

Romanian seasonal migrants in the UK

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Research focus

- The research looks at agricultural workers, where temporality defines the nature of the work.
- How does the nature of seasonal work affect the movement of migrants (whether circular or temporary or settled)?
- How do changes in legislation affect these movements?
- What are profiles of the workers? How do they organize their lives according to the seasonal work?
- What is their relationship with the homeland and with the destination place?

Specificity of the fieldwork

1. The circularity of the work flow – work is seasonal, so workers, presumably, have at least a few months when they are without employment.
2. The changes in legislation for Romanian and Bulgarian migrants – the lifting of work restrictions after 2014. In the agricultural context, this means a change the status of ‘seasonal migrant’ (SAWS) to that of ‘European migrant’.
3. The secrecy of the farming industry, and the negative press in the UK.

Sample



Semi-structured interviews with approximately 20 Romanians working on British farms in low-skilled jobs in Hereford and Kent.

Demographics:

- gender balanced;
- generally between 20 and 45
- with and without family responsibilities
- from the countryside or small towns

Occupations:

- Fruit pickers/packers; maintenance
- 2 managers, 1 supervisor – promoted from low-skilled jobs
- People who moved on from agricultural work to other industries

Farms and recruitment



- Horticulture
- In the past – SAWS allowed recruitment through the mediation of operators (such as Concordia). After 2014, recruitment was no longer controlled.
- Small-scale farms recruit very informally, through managers' personal connections in the villages of origin.

Mid and large-scale farms use multiple recruitment paths:

- by employing former workers, who remain in their database
- recommendations of the managers, usually kinship ties and connections to place of origin
- Romanian agencies, mediated or not by Concordia.

In their narratives of movement, the workers do not perceive changes in work legislation as a dramatic factor.

The work

- over-recruitment
- management of work that reinforces ethnic divisions.
- contracts mean little; networks of obligation are important
- ‘there will always be a way for people to come and work’ – the irrelevance of legal boundaries

And the workers

- Family obligations
- Saving money
- Feeling safe on the farm – difficulty dealing with the labour market and with potential discrimination
- Work mobility: obtaining a higher position on the farm or moving out of farming industry