

## **Agency Workers Bill needs further consideration**

A Private Member's Bill intended to protect agency workers would have unintended consequences for workers within the UK food industry, warns the Association of Labour Providers.

The Temporary and Agency Workers (Equal Treatment) Bill is due for its second reading on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. It provides that an agency worker has the right not to be treated less favourably in respect of pay, working hours, paid holidays and sick pay, than a direct worker doing "broadly similar" work.

David Camp, Director of the Association of Labour Providers, the trade association for organisations that provide and use temporary, contract and seasonal workers within the food and agricultural sectors, foresees unintended consequences if the Bill becomes law.

"Within the food and agricultural sectors 90% of the agency workers are migrants, predominantly from Poland and the other Accession States, who come to the UK for the increased earning potential this country offers. This Bill would increase the cost of UK food production and reduce our price competitiveness in comparison to foreign growers and packers. It would further accelerate the trends for retailers to source fresh vegetables and meat from overseas and for suppliers to set up production and packing plants abroad. This would be bad for the UK economy and bad for the migrant workers denied the opportunity to work in the UK.

Alternatively, food producers would look at ways to control their labour costs to remain competitive. This would be done in two ways. Firstly, by reducing pay, holidays and sick pay for permanent workers to enable the increase for agency workers so that overall the cost impact is neutral. Secondly, by outsourcing all unskilled basic work to agency workers, redefining grading systems and terms and conditions packages as required to circumvent the "broadly similar" and "comparable direct worker" elements of the Bill.

In its current form the Bill would work contrary to its intentions and ensnare conscientious employers and agencies in red tape and legal mires.

**ENDS**

### **Notes:**

The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) is the specialist trade association for organisations that provide and use temporary, contract and seasonal workers within the food, agricultural and other GLA regulated sectors.

The ALP is a centre of expertise and good practice on temporary labour issues for both labour providers and labour users alike.

The ALP's goal is to help improve the standard of labour provision in the food supply chain whilst supporting the need for an ethically managed, cost effective, flexible labour force within the sector.

The ALP welcomes growers, producers and packers as Associate Members.

The ALP Chairman is Mark Boleat and Director is David Camp

A list of members and further information can be found at [www.labourproviders.org.uk](http://www.labourproviders.org.uk).

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