



NEW ZEALAND
IMMIGRATION

Immigration Factsheets

Recognised Seasonal Employer

September 2019

- The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme was announced in October 2006 and came into effect in April 2007.
- The policy allows the horticulture and viticulture industries to recruit workers from the Pacific (with some exceptions) for seasonal work when there are not enough New Zealand workers.
- There is an administrative limit or cap on the number of RSE places that can be taken up in any one year.
- This cap was set at 5,000 places when the scheme was established in 2007, but the success of RSE has led to increased demand from employers, and the cap was increased to 8,000 places in 2009, 9,000 in November 2014, 9,500 in December 2015, 10,500 in December 2016, 11,100 in December 2017, 12,850 in November 2018. In 2019 a two years of cap increases were announced. 14,400 for 2019/20 and 16,000 for 2020/21. The allocation for 2020/21 is conditional on industry progress on:
 - making industry jobs more attractive to New Zealanders
 - removing barriers for New Zealanders to work in the industry
 - reducing the use of residential housing in key priority areas
 - increasing the number of purpose-built beds that add to housing stock
- The number of available places varies each year depending on the forecast of New Zealanders available and industry demand.
- Employers can apply to recruit overseas workers under the RSE policy only when there are no New Zealanders available to do the work.
- Employers apply to Immigration New Zealand to become a Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE). As part of the processing of the RSE status application, INZ has to be satisfied that the employer has good workplace practices, including a history of compliance with immigration and employment law.
- RSE employers must comply with minimum remuneration and pay deductions requirements. RSE workers must be paid no less than the market rate for the job.



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Employment agreements need to specify the per hour rate for the work to be done and where piece rates apply the piece rate must be specified.

- All workers receive information on RSE rights and responsibilities. RSE employers are responsible for ensuring RSE workers’ welfare and pastoral care needs are met. Employers are provided support and advice on standards and obligations, and conditions are monitored closely.
- RSE employers must make available safe and suitable accommodation and on-site facilities at work for their workers. Workers are expected to pay a fair rent, power and other living costs associated with accommodation. Deductions under RSE Instructions must be for actual, reasonable and verifiable costs, so maximum amounts are not specified.
- In 2019 new requirements were introduced that restricted further RSE employer use of residential accommodation. This was done to reduce the risk of increased demand for public housing as a result of the RSE cap increase. Exemptions are allowed for regions with low housing pressure.
- Any decision to raise the cap for RSE workers is made by the Minister of Immigration, whereas decisions on total regional allocations are made by Immigration New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development, in consultation with industry.
- Unless employers can show they have pre-established relationships with workers from other countries, they may only recruit workers under RSE policy from the following eligible Pacific countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- Workers must meet health and character requirements and provide evidence of arrangements to leave New Zealand at the end of their stay.
- People employed under the RSE policy may stay in New Zealand for up to seven months during any 11-month period. Exceptions to this are workers from Tuvalu and Kiribati, who can stay for nine months because of the distance from New Zealand and the cost of travel.

RSE workers arrival into New Zealand

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
8,483	9,278	10,437	11,078	12,581

Top 5 nationalities

2014/15	2015/16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Vanuatu 3,435	Vanuatu 3,726	Vanuatu 4,170	Vanuatu 4,445	Vanuatu 5,130
Tonga 1,563	Tonga 1,687	Tonga 1,820	Tonga 1,899	Samoa 2,315
Samoa 1,238	Samoa 1,454	Samoa 1,689	Samoa 1,878	Tonga 2,037



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Thailand 624	Thailand 637	Thailand 633	Thailand 629	Solomon Islands 696
Solomon Islands 511	Solomon Islands 590	Solomon Islands 592	Solomon Islands 643	Thailand 628