Project Title: The development of a pre-selection system for seasonal horticultural labour

Project Number: CP 58

Project Leader: Chris Rose

Report: Final Report, December 2008

Previous Reports: Not Applicable

Key Workers: Chris Rose and Kathy Strong (Chris Rose & Associates Ltd)

Locations of Project: Various farms and locations in England

Project Co-ordinator: N/A

Date Project Commenced: 1 November 2007

Project Completion Due: 31st October 2008

Key Words: Pre-selection, aptitude and ability, increase productivity,reduce staff turnover.

The results and conclusions in this report are based on a series of experiments, surveys and assessments conducted over a one-year period. The conditions under which the experiments were carried out and the results have been reported in detail and with accuracy. However, because of the biological nature of the work it must be borne in mind that different circumstances and conditions could produce different results. Therefore, care must be taken with interpretation of the results, especially if they are used as the basis for commercial product recommendations.

AUTHENTICATION

I declare that this work was done under my supervision according to the procedures described herein and that the report represents a true and accurate record of the results obtained.

Chris Rose
Chris Rose Associates

Signature …………………………. Date …………………………..

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Grower Summary

Headline

Selecting out the poorest 25% of candidates can reduce seasonal labour costs by 16% or more whilst increasing productivity thus reducing crop waste and increasing timeliness of jobs.

Background and Expected Deliverables

Background and need for the project

- The cost of labour is increasing rapidly (over 75% in real terms since 2000) at a time of largely stagnant or falling returns for horticultural products.
- Growers are under greater pressure than ever to comply fully with employment law.
- Consistently high levels of productivity from seasonal labour are essential if UK horticulture is to remain competitive.
- Through the work undertaken on previous projects (SF 71, TF 171, FV 298) it became clear that a significant proportion (25% +) of seasonal workers are failing to attain acceptable levels of productivity because they are not primarily here to work or are not suited to the work.
- A number of the very poorest performers have to be let go, despite the considerable time, money and effort invested in employing, accommodating and training them.
- Many growers and agencies report that the problem of poorly performing workers is increasing significantly.
- Changes to SAWS (Student Agricultural Worker Scheme) and improved economic performance in the newer EU countries is causing a severe shortage of seasonal labour for horticulture for the foreseeable future.
- The poorest performers (bottom 25%) are typically only achieving around 50% of the output of the rest of the gang (top 75%).
- Research supported by anecdotal evidence shows there is a similar variation in performance in any tasks performed by many people.

The aim of this project is: To create effective methods of selecting seasonal labour with the desired attributes (aptitude and attitude) that can be carried out in the source countries.

Project rationale

Given the shortage of available labour one could ask if it is desirable to select out any applicants. The traditional response at times of labour shortage has been "We'll take everyone". This is a short-sighted and potentially very costly strategy. Some applicants are unemployable as this case study demonstrates:

A soft fruit business in Kent that has a good reputation as an employer booked labour in 2008 from a specialist UK based agency. Due to the shortage of applicants a "We'll take everyone" policy was adopted by the agency. 53 new recruits arrived at a time when there was a large amount of good picking available and the potential to earn well (top earners were on £100+ per day). Despite the best endeavours of the management and supervisors to induct and train this group, within a week all of them had left the farm, either by choice or through sacking for gross misconduct.

The grower was unable to replace the staff and estimates that the total cost of this exercise, through loss of crop (2 fields left unpicked) and the extra cost of picking over-ripe fields over the ensuing weeks was up to £450,000.

Summary of the Project and Main Conclusions
Previous HDC funded projects (SF 71, FV 298 and TF171) have clearly demonstrated that champion performers have both the physical aptitude and the mental attitude to excel. The researchers in this project have found that the same applies at the bottom end of the performance spectrum.

The problems with the quality of seasonal labour in the UK are predominately due to poor attitude rather than physical inability.

Physical aspects of work
Any physical task requires a minimum level of physical capability and an effective pre-selection procedure needs to establish the required level and reject applicants who do not achieve the standard.
This may be achieved through methods such as:
- The applicant answering health relating questions and signing to show he or she accepts that incorrect answers may result in instant dismissal.
- A test such as for colour blindness or dexterity
- A test that simulates the work that will be undertaken
- Evidence of previous work experience of a similar nature

The application form, tests and questionnaire that have been produced in this project are necessarily generic. Where the exact nature of the work is known, e.g. an individual grower recruiting labour for picking strawberries or cutting lettuce, it is possible to devise a test that simulates the work. It is more difficult to test how that individual would cope with doing the work for 8 hours / day, 6 days / week.

Adapting to any physical activity requires conditioning and growers are familiar with new workers performing slowly, initially through learning the job and subsequently through getting used to the nature of the work and the amount of time spent doing it. It is a great advantage if the applicant has previous experience of the same work. Likewise it is also an advantage if the applicant has experience of employment requiring working full weeks doing any physically challenging work.

Non-physical aspects of work

A key requirement of any worker is the resilience to keep going through the conditioning period. Many workers describe getting close to giving up, breaking down in tears and relying on support from friends as they adapt to physical tiredness, aching muscles, a sense of being slower than others and being away from home in a strange country. For some, a major financially based goal such as financing university, marriage or buying a flat will provide sufficient motivation to overcome these physical and emotional challenges. Others are just tough enough to pull through. Where both of these are missing, there needs to be some other *raison d'être.* The pre-selection process needs to elicit whether the applicant does have a valid reason for coming over and taking up the employment.

An increasing percentage of the seasonal workforce in the UK comprises less well educated people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. The university students are more likely to be higher achievers and have good levels of motivation. This other less educated pool of labour is more variable. The best are from rural areas and are used to hard physical work; however with high levels of employment in many Eastern European countries, many applicants are unemployed and possibly not suited to employment.

The pre-selection process needs to screen out those who will not be prepared to accept the discipline and responsibility of employment in the UK.

Effectively communicating "the offer"

Many growers are reporting people arriving expecting "£60 per day for no work". Often labour is provided through agents who are paid per placement and are only interested in numbers. The result is a massive mismatch between expectations of the grower and the new arrivals.

To be successful, whether recruiting directly or through an agent, it is essential that applicants fully understand the nature of the business, the work, the accommodation, the remuneration and

the conditions of employment. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Through a video of the business showing the work and accommodation
- Through a presentation with photographs and words (translated)
- Through a talk in the language of the applicants
- Through testimonials from existing workers doing the same work

Whichever methods used, it is important to give a 'warts and all' picture. Good employees have a high level of trust in their employer and when, on arrival, reality meets expectations the bond of trust is already building.

Pre-selection and...

The aim of any business employing seasonal labour should be to convert new arrivals to happy high-performing workers. However good the pre-selection process, businesses that have strong support networks for new employees will have a higher conversion ratio that positively impacts directly on the bottom line.

Pre-selection can never be a panacea; it has to be complemented by high standards such as:
- New workers made to feel welcome on arrival
- Friendly and comprehensive initial induction
- Good, clean, uncrowded accommodation with facilities you would be prepared to use yourself
- A high standard and sufficient quantity of training for each job
- A caring and supportive environment with an appointed person(s) providing pastoral care
- Top quality supervision – friendly, fair, firm, good teacher, aiming to realise the potential of all
- Good earning potential

For more information and guidance on all the above, see the HDC DVD, Creating Champion Employees.

Selection through recommendation

Many businesses get some, many or all of their non-SAWS seasonal workers through word of mouth and recommendations from existing or previous workers. Generally this works very well if a good returning worker recommends a friend or family member. The returnee is likely to feel some obligation regarding the conduct and performance of the recommended person(s). The newcomer will have a very good understanding of the setup, work and accommodation.

More caution is required where an ex-employee recommends someone. In this case the loyalty will not be to the business, but entirely to the friend or relative. In these instances the applicant should go through the pre-selection process.

Increasingly businesses will pay for a successful recommendation. A suggested level of recompense is to pay the returnee £50 for each recommended person who makes the grade*, to be paid one month after arrival. You may choose to pay a further £50 if the new person stays for longer (e.g. 10 weeks) and / or reaches a higher standard.

*The above requires that you have a clearly defined 'grade' that can be attained. It is recommended that this is a level of performance (quality and quantity) that is the minimum acceptable and can enable the worker to be designated as 'competent'. Businesses should have a definition of competency for every major job (picking, packing, cutting, thinning, bunching etc) and the supervisor should be familiar with the criteria, measurements and required standard. This helps supervisors to avoid subjective decisions based on personal preference.

The Stages of Pre-Selection

The following (including appendices) should act as a guide to pre-selection. If you are already pre-selecting labour, use it to compare with and challenge your current procedures and methods. Anyone wishing to start attracting and employing seasonal staff directly for the first time can adapt the following to fit your individual circumstances.

1. Strategy
2. Advertising
3. Presentation
4. Application form
5. Interview questionnaire
6. Physical tests

1. Strategy

It is strongly recommended that the pre-selection process includes a face-to-face interview. This requires setting date(s) hiring a venue(s) and getting a good number of potential applicants to attend.

You may just advertise the event and let people turn up, but this leaves a lot to chance. You may ask them to phone a number to book a place, but this needs a manned telephone or is reliant on people leaving a message. You could also ask people to apply in writing, text or e-mail depending on the people you are targeting.

If you have a web-site for your business' this can be a very useful tool to help applicants who

have access to the internet, as long as it (or part of it) is aimed at seasonal labour. Any advertisement should mention the web-site. A web-site will not easily attract potential workers by itself unless it is very well placed in key searches. It is important to bear in mind that many poorer people who may be ideal candidates do not have internet access.

You need to define what the required attributes are. Do not make the standard too high. Depending on how many people you need, you are not looking for only the best. The standard you define should be the minimum acceptable so that if you don't get enough achieving it you know you need to re-advertise or look elsewhere.

In the Beyond the Fringe sketch where Peter Cook is interviewing a one-legged Dudley Moore for the role of Tarzan, Cook says "If we get a no-legged applicant, I would have no trouble in offering you the part." Though the comedy works, it shows a clear lack of minimum required attributes!

The application form and questionnaire (4 & 5 below) include guidance on examples of required attributes.

2. Advertising

An effective advertisement is one that reaches a sufficient number of people who have the required attributes to allow some degree of selection, whilst deterring those people without the right attributes or with undesirable attributes.

For growers recruiting directly it is extremely useful to have help from someone who knows your business and that you trust, in the country and area that you are targeting. Often the ideal person is a supervisor who returns home for a part of the year. Advertisements can be placed in local newspapers, job centres, local radio, supermarkets.

Whilst the advertisement should make clear the what, where and when of the work, the aim is to attract numbers rather than deter.

3. Presentation

Ideally you have attracted a large number of people to the venue. The aim at this stage is to both sell yourself and your business to potential applicants and to deter time-wasters. Aim to give an accurate picture of the amount and type of work, expectations, remuneration, accommodation and facilities. (See 'Effectively communicating the offer' page 3 above). It is essential that you have a good translator who understands the message that you are trying to convey.

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4. Application form

The form (see Appendix 1) can be filled in prior to the event, however this does add significantly to the administration burden. Ideally those that want to apply fill in the form, with helpers on hand to answer any queries and to fill in the form for anyone who is illiterate. The form can be marked very quickly. There are a number of pre-framing questions each of which can eliminate an applicant if wrongly answered:

- Have you had any serious illnesses in the last 3 years?   Yes / No If yes, please give
        details:
- Do you have any back or joint problems? If yes please give details:
- Are you sufficiently fit to cope with full days of physical work? Yes / No
- Do you suffer from any form of colour blindness? Yes / No If yes, please give details
- *Our business is non-discriminatory on grounds of age, sex, race, religion, politics.*
   We do not tolerate drinking alcohol during the working day or failing to turn up to work
    on time and in a fit state due to alcohol consumption. The possession of or
consumption
    of banned substances, in or out of working hours, will result in instant dismissal.
    Would you accept these conditions of employment? Yes / No
- It is likely that you will be required to share accommodation.
   Does this pose any problems for you? Yes / No

   The last 3 questions can be used to reduce the number going forward to interview:
- Why do you want to come to the UK?
   State up to 4 reasons and how important on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)
- Which would you prefer? (Circle 1):
   Farm A. Long hours, hard work, very good money
   Farm B. Fewer hours, steady work, less money
   Why?
- Why do you believe you are the right person for this job?

There is a version of the form with guidance notes for employers / labour providers in Appendix 2.

5. Interview questionnaire

The aim is to have already eliminated a proportion of the total that turned up. The interview questionnaire (Appendix 3) should be used by the interviewer and has guidance notes. The questions have different weightings, which are in the form of a factor that is multiplied by the score. Inevitably there is a need for some subjectivity in scoring the answers; however using the questionnaire will be far more objective than rating applicants on a straight interview.

One couple who have carried out many hundreds of interviews reported that she was often swayed by male applicants and he by female applicants. It is far harder to be objective than we realise.

If there is more than one interviewer (I.e. applicants may see interviewer A or interviewer B) it is important to work to the same standards. Both should initially interview together to align their scoring levels.

The pre-selection process has two objectives:

1. To eliminate unsuitable applicants
2. To grade remaining candidates to allow selection of the best

The key attributes that the interview questionnaire seeks to measure are:

- Work experience
- Determination
- Commitment
- Aptitude for repetitive work
- Resilience
- Attitude to authority
- Ability to trust in self and in others
- Self-discipline and responsibility
- Enthusiasm

6. Physical tests

Physical tests can be use to further select from a group of candidates (pre-selection) or to stream a group of successful candidates on the basis of performance level or aptitude for particular work. An example of the latter would be selecting the most dextrous for a packing job or the most accurate for a QC role.

A particular aspect of the tests used in this project (See Science Section for detail) is that a measure was made of the improvement over 3 attempts at quick (30-50secs) sorting tests.

Current commercial pressures require that seasonal workers are able to learn quickly and this measurement is valid even if the job does not require the ability to sort quickly.

The tests measured dexterity, discerning and sorting ability, speed of learning. A measure of attitude was made through observation – in some cases it was obvious that the testee was not trying.

When devising tests it is important to decide exactly what it is you want to measure. Measuring physical fitness for instance using a strength test will not help if the job requires cardio-vascular fitness.

Financial Benefits

The table below, based on actual figures from a strawberry farm, show how a 12% gain in output is achieved.

Kgs / hour	100% Picked No selection	100% Picked 25% Selected out	Gain
Top 10%	20.1	20.1	0%
Mid 65%	12.2	12.2	0%
Bottom 25%	5.0*	12.2	84.6%
Average	11.19	12.99	16.08%

  * Includes productivity lost in removing underperforming staff and training replacements

The compound effects of labour shortage

Increasingly growers are struggling to get all of their product harvested due to shortage of labour of the right calibre. If the gains in productivity in the table above enable a grower to harvest an extra 16% of the crop, the financial benefits can be enormous. As well as the direct income gain, there are many less measurable gains. When all labour is required for harvesting, other non-harvest work does not get done or is compromised. When there is a labour shortage picking intervals get extended and quality suffers.

Depending on the crop, extra costs are incurred in removing old and out of grade product or sorting the good from bad. Frequently this further slowing of productivity spirals until a decision is made to walk away from part of the crop such as a field or a house or bays.

Action Points for Growers
- Analyse the seasonal labour you have had in the current / most recent season
- Did you have enough and what % were not of an acceptable standard?
- Ask your labour provider(s) about their approach to pre-selection

- Decide whether you need to recruit directly
- If recruiting directly for the first time, aim for a small percentage of your total requirements
- Study the guidelines and forms and adapt to your circumstances
- Ensure you keep to a minimum acceptable standard even if you have to re-advertise
- Use a trusted supervisor or similar in the target country to organise the recruitment
- Consider paying them a bonus on results once the recruit has reached target standard

Science Section

Introduction

The UK horticultural industry is facing a significant shortage of seasonal labour and a more acute shortage of high calibre seasonal labour. Within the numbers that do arrive on farms and nurseries, an increasing percentage do not make the grade. In part this may be due to growers requiring more from their workers, however widespread anecdotal evidence shows that output is lower. Formerly growers could 'tolerate' the occasional underperformer; now higher numbers of underperformers combined with squeezed margins makes this benevolent approach unviable.

Given that the cost of labour is increasing rapidly (over 75% in real terms since 2000) at a time of largely stagnant returns for horticultural products and that growers are under greater pressure than ever to comply fully with employment law, consistently high levels of productivity from seasonal labour are essential if UK horticulture is to remain competitive.

Changes to SAWS (Student Agricultural Worker Scheme) and improved economic performance in the newer EU countries is caused a severe shortage of seasonal labour for horticulture in 2008 and only a cool and late season prevented greater crop loss.

Seasonal labour is the single biggest cost for most growers and yet growers using labour providers typically have no involvement in the selection or recruitment process and very little come-back if the labour is unsuitable. The main labour providers, including the SAWS multiple-operators, do try hard to screen out unsuitable labour; however they are dealing with many thousands of applicants and do not have the time or resources to interview and select in the way they would ideally do.

The aim of this project is to create effective methods of selecting seasonal labour with the desired attributes (aptitude and attitude) that can be carried out in the source countries. Most selection processes aim to select the best candidate(s) from a large initial pool. UK horticulture requires a large number of seasonal workers from a diminishing labour pool, and thus most workers are accepted. The urgent need is to screen out the minority that are not able to, or choose not to perform adequately. The focus has been to understand what makes a person unsuitable, either through a lack of desirable traits or through the presence of undesirable traits.

Materials and Methods

Summary of Research

Whilst pre-selection for seasonal horticultural labour is a novel concept, for full-time positions across other industries it is commonplace or standard procedure. The extensive research undertaken for this project, is summarised here.

In 1954, John Flanagan established the 'Critical Incidents Technique' which was the precursor to key methodologies used in rigorous competency studies. He stated that "the principle objective of job analysis procedures should be the determination of critical requirements".

Critical Incidents can be defined as a set of procedures for systematically identifying behaviours that contribute to success or failure of individuals or organizations in specific situations. In 1973, David McClelland was inspired by this Critical Incidents Technique to discover and develop the term 'Competency'. At that time, there was dissatisfaction among researchers about the value of personality traits tests in predicting job performance. Competency assessment studies the people who do the job well and defines the job in terms of the characteristics & behaviours of these people.

In 1982 Richard Boyatzis wrote the first empirically based and fully researched book on competency model developments. Boyatzis said that "Competency is the vital behavioural skills, knowledge and personal attributes that are translations of organizational capabilities and are deemed essential for success. They distinguish exemplary performers from adequate performers"

There are 4 major components of Competency:
Skill (capabilities acquired through practice)
Knowledge (understanding acquired through learning)
Personal attributes (inherent characteristics brought to the job – the essential foundation on which knowledge & skill can be developed)
Behaviour (observable demonstration of some competency, skill, knowledge & personal attributes – a set of actions that can be taught, learned and measured).

It is said that 20% of behaviours drive 80% of excellent performance. Experience gained through previous HDC projects (SF71, TF171, FV 298) and commercial work, informs that mental attitude, habits and other brain driven behaviours are even more important.

Suzanne Simpson, PH.D., C.Psych. wrote an article titled "Competencies - The Core of Human Resource Management". Ms Simpson states "Competencies are related to the job not to the person. It is the requirements for the job that must be determined first. It is important to also note that while we speak of a job this is for the convenience of writing and not implementation. By this I mean that the definition applies to a group of jobs or a whole range of jobs. For example, airline pilots regardless of what aircraft they fly or what airline they fly for have similar job related

knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to be successful in that job. Therefore for certain competencies, once determined, they can be applied to all pilots. An exaggerated example of this might be that an analysis determines that pilots must not be colour blind. Therefore, no pilot applicant that is colour blind can be hired. To ensure that this is universally applied there is means to determine that condition through recognized tests".

The work done by Chris Rose and Kathy Strong for the HDC includes the competency approach and our knowledge of the mind and performance. This means that the 'mental' attitude which is so important to the ability to perform tasks was 'modelled' from competent workers and checked against trial data. Therefore we have added another dimension to competency modelling; the thinking, attitude, focus, belief systems, self-esteem levels and physical attributes of top performing workers.

In addition to calling on skills developed in the 70's by Dr. Richard Bandler and John Grinder (NLP) Neuro Science, The Science of Personality by Lawrence A. Perwin, Skinner's Behaviourism, The Social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (self-efficacy beliefs and his approach to motivation), and other psychological research on brain and behaviour (cognitive) models, we also looked at other models of selection such as:
The Five Factor Model - Lewis Goldberg, Naomi Takemoto-Chock, Andrew Comrey, and John M. Digman
16 PF (Personality Factors) - Raymond B Cattell
The DISC model - Thomas International
Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator,
Eysenck's Trait Model (Personality Inventory),
The Kolb Index,
The 34 themes of Strengthsfinder developed by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton Ph.D. and many other such models.

The Five Factor Model seems to be favoured by many researchers and in this report; we can only briefly visit a description as it relates to Europe. The Big Five Personality Factors include; Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Research conducted to find if personality was a predictor of employee competence was largely unsuccessful until these dimensions were ferreted out and ways to measure them were available.

Mr. Salgado statistically combined results (conducted a meta-analysis) of 36 European studies and found similar findings to those found by studies of worker performance in the United States and Canada. He concluded that personality factors in Europe operate largely as they do in the United States and Canada. The following was found:

Conscientiousness and emotional stability are valid for all occupations and for all criteria. (supervisory ratings, training success, and history as tracked by personnel records such as promotions and the like).

Conscientiousness is the most predictive of employee performance over all other factors.

Extraversion predicts the performance of managers and police.

Openness is a valid predictor for police and skilled labour jobs.

Agreeableness shows the lowest relationship to employee success, a correlation of almost zero.

Agreeableness was associated with training success.

Openness is a valid predictor of training success.

All personality trait relationships with employee job success or training are small.

Therefore, they are not the total picture by a long shoot.

Universally unacceptable traits in workers

The following list was compiled through collaboration with many growers, managers and supervisors directly involved in employing and working with seasonal labour. Each can be present in degrees and at some level would result in instant dismissal of an employee.

- Violent behaviour
- Dead lazy
- Untrustworthy - inveterate liar or cheat
- Significant mental problems (health & safety issues)
- Physically incapable of work
- Alcohol or drug abuse affecting work performance
- Contempt for authority

In addition, certain traits such as perfectionism are unacceptable at an extreme level.

In some cases, such as alcohol and drug abuse, the only recourse may be to put a clause in the application form (see Appendix 1). Whilst this will not guarantee compliance, it promotes awareness and does at least make disciplinary procedures more straightforward.

Performance questionnaire

This questionnaire (see Appendix 4) was used with poor performers on several farms. They were largely answered by the individual with additional input from the supervisor. The traits or behaviours that were consistently found in the poorest performers were:

- They could not explain why they were there - no sense of purpose
- They still appeared lost and disoriented after several weeks of work
- No goals or performance / earning targets

- Tendency to blame - their supervisor, the crop, the weather, etc.

The information gleaned from the performance questionnaire was combined with knowledge gained from research, industry consultation and experience to put together the application form and interview questionnaire.

The Stages of pre-selection

The following is a guide for growers to pre-selection. Growers already pre-selecting labour can use it to compare with and challenge current procedures and methods. Those wishing to start attracting and employing seasonal staff directly for the first time can adapt the following to fit their individual circumstances.

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5. Interview questionnaire
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- Commitment
- Aptitude for repetitive work
- Resilience
- Attitude to authority
- Ability to trust in self and in others
- Self-discipline and responsibility
- Enthusiasm

6. Physical tests

Physical tests can be use to further select from a group of candidates (pre-selection) or to stream a group of successful candidates on the basis of performance level or aptitude for particular work. An example of the latter would be selecting the most dextrous for a packing job or the most accurate for a QC role.

A particular aspect of the tests used in this project (See Science Section for detail) is that a measure was made of the improvement over 3 attempts at quick (30-50secs) sorting tests. Current commercial pressures require that seasonal workers are able to learn quickly and this measurement is valid even if the job does not require the ability to sort quickly.

The tests measured dexterity, discerning and sorting ability, speed of learning. A measure of attitude was made through observation – in some cases it was obvious that the testee was not trying.

When devising tests it is important to decide exactly what it is you want to measure. Measuring physical fitness for instance using a strength test will not help if the job requires cardio-vascular fitness.

The physical tests presented here are examples of generic tests and are designed to measure four attributes; ability to discern, dexterity, ability to learn quickly and, via observation, attitude.

The tests were carried out on a number of experienced strawberry pickers.

In each test each testee performed the exercise 3 times. A record was made of the time taken and the number of mistakes, plus any comments for each attempt. Any mistakes were shown to the testee after each attempt.

Test 1

Requirements: 4 bowls or similar receptacles

A number of marbles which can be divided into 3 groups with different colourings

A stopwatch

Pen & paper

The testers used 30 opaque marbles with, amongst other colourings, either a bright orange streak, a faint orange streak or no orange marking. Two of the marbles had an orange streak that was a little less bright but closer to the bright group than the faint group.

Opaque marbles   L to R orange streak, pale orange streak, no orange streak.

All of the marbles are placed in the first bowl close to the testee. The other three bowls are arranged behind and around the first.

The testees were shown the 3 different criteria and instructed to sort the marbles into the 3 bowls.

Test 2

Requirements: 3 bowls or similar receptacles

A number of marbles which can be divided into 2 groups with different colourings

A stopwatch

Pen and paper

The testers used 36 traditional translucent marbles with a 2 or 3 coloured design in the centre. 18 of the marbles had both orange and blue in the design, the other 18 had only one or neither colour. Two of the marbles were a lot larger.

Translucent marbles.   Left marble has both colours, right only has blue.

The testees were instructed to separate those with both colours present from those without. They could choose whether to remove all the marbles from the first bowl and sort into the other two, or to select just one group from the first bowl into a second bowl.

Test 3

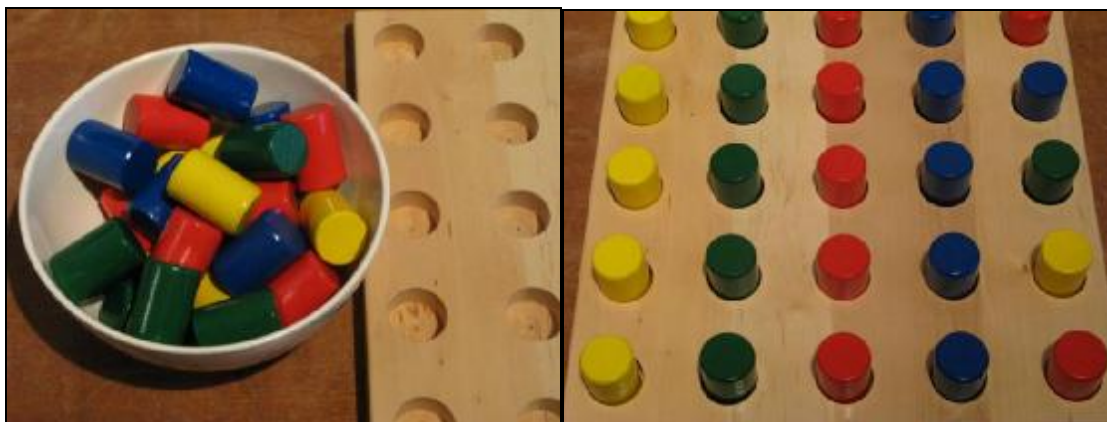Requirements: A pegboard with different coloured pegs

A bowl or similar receptacle

A stopwatch

Pen and paper

The testers used a 25-hole pegboard with six each blue, green and yellow pegs and seven red pegs.

All the pegs were placed in the bowl. Testees were instructed to place the pegs so as to create four single colour lines of pegs and a fifth mixed colour line.

Coloured pegs   Pegs in rows with last line mixed.

Results and Discussion

It has not been possible to test the efficacy of the application form and the interview questionnaire within this project. The effectiveness and benefits of the process will be influenced by a number of variables:

- The ability of the interviewers and testers to read the body language and vocal tone of candidates as well as the words
- The effectiveness of the current selection methods
- The ratio of candidates to numbers required
- The subsequent management of successful candidates

Physical tests

There was a large variation in speed, accuracy and level of improvement. The ability to improve with each attempt was deemed more important than absolute speed or accuracy.

There was a broad correlation between the test results and job performance. The faster pickers tended to learn what was required more quickly and perform the tests more quickly. Both slower and faster pickers were equally likely to make mistakes initially. The faster pickers were better at reducing or eliminating mistakes in subsequent attempts. Most testees improved significantly (10 -25%) over the three attempts, with no correlation between level of test improvement and job performance.

Table showing example test results

	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Pick	Average

							speed	improve
Testee	Time	Faults	Time	Faults	Time	Faults		
1	53.6	3	49.4	2	27.7	0	54%	
	51.7	3	41.7	2	27.9	0		
	48.6	1	41.9	0	24.3	0		
Improvement	9.33	10	15.2	10	13.3	0		9.64%
2	47.1	2	42.7	0	26.9	0	86%	
	44.8	0	38.8	1	25.2	0		
	39.3	0	32.6	0	22.8	0		
Improvement	16.6	10	23.7	5	15.2	0		11.75%

The tests were given to 20 experienced strawberry pickers. The results are not presented in full because it is not claimed that the tests would be accurate predictors of performance in any jobs without testing large numbers (100s) for each task or job.

There are too many differences between working 8-hours a day, 5 or 6 days a week on a farm or nursery and completing 3 short tests such as these to make valid judgements.

The project co-ordinators believe that the real value of these tests is to gauge the attitude of applicants. There is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that a high proportion of the poorest performers do not really want the job. They may, for instance, be pressured by parents or spouse to apply. Ideally applicants would be taken on for a trial period to judge suitability. This is not possible with overseas labour, so the tests provide a simulation. Much can be learned from studying how an applicant approaches and undertakes the tasks. The applicant must understand, using translators if necessary, that the test is to help measure suitability for the job (i.e. It is important to you to do your best).

Where time is short, we recommend using the tests for marginal candidates. At the interview stage, the interviewers designate each candidate as either 'in', 'out' or 'unsure and go to testing'.

Conclusions

The research undertaken during this project has demonstrated that most grower businesses lack the facilities, time and ability to recruit foreign based labour effectively. The majority rely on labour providers and agencies for some or all of their requirements. These suppliers are under

very significant pressure to supply many thousands of recruits each year and also lack the time and facility to select as carefully as they ideally would.

Conclusion 1: Something has to change.
In 2008 the system did not work. Many growers stated that they had significant problems with getting the numbers promised, the calibre of those they did get and the timing of when they got them.

Conclusion 2: The pre-selection process developed in this project is a major step forward.
A spokesperson for a major labour provider stated that 5 minutes per person was the maximum time they could allow. When set against the value of good workers and the cost of poor workers, this statement needs challenging. It will take longer and cost more to implement a thorough pre-selection process; however the gains far outweigh the cost.

Conclusion 3: Post-selection procedures are equally important.
The days of very poor people desperate to earn money are over. Tomorrow's workers have choices. To perform well they must be treated well, trained effectively and given the conditions and environment to be motivated. Some labour providers are now refusing to provide labour to businesses that fail to do this. These businesses will need to change to survive.

Conclusion 4: Thorough pre-selection will become standard policy.
This is more a prediction than a conclusion. Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of unsuitable recruits arriving. To remain successful, the industry has to overcome this challenge. Businesses have the option to use the process as provided here, adapt it, or come up with their own process. Doing nothing is not a viable option.

Research

Agricultural Employment Testing: Opportunities for Increased Worker Performance - Gregorio Encina Billikopf , University of California

Systematic Selection of Ag Employees (Video #V90-Y) - Billikopf

Testing to predict tomato harvest workers performance - Billikopf

Temporary workers in UK agriculture and horticulture - University of Cambridge

Prism for management assessment and coaching -

http://space.businessballs.com/wilkobilko/resources/prism_for_businessballs.pdf

http://www.queendom.com/tests/index.htm

http://www.nwlink.com/~Donclark/performance/performance.html

http://www.morrisby.com/content/products/dexterity.htm

New Zealand Seasonal Worker Scheme - http://www.dol.govt.nz/initiatives/strategy/rse/index.asp

Technology Transfer

- An article was published in HDC News, December 2008
- This report has been circulated to the project collaborators (HOPS GB, Concordia, Place UK)
- The project collaborators are labour providers who collectively serve a large section of the industry

Appendix 1

Seasonal Worker Application Form

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help us to learn more about you

Please ensure that you answer every question   Ref **No**

Section A

Warning: If you are employed and it is found that you have not answered this section honestly you can be dismissed immediately.

Name: [   ]   Date of birth: [   ]

Address: [   ]

Male / Female (Circle 1)

1. What work / job(s) / studying have you done in the last 3 years (Give approximate dates)?

2. Have you had any serious illnesses in the last 3 years?   Yes / No
If yes, please give details:

3. Do you have any back or joint problems?
If yes please give details:

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                                                                    ┌──────┐
┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐             │      │
│                                                      │             │      │
│                                                      │             └──────┘
│                                                      │
│                                                      │
└────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

4. Are you sufficiently fit to cope with full days of physical work? Yes / No

5. Do you suffer from any form of colour blindness? Yes / No

If yes, please give details

6. *Our business is non-discriminatory on grounds of age, sex, race, religion, politics.*

We do not tolerate drinking alcohol during the working day or failing to turn up to work

on time and in a fit state due to alcohol consumption.

The possession of or consumption of banned substances, in or out of working hours,

will result in instant dismissal.

Would you accept these conditions of employment? Yes / No

7. It is likely that you will be required to share accommodation.

Does this pose any problems for you? Yes / No

If yes, please explain.

8. Why do you want to come to the UK?

State up to 4 reasons and how important on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)

Reason for wanting to come to UK	Importance (1-5)	

9. Which would you prefer? (Circle 1):

Farm A. Long hours, hard work, very good money

Farm B. Fewer hours, steady work, less money

Why?

10. Why do you believe you are the right person for this job?

Appendix 2:

Seasonal Worker Application Form

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help us understand more about you.

Official

Please ensure that you answer every question.   use

only

Section A

A score of 0 for any question in this section should rule the candidate out.

Warning: If you are employed and it is found that you have not answered this section honestly you can be dismissed immediately.

Name: _____   Date of birth: _____   ☐

Male / Female (Circle 1)

Discrimination on grounds of age or sex is not condoned.
The answers given may help decide which type of work the candidate may be more suited to.

2. What work / job(s) / studying have you done in the last 3 years (Give

None or blank = 1. Manual work for the whole period = 5. Studying for the whole period = 3

2. Have you had any serious illnesses in the last 3 years?   Yes / No

If yes, please give details:

3. Do you have any back or joint problems?

If yes please give details:

4. Are you sufficiently fit to cope with full days of physical work? Yes / No

5. Do you suffer from any form of colour blindness? Yes / No

If yes, please give details

6. *Our business is non-discriminatory on grounds of age, sex, race, religion, politics.*
We do not tolerate drinking alcohol during the working day or failing to turn up to
work

on time and in a fit state due to alcohol consumption.

The possession of or consumption of banned substances, in or out of working hours,

will result in instant dismissal.

Would you accept these conditions of employment? Yes / No

Yes = 5. No = 0.

7. It is likely that you will be required to share accommodation.

Does this pose any problems for you? Yes / No

If yes, please explain.

Score this based on your accommodation. Refusal to share when this is a requirement = 0.

8. Why do you want to come to the UK?

State up to 4 reasons and how important on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)

Reason for wanting to come to UK	Importance (1-5)

Earning money most important = 5. No mention of earning money = 1. Left blank = 0.

9. Which would you prefer? (Circle 1):

Farm A. Long hours, hard work, very good money

Farm B. Fewer hours, steady work, less money

Why?

<div style="border:1px solid black; min-height:120px;"></div>

<div style="border:1px solid black; width:70px; height:90px; float:right;"></div>

10. Why do you believe you are the right person for this job?

<div style="border:1px solid black; min-height:230px;"></div>

<div style="border:1px solid black; width:70px; height:90px; float:right;"></div>

Section B

8. Why do you want to come to the UK?

State up to 4 reasons and how important on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)

Reason for wanting to come to UK	Importance (1-5)

9. Which would you prefer? (Circle 1):

Farm A. Long hours, hard work, very good money

Farm B. Fewer hours, steady work, less money

Why?

10. Why do you believe you are the right person for this job?

This is something of a tie-breaker. Left blank = 0. High motivation, determination to work hard to earn good money = 5.

Appendix 3

Pre-selection Interview Questionnaire

Note to interviewer: Do not show this questionnaire to the applicant. Circle the score

between 0 and 5 for each question in the scoring grid. After the interview multiply each

score by the number to the right of the grid and enter the result in the box on the right

Name: [   ]   Ref No: [   ]

1. Tell me about what work you have done? (*Looking for type of work, [including studying]? How long for? Did they enjoy it? Were they good at it? Did they stick at it? Why did it end?*)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x1   [   ]

5 = Good experience of same work and good at it. 0 = No work experience

3 = A manual job for at least 6 months

2. Whose idea was it to apply for this work? *(Looking for how much they really want the work)*

0	1	2	3	4	5

x1   [   ]

5 = Own initiative stated with conviction. 0 = Parent or spouse's idea and clearly resented.

2-3 = Someone else's idea and positive about it or own idea without full conviction

3. If you weren't selected, what would you do? *(As above and level of determination)*

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0	1	2	3	4	5

x1.5

5 = Keep trying until they get this sort of work and showing real determination. 0 = Signs that they would welcome not being selected. 2-3 = Would keep looking for some sort of work, showing less than full commitment.

4.   Why do you want to do this work? *(Would they be committed to the job? What do*

they focus on?)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x3

5 = Passionately wanting to achieve a large financial goal. 0 = Answer suggests they don't really want this work, e.g. have to think hard, not convincing, talk about non-work related reasons. 2-3 = Want to earn money and see UK, meet people etc.

5. Which of the following would describe your work preference?
   a) Unpredictable, varied and challenging work
   b) Predictable, challenging routine work
   c) Predictable routine work (no surprises)
   d) No preferences (will do any work)
   e) Other (please explain)
   (Looking for attitude to change and aptitude for repetitive work – linked to Q3 above
   as strong motivation to a large financial goal will override a preference for variety.)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x2

6. Imagine you arrive on a farm, you like the accommodation, you like the people you are

working with and the boss and supervisors are OK, but you find the work really hard – it is

tiring and you seem to be slower than the others. What would you do? (*Looking for stamina,*

endurance – depending on answer, you could ask further questions to draw this out.)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x2

7. Supervisors can be friendly / firm / fair / cheerful / good instructor / supportive coach / strict / easy going.

Which qualities would you like to see in your supervisor (include any qualities not mentioned above)?

7a) Which of these are most important to you?

(*Looking for attitude to authority – underlying attitude is more important than which specific qualities matter to them. Refusal to accept authority is a major reason for dismissal so it is important to seek answers until you feel confident to score them)*

0	1	2	3	4	5

x3

8. Who do you trust? (*Looking for whether they tend to be trusting or distrustful AND evidence of self-trust.*)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x2

5 = Trust themselves and many others who they have learned to trust. Naturally inclined to trust. 0 = Nobody, ever. 2-3 = Trust some close friends & relations. Distrust until trust is earned.

9. What does self-discipline mean to you? (*Again looking for signs of self-trust, self-responsibility – could ask how they get up in the morning? Does their own behaviour match their beliefs about responsible behaviour?*)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x3

5 = Clearly demonstrate that they take full responsibility for their actions and have motivation. 0 = Takes no responsibility for actions and depends on others for direction, motivation and discipline. 2-3 = Understands the concept but doesn't fully live it.

10. What are you good at? Tell me about it? (*Looking for their passion, particularly if they have shown none so far. Prompt to get an answer – e.g. Are you a good son / daughter / friend?*)

10a. What do you enjoy doing most? *(Ask only if the previous question doesn't answer the previous question fully.)*

0	1	2	3	4	5

x1.5

5 = They describe something they excel at and show real passion about it. 0 = They can find nothing that they are good at. 2-3 = They come up with something they are good at but with limited enthusiasm.

11. Have you ever had to learn something that required effort? (e.g. hobby or sport).
Yes / No

If yes, what did you learn and how good were you?
(Looking for a yes answer. Get a measure of level of determination, self-discipline and persistence)

0	1	2	3	4	5

x3

5 = Yes and showing a major challenge with initial failure / struggle that is successfully overcome. 0 = Yes and gave up, or No. 2-3 = Yes and showing moderate effort or a smaller challenge that is overcome

Name: _____   Ref. No.: _____   Total Score

(Sum of Score

Boxes)

Appendix 4

Performance Questionnaire

Name: Farm:

Champion Picker DVD   y/n

Country of birth

How long on farm

Training   y/n

Supervisor/Team Leader

Movements   slower/faster (than others)

Learn from mistakes   y/n

Look lost and disoriented   y/n

Can explain why they are here   y/n

Have clearly defined goals   y/n

Have obvious common sense   y/n

General attitude to work

General attitude to money (enough etc.)

Happy in their work   y/n

Happy on the farm   y/n

Happy in the team   y/n

Satisfied with accommodation facilities   y/n

Like and respect their supervisor   y/n

Why they believe they are at the bottom of the team (blamer/self responsibility)?

What they would like to do about it (blamer/self responsibility/hopelessness)?

Physically able   y/n

Would they return   y/n

Do they like farm work   y/n

What attracted them to farm work (money/adventure/goals/sight seeing/learning/meeting others/new friends/nothing else to do/no work in their country)?

Are they at university   y/n

Favourite hobby

General demeanour (pleasant, uninterested, frustrated, annoyed, surly, sad, happy etc)

General attitude (blamer, helpful, willing, bored, frightened, couldn't care less, want to do well, not interested in improving their game, tired, energetic, ambitious etc.)

Values: What is important to them in a job?

                 What is important to them in a relationship?

                 What is important to them in a career?

Values: Which of the following are important to them?

Security, Adventure, Belonging, Roof over their head, Achievement, Power,
Love and Affection, Influencing others (leading), Control of self/environment/others,
(McLelland- Power, Affiliation, Achievement)

What would they most want to avoid experiencing in a job?

What don't they like in a job?

If it was possible to turn back the clock, what could they have done better?

What are they willing to do to increase their pay/performance from today?

Any other comments about the job, themselves, supervisors, the farm?