



An Roinn Talmhaíochta  
agus Forbartha Tuaithe

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Department of Agriculture  
an Lannart Oncum

*forwarded to  
K.B.  
12/8/03*

Ms Norah McCorry  
Equality Directorate research Branch  
Room E5.25 Castle Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3 SG

12 August 2003

Dear Ms McCorry

### **MIGRANT WORKERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

In Stephen Donnelly's minute of 22 July he asked a number of questions from all Departments in relation to research targeted at establishing a broad quantitative demographic profile of the migrant worker population in Northern Ireland.

DARD does not have specific information on the Sector Based Short Term Work Scheme but information is available on the Internet at [www.workpermits.gov.uk](http://www.workpermits.gov.uk). I would suggest that Work Permits UK (telephone number 011 4259 4074) could provide information on the total number of applications. We do know that they have been strict in ensuring all conditions are met e.g. applicants must have advertised for workers in the Job Centres and press.

The mushroom sector was specifically identified as an area where local workers were not available - the request was originally made by Mushroom Industry Association of Northern Ireland (MIANI) following the BBC Spotlight investigation last autumn. To date we understand that some 50-60 applications have been made through MIANI but we are unaware of the total number of applications to the Scheme.

Labour shortages in the mushroom sector (mushroom pickers) have been an ongoing problem for a number of years. This is due to the nature of the work and the fact that it is not a "nine to five" job and continues all the year round. This has prevented employers in the sector from taking advantage of other schemes such as the Seasonal Workers Scheme. Depending on the farm size and cropping, some farms require pickers in the morning, others in the afternoon or evenings. In addition,



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the current local source of labour is predominantly of an age nearing retirement with few younger workers recruited or available to replace those existing. It is estimated that between 50% and 60% of existing growers may require assistance from the scheme at some stage based on the size of their farm (i.e.. 4 or more houses).

I hope this information is helpful but if you want to discuss or clarify could I suggest that you contact Steven Millar, Head of Crops & Horticulture Development Branch (94426789) or Cathal Ellis (94426793) to discuss. I am also available on 90524047 to discuss any matters arising.

Yours sincerely

Esther Moore  
Central Management Branch

cc S Millar  
E Gallagher



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