



NGOs call for the UK's Seasonal worker visa scheme to be overhauled as scheme operator loses licence

NGOs have called on the government to re-think its seasonal worker visa (SWV) scheme to ensure that migrant agricultural workers are protected. This follows the recent decision by UK Visas and Immigration to revoke labour provider Ethero's licence to sponsor workers on the Seasonal Worker visa. Members of the Seasonal Worker Interest Group said the government must learn the lessons from the previous experience of stripping a scheme operator of its licence in 2023.

Though we understand efforts are underway to ensure affected workers are rematched to other licenced operators, the decision to revoke a labour provider's licence without a specific mitigation plan to protect workers whose visas have been sponsored by that provider has potentially wide-ranging consequences. For example, migrant workers who have paid to apply for the visa may now be unable to travel to the UK.

Our organisations have previously pressed the government to have a publicly accessible plan in place to deal with the fallout of licence revocation for workers, and asked for information to share with workers since we learned the licence was suspended in May, to no avail. This is yet another systemic failure in the governance and operation of the Seasonal Worker visa.

The Seasonal Worker Interest Group [published a statement in June](#) calling on a new government to undertake wholesale reform of the Seasonal Worker visa scheme. This is because many of the issues for workers on the scheme are complex and interrelated, meaning it is not conducive to worker welfare to reform it on an incremental basis.

In the immediate term, as a minimum, to mitigate these latest issues for workers, the government must now ensure that:

- Clear, updated information on the situation is published on the Gov.uk website and is made accessible to workers
- All workers are reassured by the government in writing that they will be transferred to another scheme operator, and that their immigration status and ability to work will be unaffected.
- Prospective workers who are left out of pocket due to the revocation should be compensated in full by the UK government.
- The GLAA should contact all workers and farms to ensure individuals are informed about their options, have access to independent worker support and adequate safeguarding is in place.