By Ed Leahy
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New pilot scheme a "shambles"

Councillors in Fife, Scotland, have urged the government to increase the numbers of non-EU seasonal workers

Sajid Javid’s pilot seasonal worker scheme is under fire from Scottish authorities after councillors in Fife called for a larger quota, with one MSP describing it as a "shambles".

The council passed a motion backing farmer’s calls to quadruple the seasonal worker quota, describing the UK's white paper on immigration as "arbitrary and unmanageable" according to The Courier.

Fearing a repeat of last year, which saw tonnes of fruit left to rot, councillors are urging government to take action to avoid another slew of wasted crops.

According to Liberal Democrat MSP Willie Rennie, the new scheme is too complicated, with Moldovan workers avoiding the scheme as a result, saying the pilot had effectively collapsed due to three week delays on visas for Ukrainian workers.

Rennie said: "This is an absolute shambles. The scheme was only announced at the end of last year and has already shown itself to be inadequate to cope with the demand."

"Since the Brexit result in 2016, the farming industry in Fife has been struggling to fill the jobs to pick the fruit and vegetables."

"Last year, farmers were forced to throw away tonnes of soft fruit because of a lack of seasonal pickers. The latest problems have left farmers in the lurch again."

In March, the pilot scheme launched by Sajid Javid, appointed recruiters Concordia and Pro-Force to administer. The 2,500 figure has been widely derided as too small, but seen as a step in the right direction.

Farmers in Fife and Tayside have since called for those on benefits to help pick fruit according to The Courier.

Tim Stockwell said welfare recipients fear losing out on benefits if they take up seasonal work.


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