



FORESTRY, WOOD AND  
GRAPHIC TRADE UNION

Information  
in English

# Working with Forestry 2023

## **This information is from GS, the trade union organising forestry workers**

When you start working in a new job, one of the most important questions is salary. In Sweden, salaries are determined through collective wage agreements, negotiated by workforce parties, the trade unions and employers.

There is no legislation on wages in the Swedish labour market.

Salaries are determined by the unions and the employers in negotiations, with no involvement from the state. In theory this means that the employer can pay a salary of SEK 0 if there is no current collective wage agreement.

This is one of the reasons why about 80% of the workers in Sweden are organised in unions.

The collective wage agreement also regulates other remuneration and workplace issues, including intervals for wage increases. The collective wage agreement also guarantees that you have a comprehensive insurance cover in the event of a workplace accident, illness, etc.

An employer who has signed a collective wage agreement has also committed to comply with the agreement, and the union has a legal right to take action if the agreement is not followed.

The Swedish collective wage agreements apply in Sweden, which means that foreign workers must have at least the benefits specified in the agreement. You should therefore always check with GS if the company has a valid collective wage agreement prior to starting your employment.

The collective wage agreement prevents workers from being forced into unhealthy competition where workers are pitted against workers with lower salaries to get jobs. GS believes that the competition should take place between companies instead, and it should concern quality and efficiency rather than reduced wages and employee conditions.

GS primarily represents its members. A membership is therefore an assurance that knowledgeable representatives will defend your right to the agreed benefits and workplace conditions, and that they will represent you if any disputes should arise. If you want this security, you should apply for a GS membership. On the back of this folder, you can find the address and telephone number. We can also help you with other important social information.

# Working with planting treated seedlings

Currently there are two approved products to protect against insect infestations of forest plants:

- Forester
- Imprid Skog (OK until 30-06-19)

When planting sprayed seedlings you expose yourself to health risks. It is therefore important to protect yourself fully, so you are not exposing yourself to pesticides through skin absorption, inhalation or accidental ingestion. When working with planting treated seedlings, written instructions for handling and protection in order to carry out the work should be available in your own language. Instructions in handling and protection should contain information about which pesticides the plants were treated with, and rules for safe handling.

**In order to avoid direct contact with the plant, the employer must also provide:** Long trousers, shirt or jacket with long sleeves, gloves, arm protection and also rain gear and boots in case of rain.

The employer is responsible for cleaning and repairing the clothes.

The employer must ensure that there is a staff room (hut) at the workplace.

**The following must be available in the staff room:** Water for cleaning, soap and towels for everyone in the team. Storage lockers where the employee's own clothes can be stored during work. (Please observe that each employee must have his/her own clothes locker, clothes drawer or other suitable arrangement, as the regulations require separate spaces for private clothes and work clothes). The hut must have a heating device so clothes can dry between shifts.

There should be opportunities to change clothes, opportunities to eat food. The hut should also have a first aid kit. Note! In some cases, special hygiene requirements are in force when working with pesticides. Eye flushing devices must be provided for companies, where there is a risk of eye damage from used substances.

The employer must ensure that an alarm can be raised in the event of an accident. The employers must therefore provide: telephone, location tracking with coordinates, map.

The employer must provide personal first aid.

# Questions and answers about forestry

**What does a manual forestry worker earn on average?**

According to union calculations the average wage for forestry workers in 2019 was around SEK153/hour or around SEK 26,600 per month. This is the salary without any compensation as e.g. compensation for work out of office hours, overtime pay etc. (The salary data is calculated according to the statistical salary information received by the union).

In forestry work (planting and clearing) another salary scheme than hourly wages may be adopted on condition that the employment is temporary. This would normally be as contract work. The contract work can be negotiated from assignment to assignment. The purpose of the contract work is that you should be able to earn a normal Swedish salary when working normal hours for 8 hours a day. Those working hard should obviously earn more. The employee is guaranteed minimal wage in the contract, regardless of how the contract proceeds. The minimum wage per hour is regulated in the collective wage agreement via tariffs. The salary levels depend on the work experience of the employee.

## Example:

A worker planting seedlings without experience SEK 127,97 per hour. With experience from 3 seasons SEK 141,42 per hour.

A worker clearing forest without experience SEK 133,10 per hour. With experience from 4 seasons SEK 146,59 per hour.

There is also a thing called work time account which is accrued during the employment. The work time account is accrued at 3.62%. These compensations must be separately stated on the payslip and is usually paid as a lump sum on your final salary.

## Compensation for out of office hours?

Compensation for out of office hours must be paid if you work other hours than from 6.30 am and 5 pm on work days.

## THE COMPENSATION FOR OUT OF OFFICE HOURS ARE:

Monday-Friday from 5 pm and 6.30 am: SEK 41,10 per hour.

Saturday: SEK 64,74 hour (must always be on top of salary and contract if the employer has approved that the work should be carried out).

Sunday, holidays and work free weekend nights: SEK 97,06 per hour (must always be on top of salary and contract if the employer has approved that the work should be carried out).

At some companies the local collective wage agreement has higher compensations.

### **Overtime?**

When working longer than normal daily hours an overtime compensation of SEK 51,59 per hour should be paid. Overtime work out of office hours should also be paid compensation for out of office hours.

### **Work hours?**

During daytime work the work hours are 40 hours per week without holidays (Monday–Friday).

### **Holiday pay**

Holiday pay

In Sweden, you also accrue holiday pay during your employment. In forestry the holiday pay is 13%. This should be stated separately and never included in the salary.

### **Who is responsible for travel?**

First and foremost the employer, but if the employee and the employer agree to let the employee use his/her own car, the employer must pay SEK 37.00 per 10 km.

In addition travel time compensation should be paid for travel outside normal office hours with SEK 9.85 per each initiated 10 km further than 60 km. (Shorter travel than 60 km/per day is not eligible for extra compensation)

### **Subsistence?**

Allowance for expenses while away is paid at SEK 240 per work day. Further compensations and rules can be seen in the agreement. Our department can guide you through this.

### **If you get ill**

If you get ill the employer must pay 80% of the salary from the 2nd sick day (inclusive). From the 8th sick day you must have a doctor's certificate. If the disease is of the nature such that you must have medical care or medicine, you must visit the nearest medical centre. Healthcare in Sweden is available for everyone working in Sweden.

### **Employment contract**

(Should be created as 2 copies, employer and employee both keep their copy)

Must e.g. contain: name and address of employer and employee, employment form, employment information, location of employment and scope, salary and salary slip, pay date.

### **Payslips**

The salary must be paid on a specified day at least once a month. Each time the employer pays your salary, you must receive a payslip. The payslip must contain information about hours worked, salary and all compensation you are entitled to. How much has been deducted in taxes must also be stated. The employer must provide documentation for time accounting.

### **Holidays 2023**

Easter 7–10 April

Ascension Day 18 May

Midsummer 23 June

6 June

If working on these days compensation for out of office hours and overtime must be paid for all the time worked. Such compensation can never be included in any contract.

Compensation for out of office hours is SEK 97,06 per hour.

Overtime compensation is SEK 51,59 per hour.

### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

If you work on Ascension Day 18 May from 7am to 4pm with a break for one hour you must receive SEK 97,06 \*8 hours and SEK 51,59 \*8 hours on top of your contractual salary.

Some employers claim that it is voluntary work and therefore no additional compensation should be paid. But this is wrong. If the employer has approved the work on any of the holidays stated above, the employer must also pay compensation for out of office hours and overtime.

### **Membership of GS**

As a seasonal worker in Sweden you can apply for a seasonal membership of GS.

The membership is valid for the time you are working in Sweden and means that the GS union can represent you against the employer.

The employer is not allowed to give any union members any special treatment.

If you are a member of GS, you can always call and get help or answers to questions.

GS has 8 local offices around Sweden. If you are unsure where to turn to, then call our switchboard: 010-470 83 00.

### **Staff room for forestry work**

The employer is responsible for providing a room for employees to store clothes, heat food, dry clothes, and rest in a space connected to the workplace. It is therefore not enough for the employer to refer to their home or a tent.

### **Accommodation cost**

It is common for the employer to make housing available to employees and to deduct this from their salary.

**The employer cannot decide what the housing costs are, but must adhere to what is written in the collective wage agreement.**

In the collective wage agreement it is stated that housing costs should be comparable to the housing costs in the town and usually 10 % lower, as it is commonly the case that the employer does not enter a rental agreement.

### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

If 10 workers from Ukraine share a villa of normal standard in rural Sweden, and all workers pay SEK 3,000 per month it means that the employer rents the home for SEK 30,000 per month. However, the normal rent for a villa in rural Sweden will in principle never be in excess of SEK 12,000. The 10 workers should therefore pay no more than SEK 1,200 in rent per month.

### **Rights and obligations**

All forestry workers in Sweden who work at a company with a collective wage agreement are entitled to what this information provides (salary, conditions, work hours, staff rooms etc.). Almost all forestry companies have collective wage agreements.

However, it is our view that many foreign workers arriving in Sweden to work in Swedish forestry are in some way deceived by their employers. In order for us to be able to overcome errors and breaches of the collective wage agreement, we need to know about this. Therefore, it is important that you contact GS if you have any questions or if you notice errors.

Please note that GS can only represent you and negotiate on your behalf if you are a member of GS. In Sweden, it is a violation of the law to give special treatment to those who choose to join a trade union.

### **You can find us here:**

GS has eight local offices around Sweden. Do you know where to get in contact with us? Please call our switchboard on **010-470 83 00** or visit our website: **[www.gsfacket.se](http://www.gsfacket.se)**

#### **GS Department 1 Skåne/Blekinge**

Landskronav. 25 A, Helsingborg  
Telephone 010-470 84 01  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd1](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd1)  
Email address: [avdelning1@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning1@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 2 Halland/Västra Småland**

Myntgatan 8 D, Värnamo  
Telephone 010-470 84 02  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd2](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd2)  
Email address: [avdelning2@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning2@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 3 East**

Verkstadsgatan 13, Oskarshamn  
Telephone: 010-470 84 03  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd3](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd3)  
Email address: [avdelning3@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning3@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 4 Västra Götaland**

Norrby tvärgata 3, Borås  
Telephone 010-470 84 04  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd4](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd4)  
Email address: [avdelning4@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning4@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 5 Södra Svealand**

Byggfackens hus, Riagatan 51, Örebro  
Telephone 010-470 84 05  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd5](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd5)  
Email address: [avdelning5@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning5@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 6 Dalarna/Gävleborg**

Väggatan 9, Bollnäs  
Telephone 010-470 84 06  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd6](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd6)  
Email address: [avdelning6@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning6@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 7 Mellannorrland**

Krondikesvägen 93 D, Östersund  
Telephone 010-470 84 07  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd7](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd7)  
Email address: [avdelning7@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning7@gsfacket.se)

#### **GS Department 8 North**

Mossgatan 28, Skellefteå  
Telephone 010-470 84 08  
Website: [www.gsfacket.se/avd8](http://www.gsfacket.se/avd8)  
Email address: [avdelning8@gsfacket.se](mailto:avdelning8@gsfacket.se)