

FNET's Responsible Recruitment Working Group

Minutes of the meeting

10th October 2023, 14.00 – 15.00 – Virtual / Zoom Meeting

1. Attendees:

Name - Business	Name - Business
1. Andrew Nicholson – 2sfg	7. Emma Henry – Berry World
2. Estelle Brennan – Labeyrie-Fine-Foods	8. Carl Cooper – Westbridge Foods
3. Sharon Cross – G's Fresh	9. Fiona McKerrow – Dole Foods
4. Hannah Radvan – M&S	10. Rachel Munns – World Wise Foods
5. Louise McCafferty – Joseph Robertson	11. Courtenay Forbes - Tesco
6. Ginette Ferri – New England Seafoods	12. Linda Beresford - FNET
Apologies Sam Ludlow- Taylor - Waitrose	Guest Speaker James Mallick – Pro-force

Meeting recording link: RR 10 Oct 2023 recording (available for a limited time of 2 months)

RR 10 Oct [recording](#) Passcode: \$3r6FT^H

Agenda slide [deck here](#).

2. Progress Made in last 12 months

Members shared progress made, challenges and planned objectives for the next 12months-

- One member the pressure to become the business partner for RRT from retailers but was concerned that the time to complete was taking too long. Training had been completed and with the next stage to apply for Business partner status. The business had carried out a review of labour providers using a rendering system to condense and simplify the duplication and risk. Sustainability pillar was added to the tender process which is a first for this business with external expertise to support the decision-making process.
- A second member had added more feet on the ground to get people talking in person which was adding value. The previous year, the business was struggling to get workers but this year they have been able to improve the process working with labour providers who are operating as “business partners.” They have been able to remove the highest risk labour providers and reduce the number used and the source countries recruited from. They have participated in recruitment fairs and employed as many returnees as possible to reduce the risk of exploitation. Two Staff surveys have been carried out with seasonal workers to seek their views aimed at accommodation. Between 300-400 workers have been spoken to, to understand the high-risk issues for them. This was possible due to the additional feet on the ground (Ethics team and trained supervisors/managers).
- Another member shared they are using a single labour recruiter for each site. This provides a dedicated and better-quality service. They have created a code of conduct which is shared with all prospective employees. The company is auditing against the code of conduct. Challenges are quality of workers is still an issue which in turn leads to challenges in employee retention.
- A returnee member to the group is working with the HR team and the RRT putting a package together. They are trialling Recruitment Fee repayment. They do not use labour providers and only recruit directly. They are adding RR related questions to their employee questionnaires. Challenges are to identify a KPI for measuring Modern Slavery and challenges with leverage in the supply chain in achieving progress.

- A further member with both UK and International operations shared experience in both. In own operations they have been able to continue their annual assessment of labour providers, which allows them to go through the approval process. The biggest challenge is to fill the factory with all year-round work to reduce the need for seasonal workers and allow them to have a stable workforce. For labour recruiters last year, there was such a shortage of workers which was a challenge. Some recruiters have skills shortages and are earning less that they are starting to cut corners and are delaying membership of SEDEX and ALP. They are working with them to address this.
- Another member has started using the RR reporting tool and have agreed with others that it is not a quick assessment. However, it has resulted in insightful learnings and shows them areas to work on for the business. They're working through the stronger together toolkit and looking at ways to increase the score here. The have recently started working with a new labour recruiter who is able to transport the staff to the place of work, the benefits are this has increased number of workers, the negative is that this this could pose an elevated risk of payment, so they have increased checks with the agency to ensure due diligence.
- A further member shared they regularly update the S2G toolkit, and getting feet on the ground has been beneficial to support the growers. Talking directly to workers and asking them what they need etc. Worker surveys has been completed during the past year (both digital and paper) which has helped. In the next 12months they plan to roll out the toolkit to other countries and upskill the team.
- One member has set up surveys in the last 2moths using an internal system. These were translated into all languages used to ensure access and to increase visibility the business ran a posted campaign for the surveys. The posters were added to all the living arrangements and the use of a QR code to access the survey further improved success. We simplified the questions to make it easy to complete. Participation has been a challenge so this business combined the campaign with boots on the ground where workers could speak in a relaxed environment. This has worked well. They also promoted the JUST GOOD WORK app. Laminated posters were sent to all the growers to make it easier for them to engage. Interviews have been successful. Following the last face to face meeting this business has collected all supplier's modern slavery statements which they are currently reviewing to see if there are any insights. The member shared that survey participation is the biggest challenge and survey fatigue is a real problem, hence the move to in person discussions.
- Courtenay shared Tesco had carried out enhanced Responsible Recruitment raining with Thai suppliers and have used Impactt to support that work. Courtenay Tesco is happy for members of the WG to pick up offline for more information.

3. Resources sharing

- Due to the time constraints these were not covered in the meeting, however, please see links to the following:
 - [S2G Workshop for Warehouses](#)
 - Case Study video can be found [here](#)

4. Guest Speaker – James Mallick Pro-Force – Seasonal Worker Scheme Recruitment in 2023 season

Slide dec [here](#). Headline messages are:

Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS) Recruitment

- ☑ No shortages in horticulture and poultry being reported
- ☑ Higher returnee levels than previous year

Non-SWS Recruitment

- Increased demand for the Skilled WOrker scheme

Non-SWS Key Challenges

- Not enough accommodation
- Expect challenges with EU leavers
- Expect challenges with Ukraine leavers

SWS Key Challenges

- Weather has had an impact this season
- Challenges expected due to EU leavers
- Challenges expected with Ukraine Leavers
- Next season Gov confirmed 45,000 worker visas for the SWS with option for 10,000 extras

RR Progress Assessment shows the lowest score is for Grievance Mechanisms, but it is higher than last year with still more work to do. Note SWS WG is developing GM’s with the support of Nottingham University which was shared In the Empowering Work WG on 5th October by David Camp. The presentation is available upon request to Linda

Q – How are the 10,000 extra visas allocated?

A – We don’t know

Q – When will the workers arrive in UK?

A – With better planning the workers can start arriving on 21st Jan

Q – Has the Home Office approach changes this year?

A – The HO has engaged more during 2023 than previous years and we have had feedback from visits.

5. Next meeting planning

- The end of Jan 2024 was proposed for the next meeting

KPIs – same ones from last year. A start of year survey to establish benchmark.

Actions / next steps

	Action / Next step	Who
1	Continue to progress on your RR journey and plan to share further progress at the next meeting as the team members found this insightful	WG
2	Note: All members meeting on 22 nd November– Update needed from the WG to present to All Members.	WG Leads/Linda
3	Meeting dates Q4 – end Jan agreed - suggestion Tue 30 th Wed 31 st January. Send poll to confirm dates	Linda

- End -