

WORKING WITH FOREST MANAGEMENT 2024

This information is from GS, the trade union that organises forestry workers in Sweden

When you start new work, one of the most important issues is salary. In Sweden, wages are determined by collective agreements negotiated by the labour market parties, trade unions and employers.

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

Wages are determined by trade unions and employers in negotiations, without any interference from the state. In theory, this means that an employer can pay €0 in wages if there is no collective agreement in force.

This is one of the reasons why around 80% of workers in Sweden are members of trade unions. Collective agreements also regulate other allowances and employment conditions and when wages and benefits should be increased. The collective agreement also guarantees that you have adequate insurance cover in the event of an accident at work, illness, etc.

An employer who has signed a collective agreement is committed to follow the agreement and the union has the legal right to take action if the agreement is not followed.

Swedish collective agreements apply in Sweden, which means that foreign workers should have at least the benefits it specifies. You should therefore always check with GS whether a company has a valid collective agreement

before you start your employment. The collective agreement prevents workers from being forced into unhealthy competition where workers are pitted against lower paid workers to get jobs. GS believes that competition should instead be between companies and focus on quality and efficiency, not lower wages and conditions for employees.

GS primarily represents its members. Membership is therefore an assurance that knowledgeable representatives will safeguard your rights to agreed allowances and employment conditions, and that they will represent you in case of any disputes. If you want the security that comes with this, please join the GS.

BECOME A MEMBER HERE:



Staff room in forestry work

The employer is required to provide a space for employees to store/dry clothes, heat food and recover in the vicinity of the workplace. It is therefore not sufficient for the employer to refer to the residence or tents. There should also be lockers where your own clothes can be stored during working hours. (Note that each worker needs a separate locker as the regulations require separate spaces for private clothes and work clothes). The staff room shall have a heating device to allow clothes to be dried between shifts. The cabin must also contain a first aid kit. Please note! Special hygiene requirements are imposed in some cases when working with pesticides. An eyewash device must be provided for work where there are substances at risk for damaging the eyes.

The employer must ensure that there are facilities for raising the alarm in the event of an accident. Employers should therefore provide: telephone, location information in the form of coordinates and a map.

The employer must provide a personal first aid kit.

Questions and answers on forestry work

What does a manual forestry worker earn on average?

According to the union's calculations, the average wage for forestry workers in 2023 was about SEK166/hour or about SEK28,900/month. This is the salary without various allowances such as pay for inconvenient work hours (OB), overtime, etc. (The salary data is calculated from statistical salary data received by GS).

For forestry work (planting and clearing), wages other than the hourly rate may be applied provided that the employment is temporary. It is usually in the form of a contracted task rate. The contracted task rate is a matter of negotiation from site to site. The purpose of the contracted task rate is to enable people to earn a normal Swedish wage when working at a normal pace for 8 hours per day. The contract employee is guaranteed the minimum wage in the contract no matter how poor the contract work is going. The minimum wage per hour is regulated in the collective agreement via tariffs. Salary levels depend on the level of experience of the employee. Do you have questions about tariffs? Become a member and contact GS.

Example:

A planting specialist without experience SEK133.21/hour. For 3 seasons of experience SEK147.20/hour.

An inexperienced clearing specialist SEK138.55/hour. For 4 seasons of experience SEK152.59/hour.

Remember, only the actual work should be included in a contracted task rate. Time spent collecting seedlings, moving or collecting tools, etc. should not be included in the contracted task rate.

Allowance for inconvenient work hours (OB)?

OB allowances shall be paid for work carried out outside 06:30-17:00 on weekdays (excl. holidays).

OB ALLOWANCES ARE:

Weekdays between 17:00-06:30: SEK42.45/hour. Saturdays: SEK66.88/hour. Sundays, public holidays and non-working holiday nights: SEK100.27/hour. All OB allowances must always be paid in addition to wages and contracted task rates if the employer has agreed to the work being done.

Overtime?

For work beyond regular daily ordinary working hours, overtime must be paid at the rate of SEK53.29/hour. If overtime is carried out during OB hours, OB allowance is also paid.

Working hours?

For daytime work, the working time is 40 hours per week (Monday-Friday excl. holidays). When working more than 40 hours, overtime must always be paid.

Working time account (ATK)

There is also something called a working time account which is earned during employment. The working time account is at 3.62%. These allowances should be accounted for separately on your payslip and normally paid as a lump sum on your exit salary.

Holiday pay

In Sweden, people also earn holiday pay during their employment. In the collective agreement for forestry work, the holiday pay is always 13%. It should be accounted for separately and never included in the salary.

Who pays for the trips?

The employer in the first instance, but if the worker and the employer agree that the worker should use his/her own car, the employer should pay at least SEK37.00/Swedish mile (10 km).

In addition, a travel time allowance shall be paid for travel outside normal working hours at the rate of SEK10.17 for each initiated Swedish mile (10 km) in excess of 60 km. Shorter journeys of less than 60 km per day do not qualify for extra allowance.

Allowance for expenses?

Allowance for expenses while away is paid at a rate of SEK 290 per working day. Further allowances and rules are set out in the contract. Do you have questions about allowance? Become a member and contact GS.

If you fall ill

If you fall ill, your employer must pay 80% of your salary from the second day of illness. From the 8th day of illness, you must present a medical certificate. If your illness is such that you need medical attention or medication, you should go to the nearest healthcare facility. Healthcare in Sweden is available to everyone working in Sweden.

Employment contracts

(Prepared in 2 copies, the employer and the employee keep one copy each)

Must include: name and address of employer and employee, type of employment, work duties, duration and extent of working time, salary and type of pay, date of payment of salary.

Payslips

The salary must be paid on a fixed date at least once a month. Every time your employer pays your salary, you should receive a payslip. The payslip should include details of the number of hours you have worked, your salary and any other allowances to which you are entitled. It should also show how much tax has been deducted. Your employer must provide you with time sheets, which you must always fill in yourself.

Public holidays 2024

Easter: 29 March–1 April
International Labour Day: 1 May
Ascension Day: 9 May
Midsummer: 21 June
Sweden's National Day: 6 June

When working on these days, OB allowance and overtime must be paid for all time worked. Such allowances can never be included in contracted task rates.

The OB allowance is 100.27 SEK/hour. Overtime pay is 53.29 SEK/hour.

FOR EXAMPLE:

If you work on Ascension Day, 9 May, 07:00–16:00 with an hour's break, you must receive SEK100.27 *8 hours and SEK 53.29 *8 hours in addition to the contracted task rate.

Some employers argue that it is voluntary working time and therefore no additional allowance should be paid. But this is wrong. If the employer has approved work on any of the above public holidays, the employer must also pay OB allowance and overtime.

Membership of the GS

As a seasonal worker in Sweden, you can apply for temporary membership on the GS website.

The membership is valid for the duration of your employment in Sweden and allows GS to represent you in matters concerning your employer. The employer must not discriminate against trade union members in any way. If you are a GS member, you can always call to get help or answers to various questions.

Accommodation costs

It is common for employers to provide accommodation for their employees, the cost of which is deducted from their wages.

The employer cannot decide what the accommodation costs are, but must follow the provisions of the collective agreement.

The collective agreement states that the accommodation cost should be comparable to the cost of housing in the locality and usually 10% lower, as it is usually the case that the worker is not entering a first-hand contract.

FOR EXAMPLE:

If 10 workers from Thailand share a normal standard villa in the Swedish countryside and all workers pay SEK3,000 per month, this means that the employer takes home rent at SEK30,000 per month for the house. The normal cost of a villa in the countryside is almost never more than SEK14,000. Thus, the 10 workers should not pay more than SEK1 400 in accommodation costs per month.

Rights and obligations

All forest workers working in Sweden in a company with a collective agreement are entitled to the information covered in this document (salary, work conditions, working time, staff room etc.). Almost all forestry companies have collective agreements. However, it is our view that many foreign workers who come to Sweden to work in the Swedish forestry industry are cheated in some way by their employer. It is therefore important that you become a member and contact GS if you have any questions or discover any inaccuracies.

Please note that GS can only represent you and negotiate on your behalf if you are a member of GS.

In Sweden, it is against the law to discriminate against those who choose to join a trade union.

You can find us here:

GS has 8 branch offices around Sweden. If you don't know where to go? Call our switchboard 010-470 83 00 or visit our website: www.gsfacet.se

GS Division 1 Skåne/Blekinge

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd1

GS Division 2 Halland/Västra Småland

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd2

GS Division 3 East

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd3

GS Division 4 Västra Götaland

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd4

GS Division 5 Southern Svealand

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd5

GS Division 6 Dalarna/Gävleborg

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd6

GS Division 7 Mellannorrland

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd7

GS Division 8 North

Website: www.gsfacet.se/avd8

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