
WORKING WITHIN AGRICULTURE AND SEASONAL WORK

(Updated April 2013)



About the industry

The labour market for workers in the Norwegian agricultural sector varies according to the time of year. There are many jobs for skilled farm workers on a permanent basis, both full-time and part-time, that involve work all year round. These jobs include general farm work in milk and animal production (sheep, cattle and swine) as well as various plant crops such as wheat, barley and hay.

During the summer season, agricultural work in Norway is mainly in planting, weeding, trimming and harvesting of fruits and berries, vegetables, flowers and plants, trees and other kinds of plants. In comparison to many other countries, Norway has a relatively short growing season. So much of the seasonal work here would be of short but intense duration.

Norway has approximately 4.8 millions inhabitants on 324 000 square kilometres of land. The country is over 3 000 kilometres in length. Even though farmland only covers three percent of the Norwegian land area, there are farms in virtually every part of this rugged country. Due to great geographical and climatic variations in Norway, choice of crops and how they are grown can vary a great deal.

Other typical day-to-day work, such as carpentry, painting and other maintenance or renovation projects can also be considered seasonal work. These do not, however, come under the category of 'seasonal' for the purpose of seasonal work permits (required for non-EEA citizens). If you come from outside the EU/EEA region, you can find more information about seasonal work permits from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI).

Work within the fishing industry may also include seasonal jobs, depending on whether the fishing can take place only during a limited part of the year. See the fact sheet for work in the Norwegian fishing industry for more information.

Work in the tourist industry may also come under the term seasonal activity, work as a ski instructor at a winter-sports centre is for example considered a typically seasonal job. See the fact sheet for the tourism sector in Norway for more details about these kinds of jobs.

What is the demand for agricultural workers?

The demand for new workers in this sector has decreased somewhat in recent years, mainly due to technological advances and consolidation into larger farming units. But there is a strong political will to maintain the population and employment levels in rural and coastal regions, and to encourage small-scale production and alternative products. There has also been an increase in the average period of employment, so seasonal workers in the agricultural sector are now often needed for longer periods of work. So it is expected that there will be a slight increase in the need for new workers for harvesting and other seasonal jobs in the near future, as well as for permanent skilled workers for year-round employment. It is estimated that approximately 20-25 000 foreign workers come to Norway each year doing seasonal work in the agricultural sector. The majority of these workers are from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

How to find work?

For agricultural work such as planting and harvesting, most recruitment is done well before the start of the season. The majority of these jobs are **not** publicly advertised, as the farmers use their own network and contacts to recruit workers from other countries.

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) has a database containing all published vacancies. Go to www.nav.no and choose "ledige jobber" to find the job vacancies.

- Select the category "*Jord-skogbruk, fiske og matproduksjon*".
- In the field for "*Underkategorier*" it is possible to select the categories "*Jordbruk og dyrehold*" (agriculture and animal production), "*Matproduksjon og næringsmiddelarbeid*" (food processing) or "*Skogbruk, gartnerarbeid og hagebruk*" (forestry and gardening).
- In the field for location ("*Arbeidssted*"), choose "*Norge*" for the entire country or your desired region.

It is also possible to make a good search only by writing the words "*ferie*" (holiday), "*sesong*" (seasonal) or "*sommer*" (summer) in the search field called "*Søk etter ord i stillingsannonse*". Then you will get all the vacancies containing one of these words. The ads will most often be in Norwegian.

Many employers will require a CV giving your personal details and a description of your education, practical experience and a little about your general interests and hobbies.

You can also call NAV Service Centre EURES (lines open from 8:00 to 15:30) on tel. +47 800 33 166 and ask for information about vacancies.

Language, education and training requirements

The majority of employers wish to employ people who understand Norwegian and can make themselves understood in "Scandinavian". Many foreign workers have been coming to Norway for a number of years, and have thus gained a basic understanding of the language.

Many employers also use English as a common working language, so it would be useful if you have a basic understanding of this language. It is also possible to get work harvesting fruits and vegetables etc. without any formal qualifications, but some experience will naturally be preferable.

Wages and taxes

As of 1 January 2013, the basic hourly wage is set at 105,25 NOK per hour for unskilled labourers over age 18 for seasonal work of up to 12 weeks duration. For unskilled labourers over the age of 18 working 3 to 6 months for the same employer, the wage is 110,75 NOK per hour. These rates are renegotiated every year, usually in the early spring.

The hourly wages are higher for long-term and permanent positions in the agricultural sector; these start at 123,15 NOK for unskilled workers over age 18; for skilled agricultural workers the hourly rate starts at 131,15 NOK per hour. There may also be additional wages for overtime, holidays and weekend work.

For strawberry picking and other kinds of harvesting, sometimes you can be paid in piecework wages. These can either be paid per kilo or on per unit rate and can vary somewhat from region to region. According to the relevant regulations, piecework wages must in any case be equal to the minimum hourly wage for the hours actually worked.

In addition, you can often get useful information from branch and employers' organisations, such as the Norwegian Farmers' Union ("Norges Bondelag"), the Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union, ("Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag") and the Agricultural Employers' Federation ("Landbrukets Arbeidsgiverforening"). See below for links to these and other relevant websites.

When you work for a Norwegian employer, you are required to pay tax in Norway. If you reside in Norway for less than six months, special tax rules apply. Bring your employment contract and passport to the nearest tax office ("skattekontor") and apply for a tax card ("skattekort"). If you start working without a tax card, the employer will deduct 50% tax. Otherwise the tax usually amounts to around 1/3 of your pay. See the Norwegian Tax Authority (www.taxnorway.no) for more information.

Important things to consider

The majority of farms are in the countryside, the community can feel small and far-removed from city life. The people and the language will seem incomprehensible to begin with, but give the place and the people a chance and give your self time to acclimatize. If you enjoy the great outdoors, then life in Norway, the land of the midnight sun, is the ultimate experience!

The work can sometimes be tough and monotonous. For some periods, you may find yourself doing a lot of overtime and having to turn up for work at unsociable hours. Employers are looking for reliable people and will want you to stay for as long as there is work.

Many employers can provide accommodation, often in communal housing, so you may have to share the living space, kitchen and bathroom with other tenants. Some employers also have

rooms available to let or camping facilities. The rent can vary considerably, depending on the standard of accommodation. Basic furniture and kitchen/cooking utensils can also be available. Since most seasonal work in the agricultural sector is to be found in the countryside, and public transportation can be very limited, you will often need your own transportation to get around.

Branch and Employers organisations

- www.la.no (Agricultural Employers Federation, only in Norwegian)
- www.smabrukarlaget.no (Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union)
- www.bondelaget.no (Norwegian Farmers Union)

Related information

- www.arbeidstilsynet.no (Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority)
- www.udi.no (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration)
- www.fellesforbundet.no (Norwegian Federation of Trade unions)
- www.landbrukstjenester.no (Norwegian Agricultural Services, association of agricultural staffing agencies)