

Seasonal workers to increase to 10,000 thanks to Scottish Conservatives

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The Scottish Conservatives have welcomed plans for an increase in the number of seasonal workers to address labour shortages in the UK soft fruit sector.

Angus candidate Kirstene Hair successfully campaigned during the last parliament to secure UK Government action to ensure more workers were made available to farmers.

The seasonal pilot scheme was announced in August 2018 and came into effect in 2019, allowing 2,500 additional non-EU workers to come to the UK from Ukraine, Moldova and Russia.

NFU Scotland said the feedback from its members about the scheme was “very positive”.

Scottish Conservative MPs have been pushing for several months for an expansion of the scheme.

It has been revealed in today’s Sunday Telegraph that the 2,500 will be increased four-fold to 10,000 if the Conservative party forms the next government.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Castleton Fruit in Laurencekirk, Ms Hair said:

“Scottish Conservative MPs stood up for our farming sector during the last parliament and fought for a seasonal workers scheme to address labour shortages.

“Our intervention was welcomed by NFU Scotland, having made it clear at the time it was only a starting point.

“I have always said that the UK Government would have to do more and that this scheme would have to be expanded.

“I very much welcome the planned increase to 10,000 workers to help growers across the country.

“This is further evidence of Scottish Conservatives standing up for our key industries here in Scotland.

"In contrast, Nicola Sturgeon's separation plans would put up new barriers to farmers trading with the rest of the UK.

"A vote for the Scottish Conservatives at this election will put the division of recent years behind us so we can move on to focus on the things that matter."