|  |
| --- |
| [**View in browser**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furl.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com%2Fs%2FJHXmCA8vVuEyNgu86yoB%3Fdomain%3Delinkeu.clickdimensions.com&data=05%7C02%7Candrea.minchausti%40brc.org.uk%7Cef8a11376e3645eaff7308dc74daca23%7C75071460b4b54635beeb37373bb2ad83%7C0%7C0%7C638513730294592664%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5N0TXjbNYgVVTRK7y6LZoQOqwudHEfZBpKnDkeNS1VM%3D&reserved=0) |
|  |
| Hi Andrea, FOOD CORPORATE AFFAIRS MEETING – 14 May 1. **LABOUR ISSUES**
* Last week Government published their response to John Shropshire's Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain (June 2023)
* Key announcements:
1. Extend scheme for 5 years – until 2029
2. £50m investment into automation technologies
3. Launch new strategy to enhance skills and attract domestic workers
4. 43,000 visas will be available to the horticulture sector in 2025, with another 2,000 visas for poultry (2,000 less visas than 2023 & 2024). Further detail of the number of visas available for 2026 to 2029 will be set out later this year.
* In regards to worker welfare, the government have outlined their commitment to:
	+ Investigating the use of the Employer Pays Principle for the Seasonal Worker visa route, through the funding of the Seasonal Worker Scheme Employer Pays Principle Feasibility Study in partnership with the Seasonal Worker Scheme Taskforce.

Members felt a positive response to this announcement was very important. The following has been prepared:  **Andrew Opie, Director of Food & Sustainability at the BRC, said:**"We welcome the Government's response to the Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain, which has given much needed certainty over the longevity of the scheme and the provision of visas for 2025. We look forward to working with government on how the scheme could be improved, such as the length of the visa and number of recruitment countries."Retailers are proud to be working with Defra on the jointly funded Employer Pays Principle (EPP) feasibility study, as part of the Taskforce, which will investigate the use of the EPP for the Seasonal Worker visa route. This will be a vital step to improving our understanding of how EPP could be applied in practice to the Scheme, including how various actors in the supply chain can improve protections of workers.” **Notes:*** Since 2022, retailers have been working with the rest of the industry and government to improve the seasonal worker experience, from recruitment to working in the UK, through their participation in and as majority funders of the Seasonal Worker Scheme Taskforce.
* This includes exploring how the Employer Pays Principle could apply to the Seasonal Workers Scheme and have been championing the Seasonal Worker Employer Pays Principal feasibility study, which is funded to take place this year.
* The Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS) Taskforce for UK agricultural workers was founded to enable collective action on the safeguarding and accessibility to workers’ rights in the UK SWS and wider UK horticulture.

 Members felt it was important to set up a meeting to discuss options to help improve the relationship with farmers, following strong disagreement with the proposed AFS module. and avoid any reputational damage.  [A meeting with the agriculture group has been set up for the first week of June].  1. **NOT FOR EU**

 * The issue is still with Ministers. We have been told no final decisions has bene made.
* The summary of responses and the Government response is expected in May.
* The Statutory Instrument will be laid in Parliament in the autumn.
* A one-year transitional period has been discussed. It is unlikely whether this transition period is a formal one which will be reflected in the law, or whether it will be presented as a one year period of pragmatism. It is also unclear whether a year will be given overall from 1 October 2024, or whether business will be a year from each key date – 1 October 2024 and 1 July 2025.

 1. **FDTP**

 * The ECO WG has shared their road map and how they are looking to get more consistency on the environmental information, specifically CO2, from farmers up the supply chain. They are no longer considering work on the ECO label.
* The Health group considered a long list of metrics. They have now narrowed them down and have asked businesses to model those. The next meeting is on 3 June and will be looking at those outcomes and the businesses experience going through that modelling.
* Some members were about the lack of transparency and engagement from wider businesses in developing those metrics. There was some specific concern about how representative would the metrics be for out of home businesses, given the wide diversity of this sector.
* The group also discussed whether providing feedback against the FDTP agreed metrics should be mandatory or not. There was a difference of opinion. One member felt we should work with the Labour government to make sure they support the FDTP if they win the election and they make reporting mandatory, as this will be the only way alignment is achieved.

 1. **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

 * A meeting has been recently held with Rachel Reeves, shadow chancellor, and CEOs. She agreed to the publication of a revised version of the green paper on working people. Engagement with her office will continue. They are receptive to our lobbying.
* We have also engaged with the office of Steve Reed. We have so far not been able to secure a meeting but will keep trying. His SPAD has helped push the office of Ruth Jones to talk to us about the resources and waste agenda.
* BRC has organised a Parliamentary Reception on 5th June to promote the ‘Buy into Retail’ campaign. The campaign will run until the general election. The campaign focuses on 3 themes:
* Investment in communities
* Investment in people and skills
* Innovating for a green future

 1. **SCOTLAND**

 * John Sweeney is Scotland’s First Minister. We are hoping the health supplements goes away.
* SRC has a good relationship with the economic Minister Kate Forbes. She is attending the SRC Board.
* WE recently had a good meeting with Health Minister Jenni Pinto on the HFSS provisions. A second draft of our response to the consultation was ready to be shared.
* We have also engaged with circular economy Minister Gillian Martin. We are expecting an announcement shortly on a charge on disposal cups.

 Kind regards, Andrea |