phase of the SEP pilot must incorporate the lessons of the 2025 pilot. Stronger pre-departure systems, clearer documentation requirements, and the possibility of bilateral agreements will be essential. Monitoring must be strengthened, particularly through mandatory pre-inspections of accommodation and strict controls on relocation. The ASE registration process, while effective, should be expanded to include closer scrutiny of accommodation arrangements. Early scheme launch and earlier ASE registration will also be critical to improving uptake and operational efficiency. The shift to a Single Application Procedure represents a major structural improvement and will support a more streamlined, coherent seasonal migration process in future iterations.

## Policy Options

In evaluating the pilot scheme and considering future developments, a range of policy options were considered. These range from ceasing the SEP in a “do nothing” option, to extending the pilot under specific circumstances and conditions.

The Department considered several options following the results of the SEP pilot. **Doing nothing** was ruled out, as the pilot did not sufficiently test the short-term permit need identified in the 2018 Review. The Department also examined waiting for the forthcoming *Single Application Procedure*, which will merge employment permit and visa processes into a streamlined system. This change is expected to prevent issues seen during the pilot where approved SEP workers later failed visa requirements. However, while beneficial, the single procedure alone would not address the incomplete testing of the SEP framework.

This paper recommends implementing the third option considered. This option recommends launching a **second pilot phase**, as the original pilot tested only 1 ASE and 23 workers far below the intended 6 ASEs and 200 workers. As the scheme’s provisions were not meaningfully evaluated, and the rationale for a temporary SEP mechanism remains, a Phase Two pilot could be established to begin in 2026/2027 and could continue with the same sector, shift to a new sector, or run across two sectors in parallel to better test the policy framework. A further or new pilot would incorporate lessons learned from 2025 and make full use of the established powers in the legislation (bilateral agreements, pre-departure training, and evidence requirements) ensuring clearer processes, better employer readiness, and more effective testing conditions.

## Recommendations

Key considerations for the Minister to note to inform final recommendations:

1. the timing issues around limited uptake, and operational issues in advance of a single application procedure.
2. the 2025 pilot is theoretically robust in design, regulation and policy, but the evaluation incomplete in scope due to the limited uptake of seasonal workers.
3. the existing worker protections, terms and conditions as provided for in secondary legislation within the scheme design.

4. the SEP scheme has not been adequately tested in all facets, and therefore it would be premature to launch a full-fledged SEP scheme.

Cognizant of the above, it is recommended that the Seasonal Employment Permit be continued in a **phase two pilot to fully test the scheme**. It is recommended that, pending confirmation of interest from the sector, the phase two pilot be implemented again in the horticulture sector, based on the framework of the 2025 pilot, with additional features.

It is recommended that the phase two pilot is initiated in Q3 2026 with a view towards preparing for the 2027 season in this sector. The administrative process should include ASE registration and approval to be completed during Q3 2026, to alleviate any potential delays. The hiring timeline should be adjusted to allow for earlier adaption.

## Future Development

The Department has begun engagement with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development's (ICMPD) expert group on Seasonal Work through the *Seasonal and Fair Employment Blueprint project*. The Department will engage closely with this group and extract detailed lessons learned from EU peer countries seasonal schemes.

The Department intends to contract an international organisation to support the design of the monitoring and evaluation of the proposed phase two pilot. Within the UN structures the International Labour Organization (ILO) brings specialised expertise in labour rights and standards, supported by its tripartite structure that balances government, worker, and employer interests. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides complementary expertise on migration policy and the development of regular labour mobility pathways. The Department is in early discussions with both organisations to establish a policy engagement framework that will include support for future seasonal work schemes.

# Annex I: SEP Regulation Requirements 2025

## SEP Regulation Requirements 2025

- Employers must apply to be registered as Approved Seasonal Employers;
- The employment must be of a seasonal and recurrent nature;
- The employment permission will be from 3 to 7 months per year;
- The season for the pilot is set to April 14th-November 13th (subject to change in future years if the SEP scheme continues past the pilot);
- The ASE is required to make arrangements to provide appropriate accommodation and health insurance to the SEP holder;
- The minimum annual remuneration for the grant of a SEP in 2025 was €30,000<sup>2</sup>, pro rata. This can include the cost of health insurance and accommodation, subject to National Minimum Wage legislation;
- The ASE must conduct a labour market needs test and must comply with the 50:50 rule ratio<sup>3</sup>;
- The ASE must have at least two foreign nationals in employment;
- The maximum number of SEPs for the pilot scheme is set to 200.
- SEP holders must leave the State for at least 5 months to be eligible to return on a SEP the following year.

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<sup>2</sup> The MAR for this role is due to increase to €32,691 in March 2026.

<sup>3</sup> The 50:50 rule requires that at least 50% of an organisations workforce are sourced from Irish/EEA/UK/Swiss nationals in order to access the Employment Permits system.

## Annex II: ASE Requirements 2025

### Applying for Approved Seasonal Employer Status

To be eligible to apply for a seasonal employment permit, you will be required to be pre-approved. The following information will be required for pre-approval:

- Employer Registered Number (ERN) and Company Name Registered (CRO) Number.
- Registered Name of Company/Business and Trading Name (if different).
- Type of Company (Sole Trader, Limited etc.).
- Nature of Business (Manufacturing, Software etc.).
- Number of EEA (including Irish) and/or Swiss and/or UK nationals currently in your employment.
- Number of non-EEA nationals currently in your employment.
- Confirmation if any redundancies have taken place in the last 6 months for the same role.
- Name, position in company, telephone number and email address for contact person.
- The location or locations at which the work referred to is carried out.
- A statement issued by the Revenue Commissioners showing the monthly statutory return made by the employer, dated within the last 3 months.
- The number of foreign nationals proposed to be employed under a SEP.
- The remuneration that is proposed to be paid to the permit holder.
- The terms and conditions and hours of employment.
- Arrangements made to provide accommodation and training for the foreign national(s) during the period of employment.
- Arrangements made to provide appropriate health insurance for the foreign national(s) without any cost to the foreign national(s) during the period of employment.
- Arrangements made to increase the skills, knowledge, qualifications or experience of employees.

An approval as an Approved Seasonal Employer will be valid for **1 year only**. You will be required to apply for Approved Seasonal Employer status each year.

The application for Approved Seasonal Employer status is separate and distinct from the application process for individual seasonal employment permits.

# Annex III Advisory Group Terms of Reference

## Advisory Group Note and Terms of Reference

### Background and Context

The Review of Economic Migration Policy (2018) found that there is a clear demand for a time limited permission for semi-skilled roles of a seasonal nature. The Employment Permits Act (EPA) 2024 provides for the introduction of a Seasonal Employment Permit (SEP) to respond to this need. The lack of a seasonal employment permit has been identified as gap in the national economic migration package.

- During the passage of the EPA through the Houses of the Oireachtas, concerns were raised by both Government and opposition parties regarding potential worker exploitation under the SEP. The EPA was amended to strengthen workers' rights, including the requirements to provide accommodation and health insurance.
- The SEP will be based firmly in the theory of sustainable circular migration and be supported by a robust Labour Rights framework. It will provide labour market access for up to seven months and provides for the return of the worker each season.
- An initial pilot scheme will be managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and include a process wherein Employers will be invited to register as "Approved Seasonal Employers" (ASE).

The SEP is a short-term employment permission which grants permission for a third country national to work in the State for a maximum of seven months per calendar year. It is designed to support targeted economic sectors, such as horticulture / agriculture in addressing labour shortages, and will be renewable across multiple years for the set calendar season. Only work which is seasonal in nature will be eligible for a SEP, and the roles eligible will be set out in regulations.

This Pilot is intended to assess the feasibility of a Seasonal Employment Scheme in Ireland. As such, the Pilot will be limited to the soft fruit picking sector in horticulture. This will allow DETE to examine the results of the pilot and determine the future direction of the Seasonal Employment Scheme. Other sectors will not be under consideration until the results of the SEP Pilot are finalised.

There have been reported risks of labour exploitation in seasonal work programmes in other jurisdictions. In order to mitigate the risk of exploitation, the scheme has been designed with a strong rights framework developed in consultation with stakeholders, and includes requirements for the provision of accommodation, health insurance,

occupational health and safety training and equipment. It also includes the right for the seasonal worker to easily move to another employer.

The EU Seasonal Worker's Directive (2014) informs the legal framework for Seasonal Employment Permits. Ireland has not opted into this Directive, but these amendments are aligned to the Directive in terms of employee rights, employee protections, and scheme design. This will enable Ireland to opt into the Directive in future, should Government wish. Workers on seasonal employment permits will have full access to the employment law protections that all other employees are guaranteed under Irish law.

The EPA 2024 was commenced on 2nd September except for the sections related to SEPs. These sections will be commenced once regulations for SEPs are finalised. These Regulations are at an advanced stage of drafting.

## Pilot

Following the enactment of the EPA 2024, DETE will conduct the SEP as a pilot programme targeting the horticultural sector - soft fruit specifically. The proposed timeline for this is to approve the first 'Approved Seasonal Employers' in Q4 2024 with the first seasonal migrant workers arriving in 2025. The design, oversight, and evaluation of this pilot is to be informed by a **pilot advisory group** containing representatives of horticultural employers, representatives of migrants and migrant workers, and government representatives with responsibility for the sector, labour and migrant rights and the enforcement of same.

### Pilot Design

- The advisory group is intended to be representative of the stakeholders involved in Seasonal Migration, it is hoped their input will inform the pilot design and evaluation criteria.

### Pilot Oversight

- Over the course of the pilot, meetings will be held for the group to provide feedback on the state of play and any issues raised by the areas they represent.

### Pilot Evaluation

- The work of the advisory group will conclude with the production of an evaluation report and resulting recommendations, produced by the Economic Migration Policy Unit, DETE and informed by the group members' findings.

## Current Scheme Features

### Approved Seasonal Employer:

- To avail of the scheme Employers must get annual pre-approval as an 'Approved Seasonal Employer'. Any breaches of conditions or non-compliance with rules in previous years will negatively impact on the subsequent approval process. A list of Approved Seasonal Employers will be published on DETE's website each year.
- The Minister will have the power to set out the number of employers approved under the scheme as well as the conditions and a process for employers to become an 'Approved SEP Employer'.
- Employment Agents may become 'Approved SEP Employers' and send seasonal worker to work for clients. The Employment Agent will remain as the 'Approved SEP Employer' for the purposes of the scheme.
- This process will not be excessively onerous on the employer – and will in fact add to the efficiency of processing the Seasonal Employment Permit once the candidate is selected (as the employer is pre-approved).

### Renewals, And Changing Employer:

- The scheme will have a very simplified renewal process for the same Seasonal Worker to remain with the same Employer each season. Furthermore, during the working season Seasonal Workers will have an option to move to another approved seasonal employer through a change of approved seasonal employer procedure.

- This process will be similar to the process for the general change of employer. Given the fact that the ASEs will already be registered, the change of approved seasonal employer process will have a more streamlined approval process.

### Rights:

- The SEP documentation will provide information on rights and will include contact information for e.g. the WRC and information relating to trade unions, as well as the cost of SEP application and/or renewal (similar to other permit types).
- Employers will be required to provide information in the employee's own language on employment rights, their pay, their contract, their terms and conditions (including board, lodging, transport, training, health and safety standards) ahead of contract start date.
- The scheme will also require a minimum number of guaranteed working hours each week, to ensure that the Seasonal Workers will be sufficiently remunerated.
- Employers will be required to purchase adequate health insurance for seasonal workers, and this cannot be deducted from the seasonal worker's wages.
- Under the SEP there will be no right to bring spouse, dependents or for family reunification due to the short nature of the work and residence. Occupational Health and Safety Equipment, and other materials required for the role will be provided by the Employer and shall not be deducted from the SEP holder's pay.
- Accommodation must be provided by the employer and must meet rental accommodation legal Standards. Accommodation standards must be pre-certified by a certifying authority in advance of SEP application and the approved Employer must inform DETE of all changes of accommodation. Rent deductions cannot be greater than those allowed for under the National Minimum Wage Act; Transport costs can be charged in line with the terms of the Payment of Wages Act.

## Terms Of Reference

### Role/Purpose:

The SEP Pilot is an opportunity for Ireland to develop a Seasonal Employment System which is attractive to migrant workers and works for businesses. A robust, rights-based system will ensure that workers will return to Ireland on a yearly basis, allowing seasonal businesses access to a labour market which will ensure they are able to reach their full potential.

The SEP Pilot will run for the 2025 soft fruit picking season. The Advisory Group will convene in Q4 2024 and will meet throughout the 2025 soft fruit picking season, convening to assess the final report of the Pilot in Q4 2025.

### Membership:

- |                                                            |                                                |                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| • Department of Enterprise,<br>Trade and Employment (DETE) | • Department of Justice (DoJ)                  | • Unite the Union                         |
| • Department of Agriculture,<br>Food and the Marine (DAFM) | • Irish Farmers Association<br>(IFA)           | • Workplace Relations<br>Commission (WRC) |
|                                                            | • Migrants Rights Council of<br>Ireland (MRCI) | • Teagasc                                 |

### Advisory Group Responsibilities:

The Advisory Group will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that worker rights are fully considered;
- Assisting DETE in developing a sustainable Seasonal Employment Scheme which will allow Irish businesses to avail of non-EEA seasonal workers in an equitable manner;
- Working collaboratively to identify potential challenges and implementable solutions

The membership of the Advisory Group will commit to:

- Providing input in a timely manner to ensure that the SEP Pilot remains on schedule; and  
Attending all meetings where possible.

### Meetings:

- DETE will chair the meetings and provide guidance on the legal requirements of the EPA 2024. The initial meeting will take place in November 2024. Planning meetings will take place up to the opening of the SEP permit in January 2025.
- Meetings in 2025 will be every **2 months** up to the start of the soft fruit picking season, and **monthly** for the duration of the season.
- Ad hoc meetings may be scheduled where necessary.
- A final meeting will take place in Q4 2025 when findings of the Pilot evaluation are available.
- Meetings will be a mixture of in-person and online TBC.