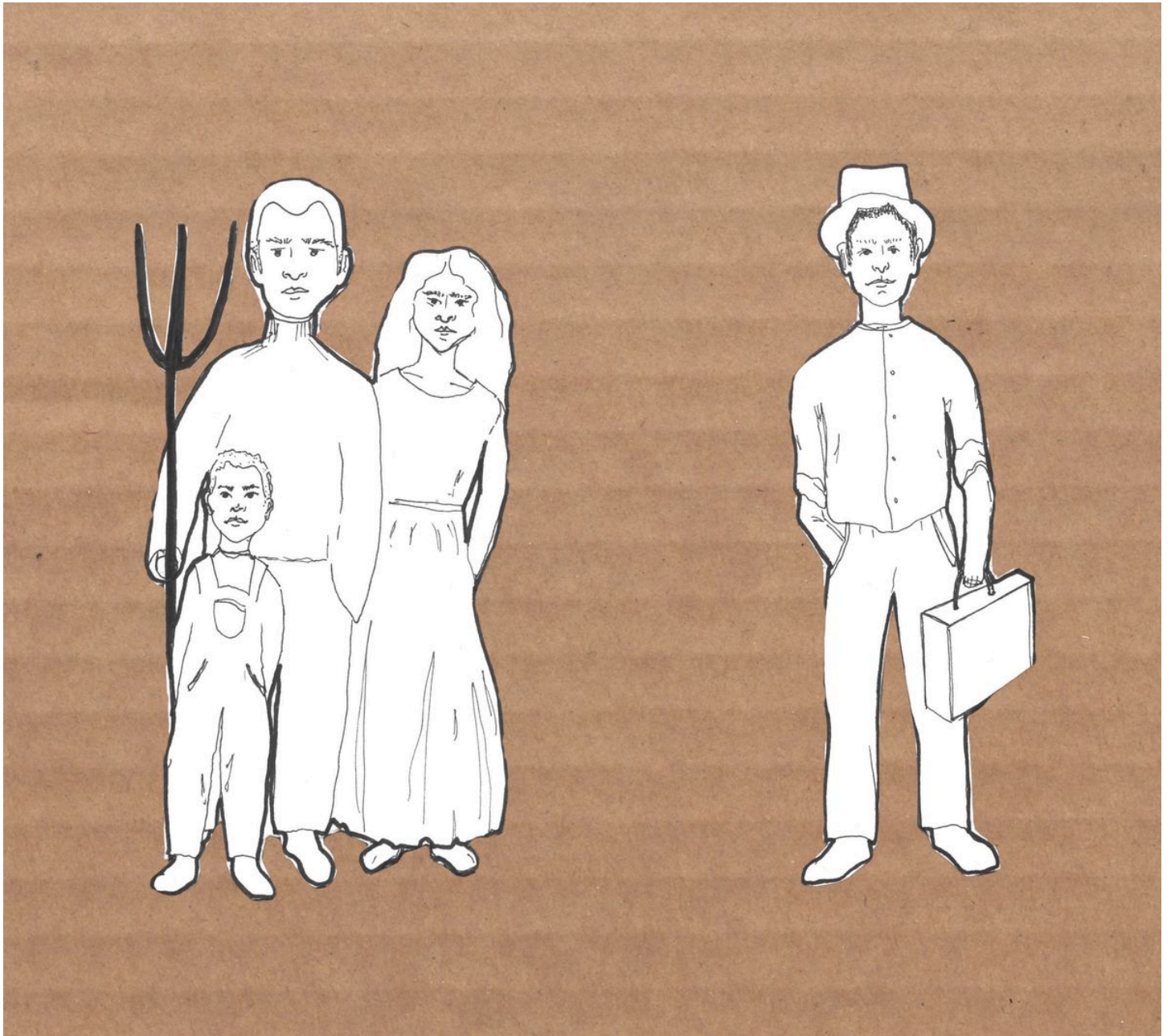


Otelfingen

Empowering the Agricultural Worker: From Seasonal to Year-Round

Mira Weingartner and Michèle Zeder

A Short History of Agricultural Labour: From Family Work to Seasonal Help



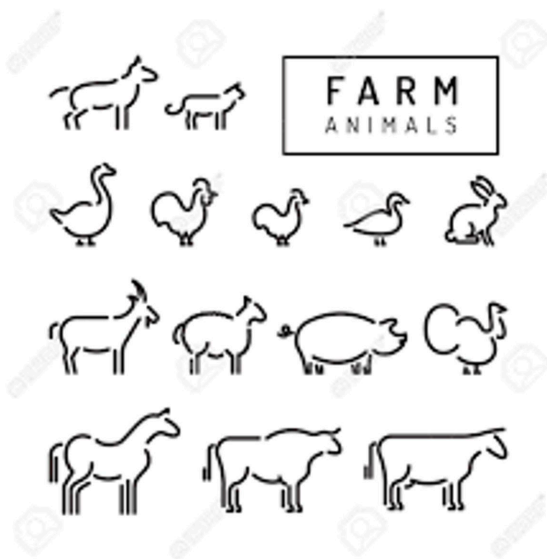
Otelfingen was a flourishing family farm village for centuries. Over time, the number of farms has significantly declined, while the remaining ones increased in size, thanks to the introduction of modern machinery and the employment of additional (non-family) workers. Today, the majority of workers have part-time positions—often as seasonal workers.

Otelfingen is located between Baden and Zurich in the Furt Valley. Its inhabitants were the richest and most powerful farmers in the region. It has been handed down that the people of Otelfingen also liked to flaunt their wealth when they went on Sunday excursions with their large carts.

The village buildings are reminders of the prosperity of the people of Otelfingen, such as the church of Otelfingen. It has an expensive copper roof, which can be seen from far away in the Furt Valley. In the middle of the village centre there is today's brewery with a large gate, which once allowed farmers from the surroundings to drive their carts directly in, to deliver their taxes—the tithe. Finally, also the stone facades of the buildings are emblematic of prosperity; at the time only the wealthy could afford stone instead of wood as a building material.



View from Unteren Sandacker, around 1925. Source: via Otelfingen Ansichtskarten [<https://otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch/dorfansicht-um-1925-8/>], Kunstverlag J.J. Brüllmann Seebach (Zurich).



Swimming at the Dürrengraben in 1918. Source: otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch, 2023



Wedding ceremony in the Hinterdorf, Otelfingen, around 1925. Photography: Otelfingen Ansichtskarten [<https://otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch/hochzeitszug-um-1925/>], 2023.



The farmers of the village on fire brigade duty around 1928. Photography: Otelfingen Ansichtskarten [<https://otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch/feuerwehr-1928-3/>], 2023.



Swimming at the Dürrengraben in 1918. Source: otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch, 2023

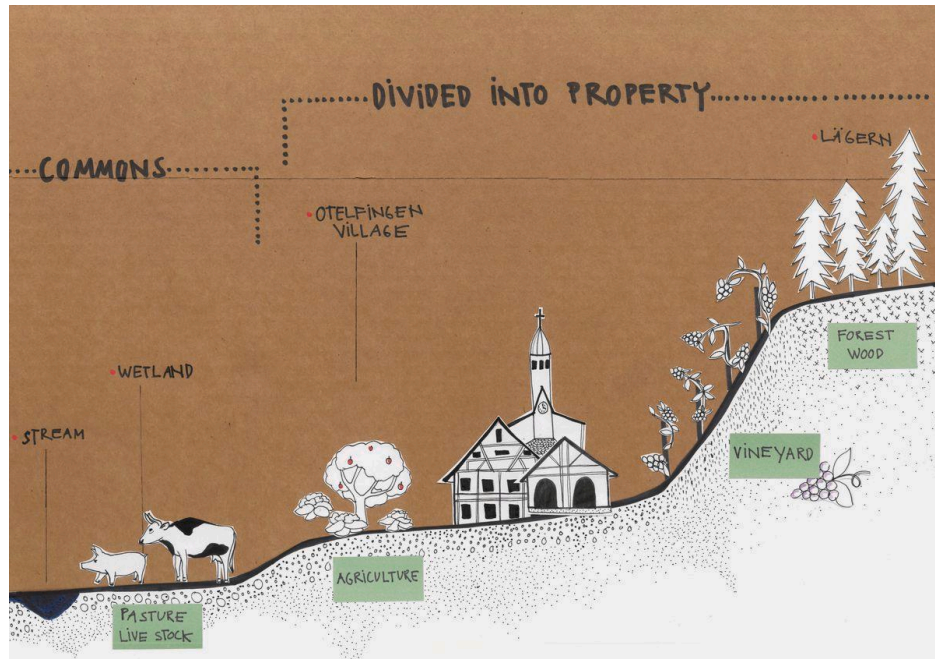


Swimming at the Dürrengraben in 1918. Source: otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch, 2023



Swimming at the Dürrengraben in 1918. On the right of the picture you can see Anna Aberli-Schlatter, called "Chappe-Anni" (hatter) with a parasol in her hand. Photography: via Otelfingen Ansichtskarten [<https://otelfingen-ansichtskarten.ch/badeplausch-am-duerrengaben-um-1920/>], 2023.

The reason for the prosperity of the former farmers of Otelfingen is the local topography, which was cleverly used: The lowland in the valley, a wetland, was used for a long time as common pastures. Around the village, located higher up, the Otelfingen farmers cultivated fruit and vegetables. On the sunny slope at the back of the village, the farming families also cultivated vineyards. And at the very top, on the mountain range Lägern, the forests for timber farming were located. This diversity in farming produce reduced the risk of famine or financial ruin.



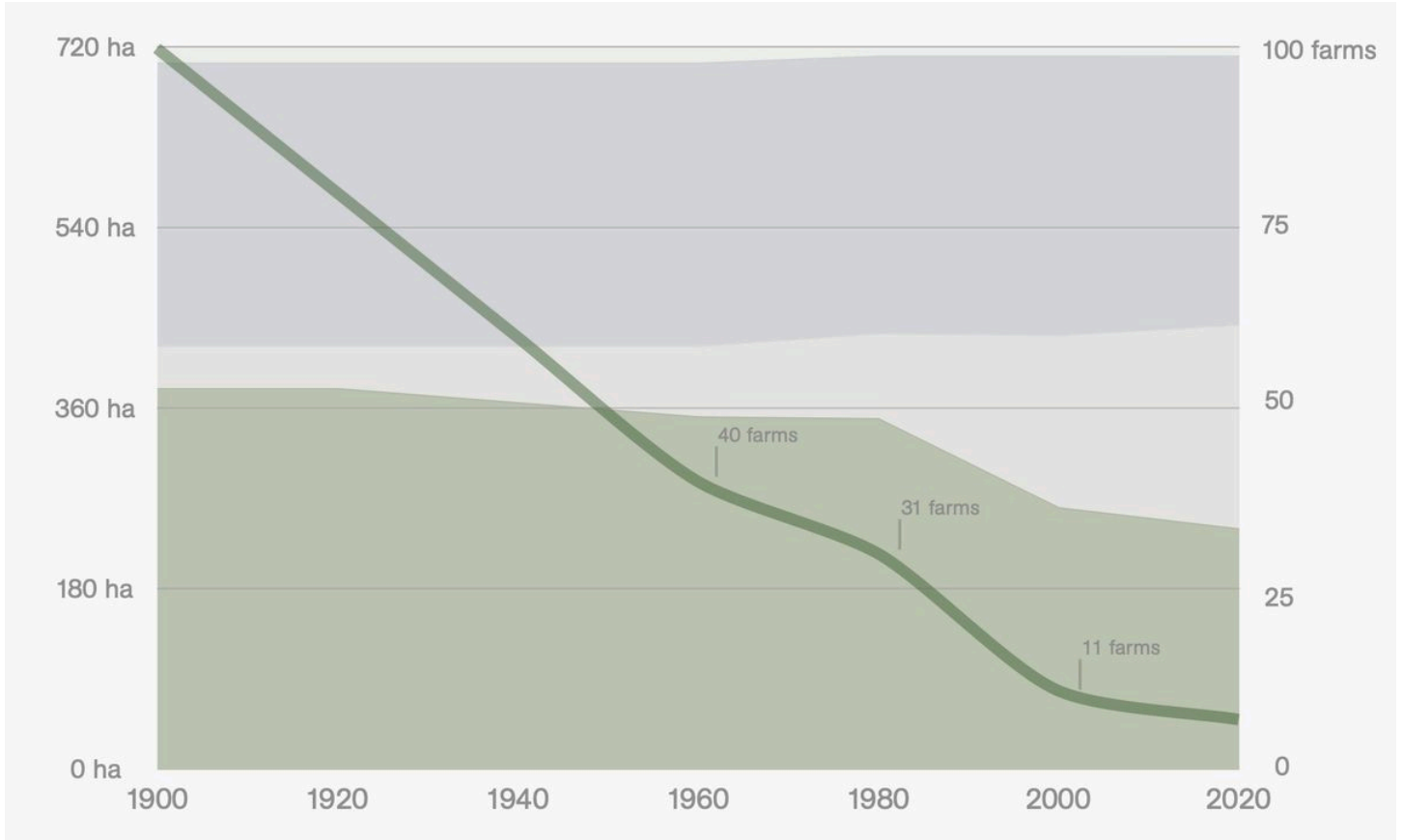
TOPOGRAPHY AS THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL FARMING
Cross-section of the landscape of Otelfingen before the industrialisation of agriculture.

The Disappearance of Otelfingen's Commons

Today, due to increasing urbanisation and the rising demand for living space, Otelfingen, which can be reached in only 25 minutes from Zurich main station, has developed into an attractive place to live. New settlements and residential areas have been built, and the number of inhabitants has increased considerably, partly at the expense of agricultural land formerly used communally.

Seasonal Labour: a New Business Model

The two largest farms that cultivate land in Otelfingen employ about 200 workers annually. Only about 20 % of the workforce in the local primary sector is employed full-time. The majority, about 80 %, work part-time on a seasonal basis.



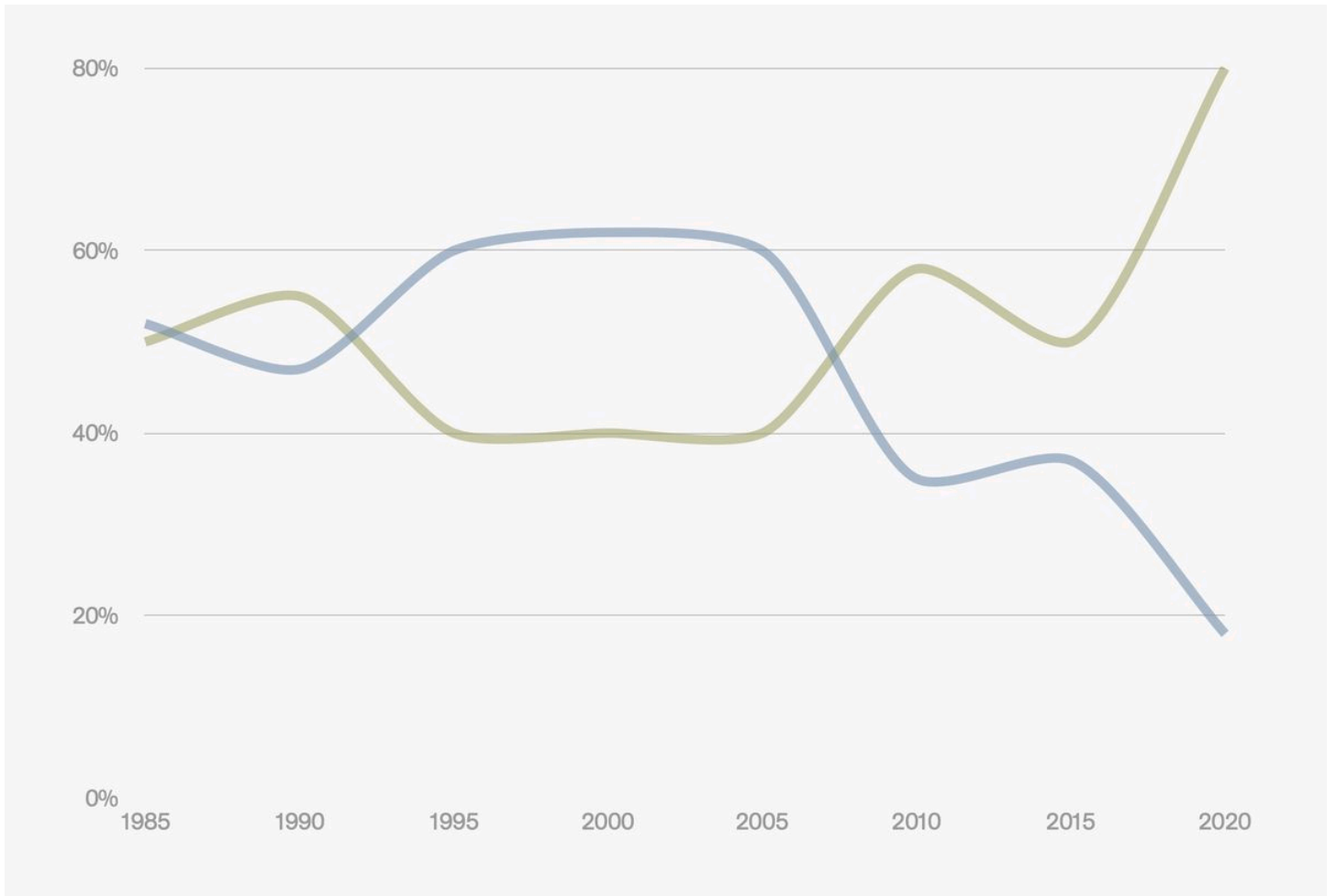
AGRICULTURAL LAND UNDER PRESSURE

Agricultural land has decreased while residential areas have expanded. A concrete example of this is the period between 1980 and 2000, when a total of 89 hectares of land disappeared, of which 85 hectares were converted into residential areas. The number of farms has decreased from about 100 at the beginning of the century to seven farms in Otelfingen by 2023. Source: Güller, Alfred. Ortsgeschichte Otelfingen, Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 1991. Kanton Zürich, 2023.

Unproductive land
Forest

Settlement area
Agricultural land

Number of farms in Otelfingen



The dominance of seasonal labour in agriculture.
Source: Kanton Zürich, 2023.

■ Full-time worker

■ Part-time worker

A Close Reading of a Seasonal Worker's Contract in Switzerland



Swiss agriculture relies heavily on flexible and low-cost migrant labor, especially in fruit and vegetable production. Google Reviews of Swiss vegetable producers provide insights into the conditions of seasonal labor, which often prove to be precarious.

In Switzerland, agriculture is one of the economic sectors with the highest number of seasonal workers. The business model is particularly widespread in fruit and vegetable production. It is estimated that over 30,000 seasonal workers come to Switzerland each year to work in local fields and greenhouses, often under precarious conditions.

«BLAAAABLAAAABLAAA»

– Philippe Sauvin, labor union «L'autre Syndicat»



Reconstructed Employment Contract of a Seasonal Worker

E M P L O Y M E N T C O N T R A C T

CONTRACTING PARTIES

Company

.....

Employee

.....

POSITION / DUTIES

Temporary employee without experience, assistant

- Work is performed according to instructions
- PHYSICALLY DEMANDING MANUAL WORK
- MONOTONOUS WORKDAYS
- LIMITED AUTONOMY
- NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT
- UNEMPLOYMENT OUT OF SEASON

WORKING HOURS

50 - 55 hours / week

- Overtime can be claimed

15 minutes break / half-day

1 day off / week

- At least 1 rest day per month is on a sunday

BONUS SYSTEM BASED ON TIME + SUCCESS POSSIBLE!

** TOILET VISITS THAT REQUIRE LONG DISTANCES ARE ALLOWED ONCE / HALF DAY*

SALARY

CHF 3'385.00

- Hourly rate of CHF 15.00
- DEPENDING ON CANTON

DEDUCTIONS

CHF 350.00 / month / bed

- In company-provided room

Additional deductions for WiFi, meals

*PRICES REACHING UP TO 600.00 CHF!
ROOM CONDITIONS = BASIC → POOR*

INSURENCES

The employee must be insured with a Swiss health insurance provider upon commencing employment.

→ PREMIUM @ AGRISANO : 250 CHF/MONTH

Accident insurance according to the Swiss Federal Accident Insurance Act (UVG) at the expense of the employer.

Krankentaggeldversicherung

→ IF A WRITTEN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT IS INCLUDED, THE "DAILY SICKNESS BENEFIT INSURANCE" CAN BE EXCLUDED.

RESIDENCE PERMIT

L-Ausweis; the validity period of the permit corresponds to that of the employment contract. It can be extended for a total duration of less than 12 months.

↳ THE PERMIT DOES NOT ENTITLE TO SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS DURING THIS PERIOD

Date, Place

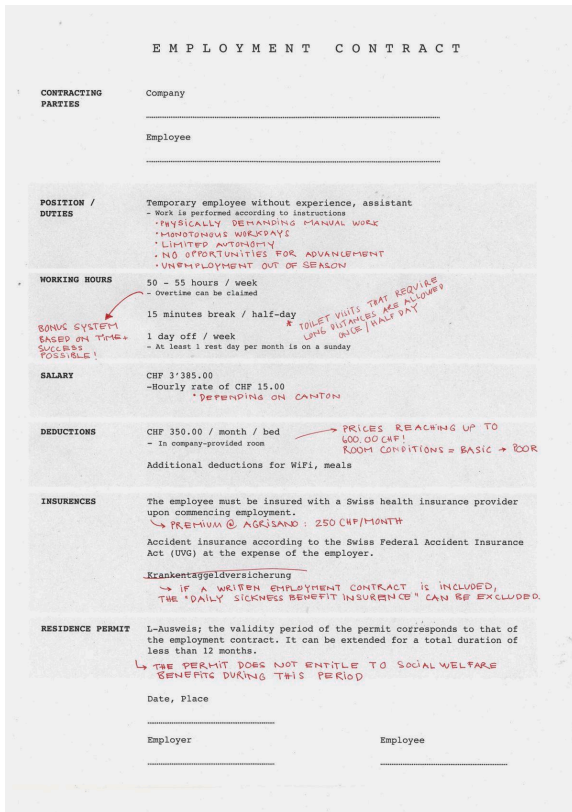
.....

Employer

Employee

.....

This reconstructed work contract illustrates the minimal working conditions of seasonal workers on paper. The actual working conditions, written in red, are often worse. Sources: Schweizer Bauernverband, IP Suisse, interviews during field research, 2023.



This fictitious contract illustrates the working conditions of seasonal workers. The actual working conditions are written in red.
Sources: *Schweizer Bauernverband, 2023, IP Suisse, 2023, field research,*



Richtlöhne 2023
Personal in Landwirtschaft, Obst-, Wein-, Gemüsebau, landw. Haushalt, etc.

- Wichtig:**
- Kantonale Mindestlöhne (z.B. NE) sowie verbindliche Regelungen zum Lohn im NAV (z.B. VG, GE) oder GAV (VS) müssen beachtet und eingehalten werden.
 - Massgebend für die Einstufung in die Lohnklassen ist nicht die Ausbildung, sondern die im Betrieb ausgeübte Funktion.
 - Die angegebenen Löhne verstehen sich als Monatslöhne inklusive allfälliger erbrachter Kost und Logis.
 - In der Landwirtschaft sind 12 Monatslöhne üblich, allfällige 13. Monatslöhne/Großkalkulationen sind in diesen Richtlinien nicht enthalten.
 - Der Arbeitgeber ist verpflichtet, jeden Monat eine Lohnabrechnung inklusive Kontrolle der Überzahl, Freizeit und Kostgelterschädigung zu erstellen. Der Ferienzuschlag für 4 Wochen beträgt 8.33% und bei 5 Wochen 10.64% (Stundenlohnabrechnungen).

Lohnklasse	Funktion	Vergleichbare Ausbildung	Berufserfahrung (J)	Bruttolohn / Monat	
				von CHF	bis CHF
8	Landw. und bäuerl.-hausw. Betriebsleiter/Innen - Verantwortung für Betrieb /Haushalt - Eigenständige Betriebsplanung	Höhere Fachprüfung HFP Fach-/Hochschulabschluss	Über 5 Jahre	4'885.00	6'510.00
			Unter 5 Jahre	4'255.00	5'485.00
7	Landw. und bäuerl.-hausw. Betriebszweigeleiter/mnen - Verantwortung für Betriebszweig - Eigenständige Planung von Teilbereichen	Berufsprüfung (BLS I)	Über 5 Jahre	4'495.00	5'860.00
			Unter 5 Jahre	4'005.00	5'190.00
6	Landw. und bäuerl.-hausw. Betriebsangestellte - Eigenständige Arbeitsplanung - Kann alle Arbeiten eigenständig ausführen - Gruppenleiter	Fähigkeitszeugnis	Über 5 Jahre	4'085.00	5'305.00
			Unter 5 Jahre	3'860.00	4'915.00
5	Landw. und bäuerl.-hausw. Betriebsangestellte - Arbeiten werden gemäss Auftrag selbstständig ausgeführt - Grundkenntnisse vorhanden	Teilprüfung, LAP I Edig. Berufstest EBA	Über 5 Jahre	3'790.00	4'230.00
			Unter 5 Jahre	3'470.00	3'840.00
4	Befristete Angestellte oder Angestellte ohne Erfahrung, Hilfskräfte - Arbeiten werden gem. Weisungen ausgeführt	Saisonale Arbeitskräfte		3'385.00	
3	Aushilfe unter 18 Jahre - Einfache Tätigkeiten	Keine berufl. Ausbildung		1'540.00	2'590.00
2	Praktikanten im Rahmen eines Programmes von SBV/Agrimpuls (Vorbehalt unter Zustimmung SEM)	Praktikanten	Über 4 Monate	2'860.00	
			Unter 4 Monate	2'695.00	
1	Praktikanten im Rahmen eines Studiums an der HAW/ETH (2022)	Studenten		1'500.00	1'800.00

Der Minimallohn für Angestellte in der Landwirtschaft beträgt CHF 3'385.00!

Alppersonal
Informationen zu Löhnen auf Alpen sind auf der Internetseite www.zalp.ch oder bei verschiedenen kantonalen Anlaufstellen zu finden. Grundsätzlich kann auch bei Angestelltenverhältnissen auf Alpen die vorliegende Lohnrichtlinie als Richtlinie beigezogen werden.

¹ kant. Mindestlöhne, verbindliche Regelungen im NAV, GAV haben Vorrang.

According to the Swiss Farmer's union's wage scale, workers get around 600 CHF less per month as a result.
Sources: Schweizer Bauernverband

INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT

CONTRACTING PARTIES

Company: _____
 Employee: _____

POSITION / DUTIES

Temporary employee without experience, assistant
 - Work is performed according to instructions

WORKING HOURS

50 - 55 hours / week
 - Overtime can be claimed
 15 minutes break / half-day
 1 day off / week
 - At least 1 rest day per month is on a Sunday

SALARY

CHF 2'695.00
 - Hourly rate of CHF 12.25

DEDUCTIONS

CHF 350.00 / month / bed
 - In company-provided room
 Additional deductions for WiFi, meals

INSURANCES

The employee must be insured with a Swiss health insurance provider upon commencing employment.
 Accident insurance according to the Swiss Federal Accident Insurance Act (UVG) at the expense of the employer.
 Krankentaggeldversicherung

RESIDENCE PERMIT

L-Ausweis; the validity period of the permit corresponds to that of the employment contract. It can be extended for a total duration of less than 12 months.

Date, Place: _____
 Employer: _____ Intern: _____

Richtlöhne 2023
 Personal in Landwirtschaft, Obst-, Wein-, Gemüsebau, landw. Haushalt, etc.

Wichtig:

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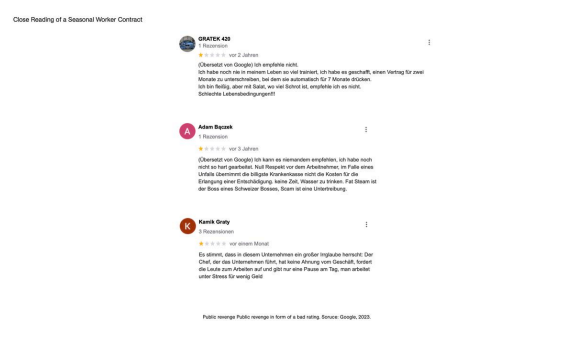
Der Minimallohn für Angestellte in der Landwirtschaft beträgt CHF 3'385.00!

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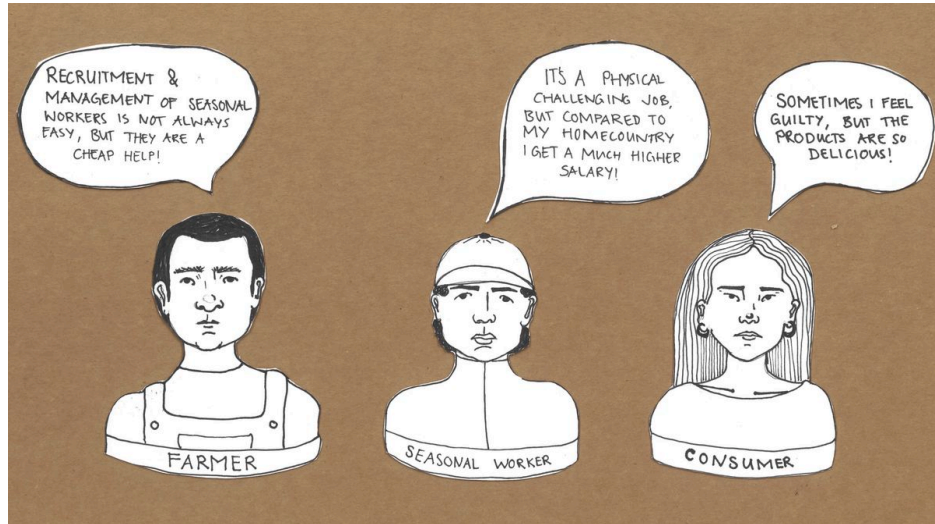
Research reveals: In order to further reduce wage costs of seasonal workers, employers also rely on the employment with internships contracts. Sources: Schweizer Bauernverband [https://www.sbv-usp.ch/de/], IP Suisse [https://www.ipsuisse.ch/richtlinien-grundanforderungen-gesamtbetrieb/], field research, 2023.

According to the Swiss Farmer's union's wage scale, workers get around 600 CHF less per month as a result. Sources: Agrimpuls [https://www.agrimpuls.ch/de/service/downloaden-und-bestellen/richtloehne-schweizer-landwirtschaft].



GOOGLE REVIEWS OF SWISS VEGETABLE PRODUCERS
 Bad rating as "public revenge." Source: Google Reviews, 2023.

Why is this working model not falling apart?
 Why do the people involved play along even though it has many downsides?



The Seasonal Model: Case Study A



In Otelfingen, there is a significant dependence on seasonal workers, mostly Romanians, particularly for manual labor in berry and fruit production. They work on the fields, in greenhouses, and at sales stands for a few weeks up to several months.

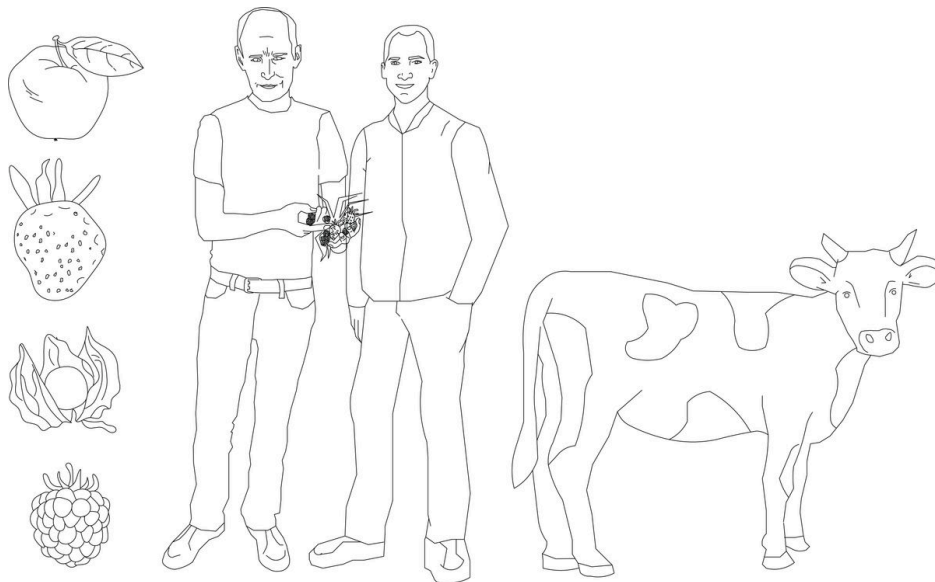
«We still have active agriculture in Otelfingen, which is still very present in the village. [...] The seasonal workers are hardly noticed in Otelfingen.»

– Barbara Schaffner, Gemeindepräsidentin Otelfingen



A Farm in Otelfingen

As part of our research, we investigated a berry farm in Otelfingen, that generates about 75 % of its income from berries and fruit. Mechanisation is less advanced in this type of farming, so a lot of manual labor is required in summer, mostly performed by seasonal workers.



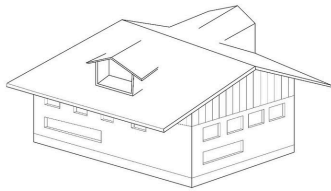
The farm's main field of business is berry and apple production. They also have some cattle—a remnant of their predecessors.

During the summer season, people from Romania come to help with the work. Be it in the fields, in the greenhouses, at the sales stalls. They weed, irrigate, harvest, pack and sell. The employer works with a bonus system: the faster they work, the more they earn.



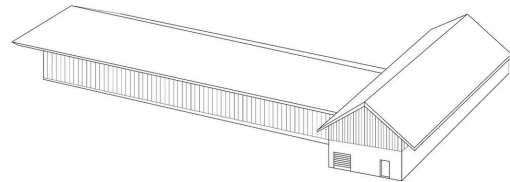
In each row one worker takes care of the berry pots.

The entire company is prepared for this seasonal increase in the number of workers. For example, the farm provides accommodation for the foreign workers. This is done in their own buildings, which are located on the farm and in the village. One room is occupied by two workers at a time. The cost of accommodation is 450 CHF per bed per month.



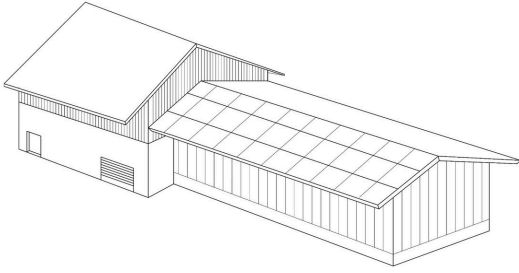
THE RESIDENCE

The farmer's residence also serves as the the farm's office.



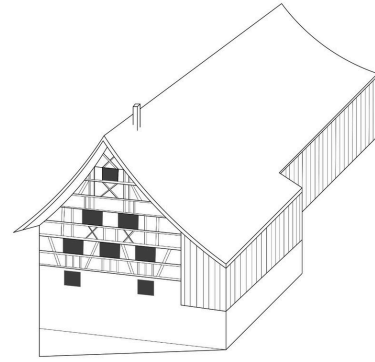
THE BARN

serving as a shelter for animals and a storage space for hay.



THE "LABORATORY"

A new building was officially registered with the authorities as a laboratory. However, it has come to light that in addition to its designated purpose, the building is also being utilised to accommodate seasonal workers.



THE PARENTAL HOME

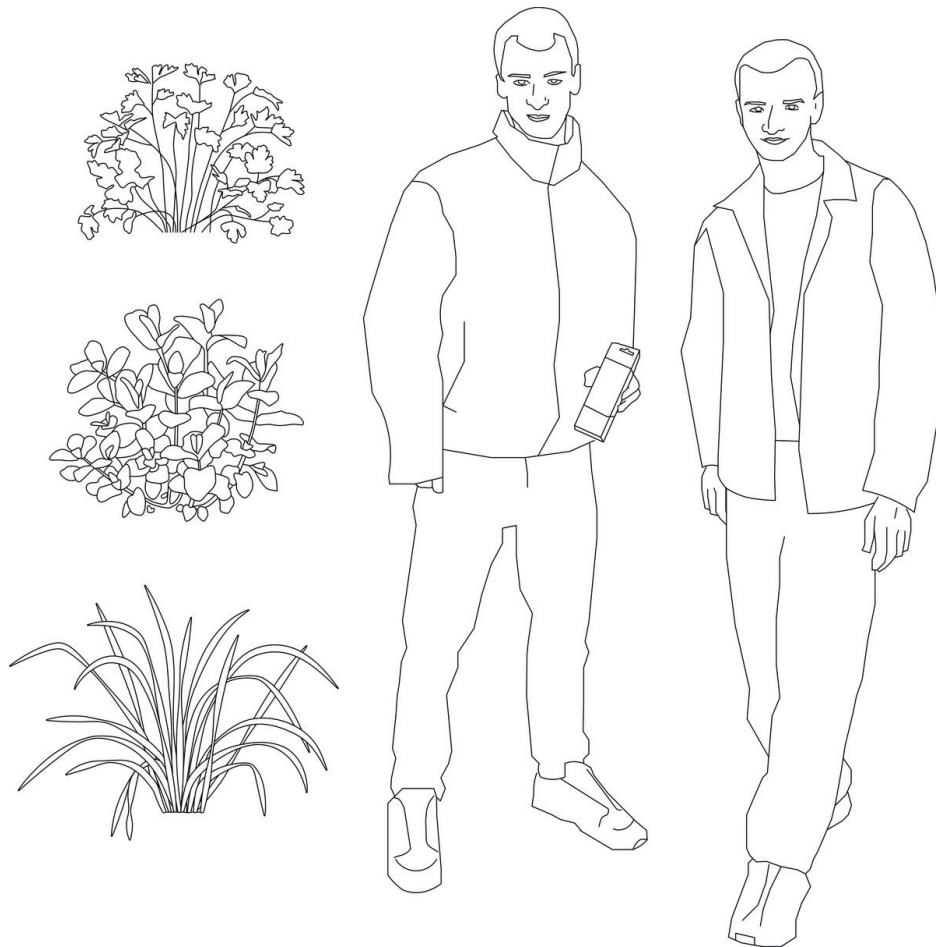
The farmer's parental home in the village is rented out to workers during the summer season. The price for a bed in a double room is 450 CHF.

The Year-Round Model: Case Study B



Another farm in the neighboring village of Otelfingen specialises in growing fresh herbs. They handle all steps from planting to packaging internally and operate production facilities in Ticino and abroad to ensure year-round herb cultivation. The employees, mainly from Portugal and Poland, have long-term contracts due to the constant demand for labor, which improves their work situation.

The farm was established in 1979 and operated partially as a vegetable and herb farm. The family-run business is specialised in fresh herbs such as basil, peppermint and coriander. 90 % of the culinary herbs supplied to Coop originate from this company. The second generation is now gradually getting involved in the business.



All steps from planting to packaging are done internally, as herb cultivation is a small industry and cannot be outsourced to third-party suppliers. The activities of washing, preparing and packaging are mainly carried out by people from Portugal and Poland.

In order to be able to grow and harvest herbs all year round, the company also operates production facilities in Ticino as well as abroad. The herbs grow in the Furt valley during the warm summer season, in Ticino until autumn and then in Israel, South Africa, Spain and Morocco. Finally, the herbs are brought to the company's site in Zurich, where they are processed.

From Planting to Processing

In order to be able to grow and harvest herbs all year round, the company also operates production facilities in Ticino as well as abroad. The herbs grow in the Furt Valley during the warm summer season, in Ticino until autumn and in Israel, South Africa, Spain and Morocco during the winter months. From any location, the herbs are first brought to the company's site in Zurich, where they are processed and distributed.



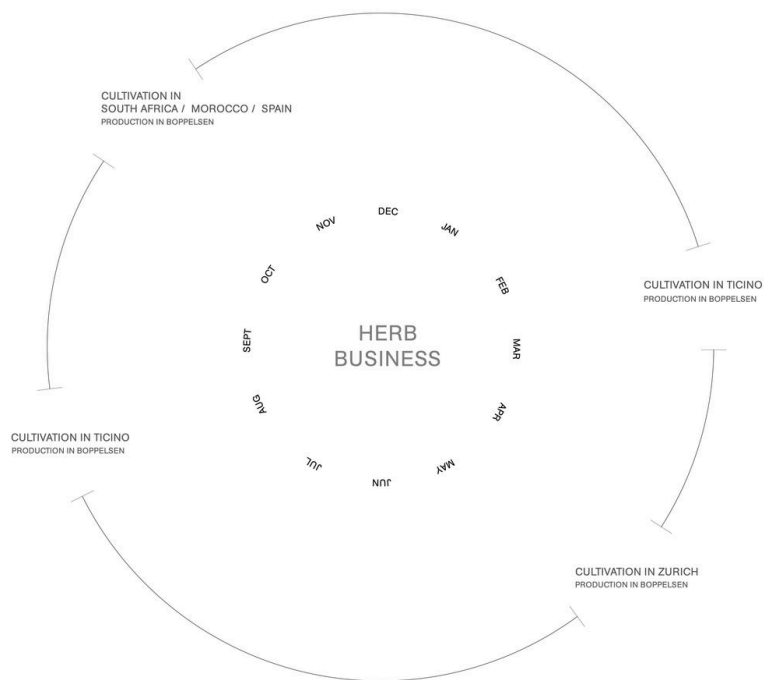
Growing herb seedlings.



At these stations, the harvested herbs are further processed.

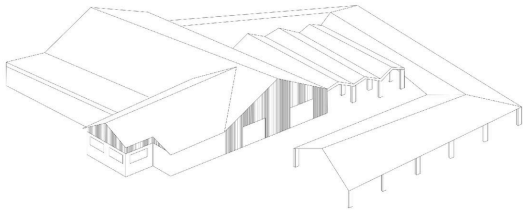


Finally, the herbs are packaged for distribution.



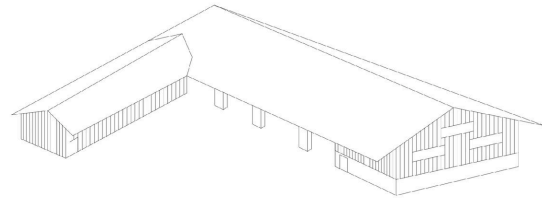
The organisation of the farm provides work all year round.
Source: the company's website and field research, 2023.

People from abroad who start their employment in the company are also provided with flats owned by the company. As the employees stay longer in Switzerland, they eventually move into their own rented flats, thus becoming more independent from the company.



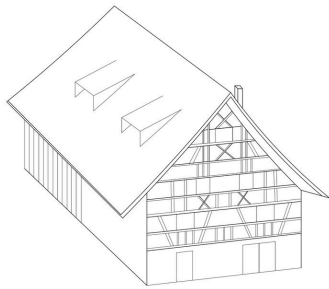
THE MAIN BUILDING

The main building of the farm houses the office as well as the entire production line from preparation to packaging.



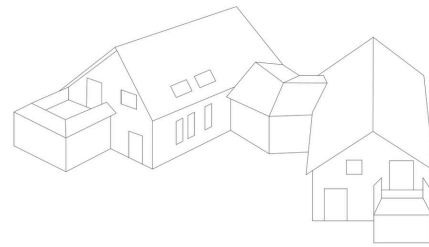
MACHINE STORAGE

A newly constructed building serves as a machinery storage facility. Within the building, there are also common rooms available for the workers, providing them with spaces to take breaks or to cook their meals during lunchtime.



FAMILY HOUSE

Since the workers often come from abroad to start their employment, they are initially provided with accommodations in the inherited family house until they find their own homes in the region.



RESIDENCE

The family themselves reside directly on the farm premises in their own villa.



Paula Marques

1 Rezension

★★★★★ vor 6 Jahren

(Übersetzt von Google) Belohnte Arbeit, ein ausgezeichnete Chef! Es hat mir sehr gut gefallen



Jose Manuel Alves Carneiro

75 Rezensionen

★★★★★ vor 2 Jahren

(Übersetzt von Google) Ich kenne sehr gut eine Firma für aromatische Kräuter, in der ich viele Jahre gearbeitet habe. Ich liebe sie

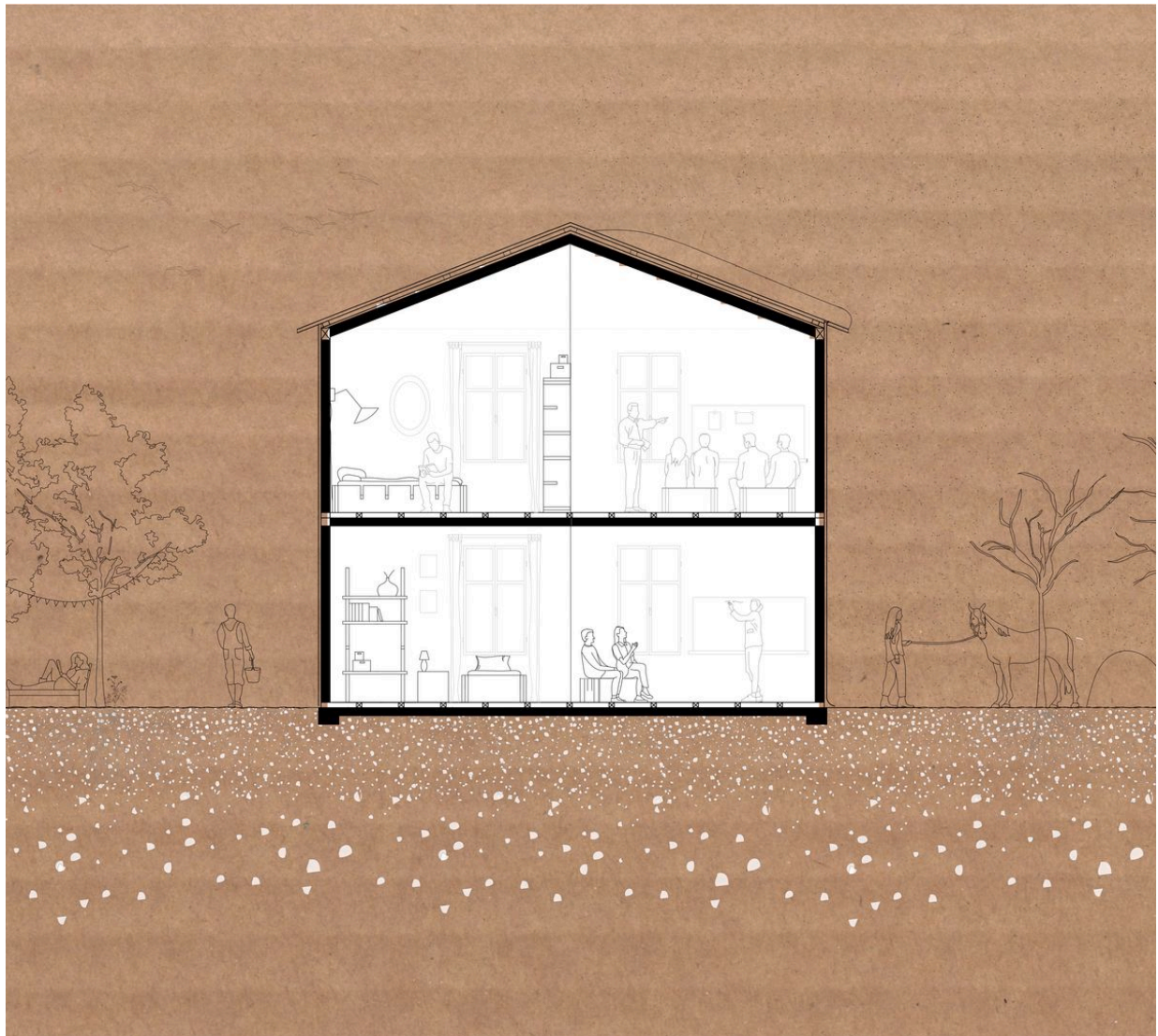


GOOGLE REVIEWS

Source: Google 2023.

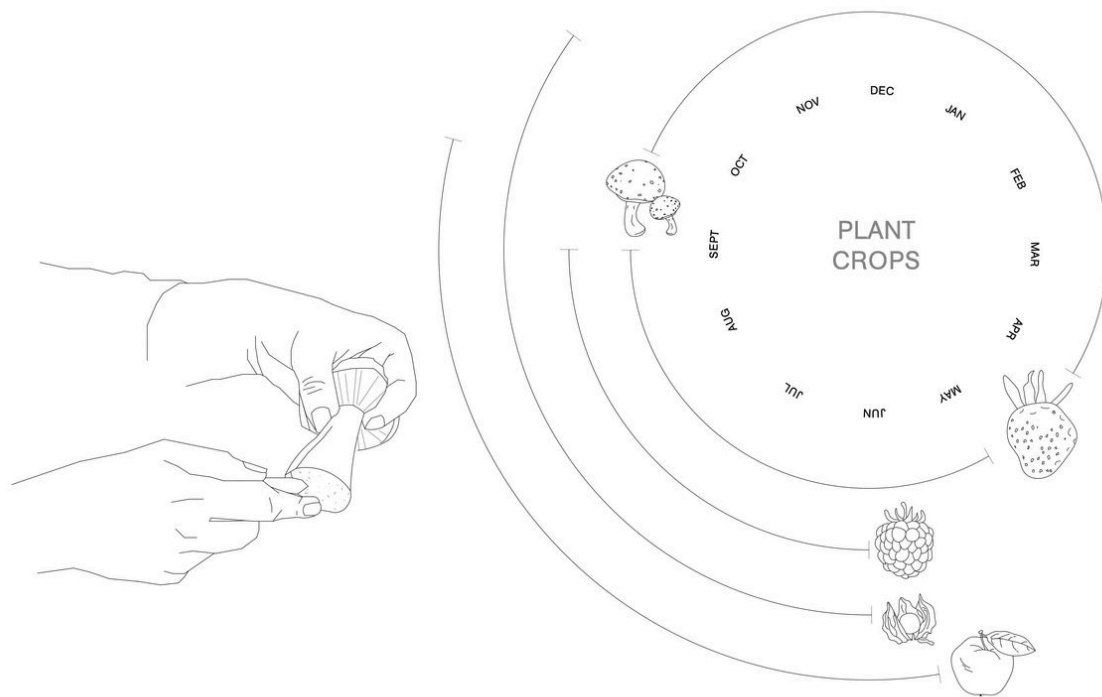
By operating production facilities in different countries, the farm can continuously grow and harvest herbs, resulting in stable and long-term employment for workers. This continuous employment helps improve working conditions because workers have a stable work situation throughout the year and are not dependent on seasonal changes. It also enables workers to settle in the region for the long term.

A Proposal for a Year-Round Employment and Practice-Based Education



To improve working conditions for farm workers on the berry farm (Case Study A), the proposal picks up on the findings of Case Study B and suggests creating year-round employment through the introduction of winter crops. With the introduction of a “Transformatal Space” a space is created that can serve as accommodation for newcomers in the summer and transform into a classroom during the winter, aiming at enabling workers to create their own agricultural projects in their home countries.

One possible addition is to grow mushrooms in the tunnels [https://krosagro.com/en/cultivation-under-cover/mushroom-growing-in-a-foil-tunnel/] used for berry-pot cultivation during the summer months. Unlike traditional crops, mushrooms do not need direct sunlight to grow. Instead, they prefer a humid, shady environment. Growing mushrooms in tunnels also allows for better control of environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity and ventilation. The microclimate in the tunnel allows mushrooms to grow all year round.



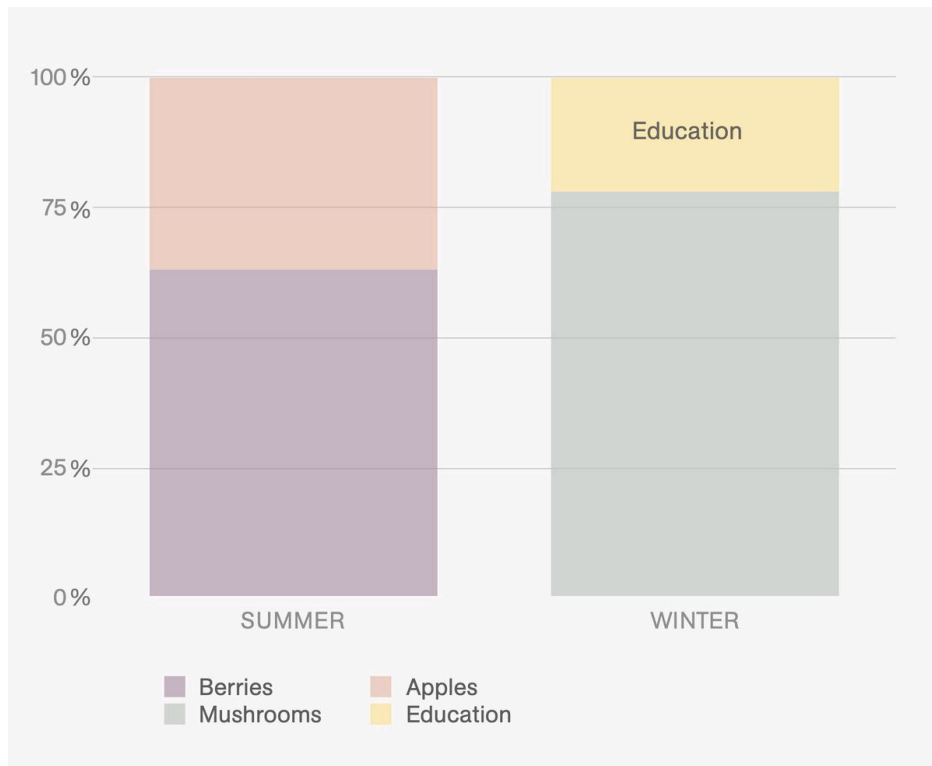
To allow year-round production, mushroom cultivation in the foil tunnels is introduced from September to April.

However, during the winter months, mushroom production also slows down, resulting in a reduction in labour demand. This provides an opportunity to offer agricultural training to workers during this time, allowing them to develop and apply their skills in independent undertakings, possibly in their home countries (when seasonal workers go abroad, it leads to a shortage of agricultural labor in their countries and encourages the importation of agricultural products to meet the demand of the population).

The weekly trainings can cover various aspects of agriculture, including cultivation and harvesting techniques, farm management, finance and sustainability. The aim is to empower to plan and implement their own agricultural projects, also possibly in their home countries.



In the summer of 2021, the fields around Banja Luka, Bosnia, lie fallow. Possibly because the farmers have left to work abroad?



YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Summer

1 ha berries = 840 hours workload

1 ha apples = 540 hours workload

Winter

1 a mushrooms = 169 hours workload

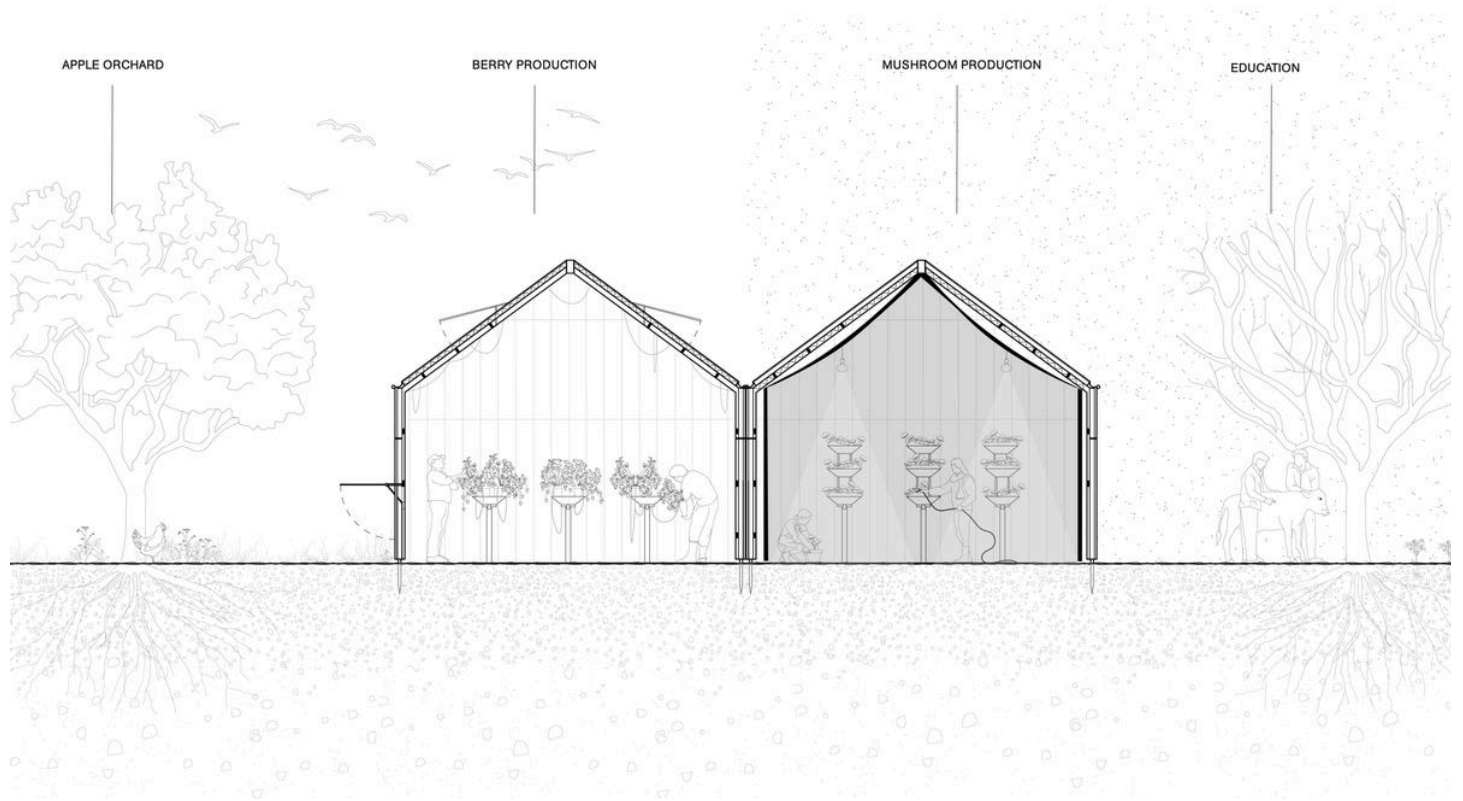
Education = 2 days per week

Source: The "Standardarbeitskräfte" helps to compare different work in agriculture.

Sources: *Bundesamt für Landwirtschaft*

<https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/de/home/instrumente/grundlagen-und-querschnittsthemen/sak.html>

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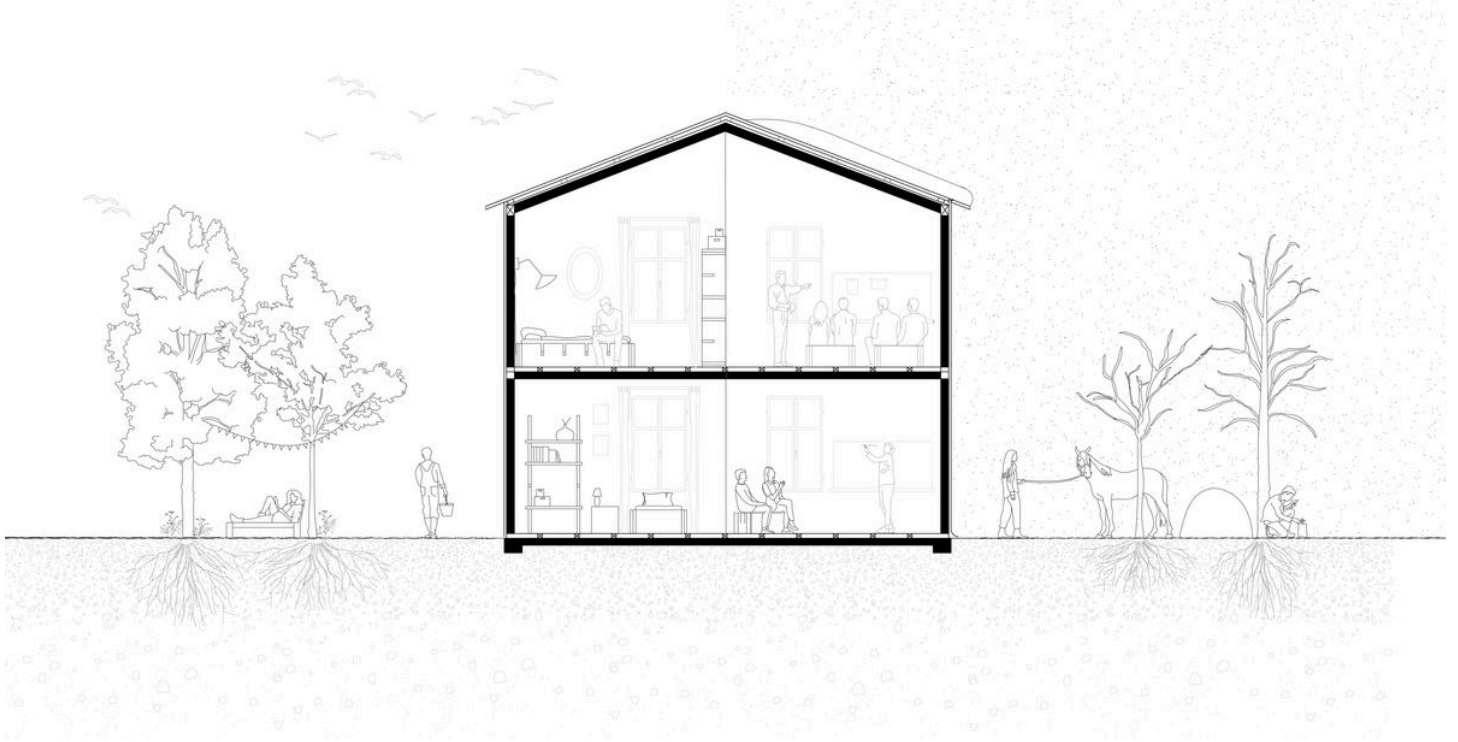


YEAR-ROUND PRODUCTION IN THE GREENHOUSES

The transition from seasonal to year-round employment is not only changing the nature of cultivation, but also the housing situation of employees. An example of this is the Zurich herb company that provides housing to newly arriving employees. As employees stay longer in the region due to the year-round model, they subsequently seek their own rental housing. In order to be able to use the existing rooms year-round, the “Transformatal Space” was designed.

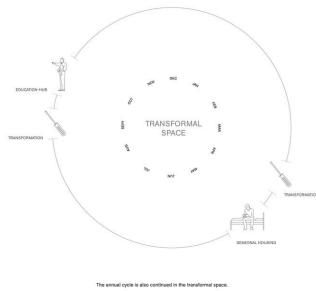
The Transformatal Space

The “Transformatal Space” is designed as an adaptable building that can meet changing needs throughout the year.



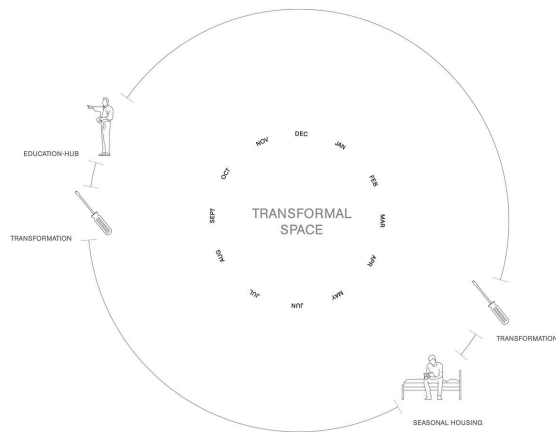
The "Transformal Space" houses the educational space or the workers' housing depending on the season.

How to Create Better Conditions for Agriculture Workers?

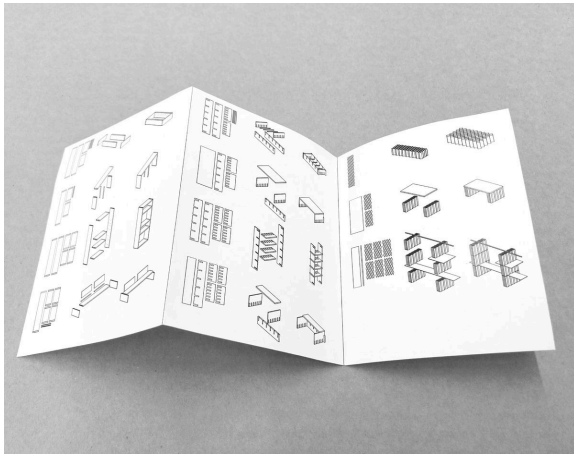


The annual cycle is also continued in the transformal space.

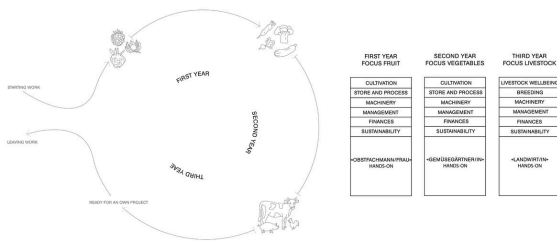
One space for different uses: a flexible space completes the idea of a practice based education.



The transformation between Seasonal Housing and Education Hub is possible thanks to adaptable furniture.

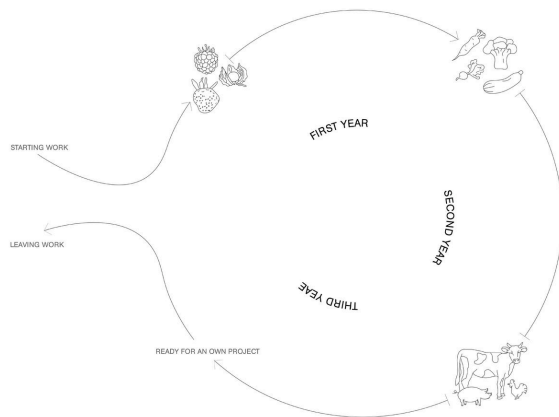


The furniture ranges from beds that can be converted into tables to wardrobes that convert and serve as benches in winter.



The curriculum for this education is aligned with the agricultural vocational training programs (EFZ-Ausbildungen) in Switzerland.

Source: *Kompetenzzentrum Strickhof*
<https://www.strickhof.ch/bildung-kurse/grundausbildung/>
 [https://www.strickhof.ch/bildung-kurse/grundausbildung/]



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FIRST YEAR FOCUS FRUIT	SECOND YEAR FOCUS VEGETABLES	THIRD YEAR FOCUS LIVESTOCK
CULTIVATION	CULTIVATION	LIVESTOCK WELLBEING
STORE AND PROCESS	STORE AND PROCESS	BREEDING
MACHINERY	MACHINERY	MACHINERY
MANAGEMENT	MANAGEMENT	MANAGEMENT
FINANCES	FINANCES	FINANCES
SUSTAINABILITY	SUSTAINABILITY	SUSTAINABILITY
«OBSTFACHMANN/FRAU» HANDS-ON	«GEMÜSEGÄRTNER/IN» HANDS-ON	«LANDWIRT/IN» HANDS-ON

It covers fruit, vegetable and animal farming. Source: *Kompetenzzentrum Strickhof*
<https://www.strickhof.ch/bildung-kurse/grundausbildung/>
 [https://www.strickhof.ch/bildung-kurse/grundausbildung/]

WORK AND STUDY CONTRACT

CONTRACTING
PARTIES

Company

.....

Employee

.....

POSITION /
DUTIES

Farm Worker, 100%

- Work is carried out independently according to instructions.
- Basic knowledge available

CONTRACT DURATION

Employment contract with a duration of three years

- notice period of one month in the first year of service
- notice period of two months in the second and third year of service

WORKING HOURS

50 - 55 hours / week

HOLIDAYS

4 weeks or 20 working days

- according to the legal minimum in Switzerland

SALARY

CHF 3'840.00

RESIDENCE PERMIT

B-Permit

- Valid for 5 years

INSURENCES

- Mandatory basic health insurance coverage
- Accident insurance
- Unemployment insurance

- as a holder of a B-permit, you are entitled to social security, including participation in health insurance and other social benefits.

EDUCATION

The employee receive agricultural education in a 20% pensum during off-season

- Upon completion of the three-year process, the employee should be capable of working independently in the field of agriculture.

Date, Place

.....

Employer

Employee

.....

.....

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