

# **Coronavirus – Need a job? Berry farmers launch recruitment drive for temporary workers**

## **Scottish berry growers launch recruitment drive for temporary workers affected by coronavirus-related redundancies**

- Angus Growers farms in Scotland need over 3,000 workers to pick fresh berries this season
- Soft Fruit supplier calls on public to unite in new Feed Our Nation campaign

**Scottish soft fruit farmers have begun a recruitment drive to encourage people to go and work on their farms – particularly if they have been affected by coronavirus related redundancy.**

Angus Growers is a group of 19 Scottish farmers who last year produced over 12,400 tonnes of fresh berries for consumers across the UK. However, this year they are anticipating a shortfall of 3,200 workers, almost 80% of their workforce, as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and its impact on workers coming into the UK from mainland Europe.

On Friday, the [UK Government announced](#) workers involved in the production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery of food would be classed as critical workers and that their children would be prioritised by education providers.

James Porter, soft fruit grower for Angus Growers, who is also NFU Scotland's horticulture chair, explained: "We are entering

an unprecedented time. As restrictions on our day-to-day lives increase and challenges build, the Scottish horticultural industry has a critical role to play in helping us maintain our health and nutritional wellbeing.

“For many years the Scottish berry industry has relied on recruiting workers from mainland Europe to provide seasonal labour to pick our crops due to a severe lack of availability of local workers. Due to ever growing travel restrictions aimed at limiting the spread of the coronavirus, we are now facing a shortfall of almost 80% of the workers required in Scotland to pick our crops this season.

“I know that many people are facing redundancy across the travel and hospitality industries and I would encourage anyone who is looking for work to visit our new dedicated recruitment site and apply. People might have a misconception that picking fruit doesn't pay that well, however all our growers pay in accordance with the Scottish Agriculture Wages Order, which is based on the national living wage. Accommodation is available on site for anyone who doesn't live in close proximity to one of our farms, and full support and training will be provided.”

Angus Growers need to recruit over 3,000 people to pick strawberries, raspberries and blue berries and blackberries this season. If you have recently been made redundant and are looking for work, please visit [jobs.angusgrowers.co.uk](https://jobs.angusgrowers.co.uk)

James continued: “The health and wellbeing of our staff is of paramount importance, and we are following the latest UK and Scottish Government advice and guidelines relating to Covid-19. This includes restricting access to sites to essential visitors only, controlling who comes in and out, splitting a farm's workforce into teams and keeping these teams isolated from one another, social distancing, site lock down measures and disinfecting procedures.

“Thankfully, the risk of spread among farm workers is

relatively low due to the open-air nature of harvesting activity; farms unlike offices, are large places where people can spread out.

“We want to reassure the public that if any workers do develop symptoms and need to self-isolate, farm accommodation is in “caravan park” style permanent units sleeping three or four persons, which means anyone suffering symptoms can isolate easily in a dedicated unit and have food brought to them for the period of time needed.

“There is an opportunity here for us all to work together to feed our nation. We desperately need workers to help us harvest our berries and ensure the UK public can enjoy healthy, nutritious food during this period of uncertainty.”

Angus Growers is also working closely with the National Farmers Union Scotland to ensure agricultural and farming businesses across Scotland can continue to produce high quality food throughout the outbreak.

James concluded: “Today we’ve launched a recruitment drive for our berry growers, however we’re also looking at how the wider food supply industry can work together to ensure the continued supply of high-quality food. I would encourage anyone working in the food supply industry to please reach out to me to ensure we all work together for the good of the nation.”

