Concordia’s principal activity is to operate as a charitable organisation, arranging work and volunteering programmes mainly for young people, aimed at promoting a better understanding between nationalities and encouraging development as independent and responsible individuals.

Concordia’s mission is to foster cross-cultural understanding and friendship by providing people with quality opportunities for international volunteering, work experience, education and training.

Our aims are to:

- give people, especially young people, the opportunity to learn new skills, to develop and to gain experience
- encourage an international mix of placements to encourage the understanding of different cultures and nationalities and the breakdown of barriers

We achieve these aims through our volunteering and work placement activities.

Our seasonal work placements scheme originated in 1943 to recruit volunteer labour to help with the war effort. It was for many years a major partner in the government’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme until its closure in 2013, with the free movement of all European Union (EU) citizens. From 2019 it has become one of two organisations participating in the new Seasonal Workers Pilot for citizens from outside the EU. Through these schemes and directly from countries that are not subject to immigration controls we offer individuals the opportunity to develop their cross-cultural understanding, while gaining work experience and training, fostering cross-cultural understanding between citizens of different nations.

Concordia strives to provide its beneficiaries with best of class conditions. All farms we work with commit to meeting our ethical standards and other requirements included in our service level agreement. They also complete a detailed risk assessment and are audited by our field officer, with their health and safety, accommodation standards as set out by the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC), rate of pay and deductions, electrical, gas and fire safety and working hours as per the ETI code and Working Time Directive (WTD). A detailed database is maintained of all growers and placements. Field officers also ensure that farms are up to date with legislation and ethical standards regarding pay, conditions and accommodation.

The Chief Executive, as well as other staff, visits all agents and universities from where candidates may come to ensure that they understand what the candidates can expect and the conditions of staying in the UK. The agent audit is based on the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) Base Code, the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the GLAA Licencing agreement.

Concordia follows the Fresh Produce Consortium’s guidelines on caravan accommodation and the audit is based on this as a minimum requirement. Our audit has been reviewed and updated with the support of the Association of Labour Providers (ALP) to ensure that it is best in class and integrates all ethical guidelines.

Concordia is registered with SEDEX which is one of the most widely used ethical audits in the world. We encourage our growers to also participate in this audit as well as others including the ETI.
Concordia’s experience has led it to develop a strong presence through an agent network in Eastern Europe, including in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania. This has been expanded to include Moldova, Russia and Ukraine from 2019.

Pricing

Concordia charges growers the same prices, using the same model, for workers outside the EU as workers from within the EU, as is advised in the MAC report September 2018. The Concordia 2019 price brochure is included for information. Concordia charges the same fees for all geographical locations, business types, sizes and order sizes. The 2019 pricing structure has been developed following discussions within the industry on ethical pricing.

Concordia charges each farm a £700 registration fee which includes the annual audit as well as pastoral help and HR guidance that Concordia offers. Concordia takes on much of the Human Resources administration of the smaller farms within this fee.

Each worker that the farm asks for is charged at a fee of £180 if ordered before 7 January 2019 and £220 if ordered on or after the 8 January 2019. A large fixed amount of this sum is passed straight to the agents to fund their recruitment costs. All the seasonal workers in 2019 have been charged at £180 to growers.

All agents with whom we work, including those involved in the permit scheme are not allowed to charge any recruitment fees but also, they are not allowed to charge any optional fees. This is following the strong push from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Association of Labour Providers (ALP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This goes beyond what is currently enshrined in law but is vital to Concordia to ensure that the seasonal migrant is protected and does not feel coerced into paying fees which, although optional, may well not feel like it.

The fee charged to growers includes free

- travel, health, dental and repatriation insurance for the worker
- support to make insurance claims in English where required
- booking of travel to the UK for the worker if required
- booking of travel from the point of UK entry to the farm for the worker if required
- translation of all documents for the worker
- 24-hour 7-day pastoral support for the worker from their agent (in their language) before, during and after the placement (for example help sourcing a P45)
- sim card with £2 credit
- Concordia 24-hour 7-day pastoral support

Process

Concordia emailed our database of farms to let them know that we were an operator of the Seasonal Worker Pilot, this database numbers c.650 UK farms. We also made an announcement on our website and this webpage was included in the Defra and Home Office communications.

We made the sector aware that we would prioritise employers based on:
- geographical need
- priority roles (harvesting)
- standard of accommodation and amenities
- farms who have invested in staff training, especially supervisor training (this is one of the 3 main complaints of workers who are not satisfied with their placement)
- farms who can accommodate groups of workers to avoid workers being the only one of their nationality on a farm.

The main priorities when allocating non-EU workers was geography and crop. Concordia has worked closely with the NFU and used their data (Labour Providers Survey) as well as our own to have an indication of where the shortages are concentrated. From this, the sectors that seem to face the biggest difficulties are (listed in order):

- Soft fruit
- Outdoor salads and Top Fruit (equal)
- Brassicas
- Potatoes

**Allocation**

Concordia has allocated its 1250 non-EU workers across England (824) and Scotland (426). Priority geographical areas included Angus, Fife, Kincardineshire and Perthshire where many soft fruit and vegetable farms are located. Concordia received no requests for non-EU labour from potato growers or from farms in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The original allocation of non-EU workers to Scottish farms was 802. The farms themselves reduced this number of non-EU workers down as they received positive responses from ‘returnees’ ie workers who had worked at the farm the summer of 2018 and agreed to return to work the 2019 season. For example, one farm was originally allocated 75 non-EU workers and they reduced this amount to 12, and another was originally allocated 60 and only took 20 in the end.

**Insurance**

Concordia offers every one of its workers that comes to the UK Concordia insurance. In addition to medical treatment, Concordia’s comprehensive insurance provides for emergency dental treatment, emergency repatriation to home country, in the event of death a death benefit payment to the family, cover for loss or theft of money and personal effects for the whole time of their placement in the UK. All these aspects are claimed by participants from time to time. As a charity, Concordia’s values will not allow a worker to come to the UK without comprehensive insurance; as this can be costly to the worker, Concordia purchases it for all workers.

The cost of insurance is covered by the fee to the grower and by Concordia meaning the worker pays nothing. Should a worker have an incident, which is not their fault, which is not covered by the insurance, Concordia has a pastoral fund to support them.

April 2019