

# CENTRAL ASIAN SEASONAL WORKERS ON UK FARMS – BRIEF 4: COMMUNICATION STYLES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

History, culture, and religious (Islamic) traditions influence the communication styles and attitudes to disagreements/ conflict in the Central Asian region, comprising Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. As British private sector companies increasingly engage with seasonal workers from this region, it becomes crucial to understand their ways of communicating and dealing with conflict. This knowledge will not only foster a more inclusive and respectful working environment but also enhance the well-being and productivity of Central Asian employees.

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Central Asians value respectful, reserved and moderate communication. People generally speak in a calm and measured tone, avoiding loud or overly expressive speech, as this is considered rude. Direct eye contact may be maintained, especially with peers or elders, but it is usually not prolonged to avoid perceived aggression or confrontation. Prolonged or intense eye contact with strangers or superiors may be seen as intrusive. When speaking among themselves, individuals tend to use a mix of direct and indirect communication. They might avoid blunt statements, preferring to convey their thoughts in a polite and considerate manner. People generally avoid raising their voices but emotionally charged topics or informal settings may be more dynamic. Gestures are used sparingly, with pointing considered impolite, and personal space tends to be smaller, with close proximity common among the same gender.

Given the importance of collectivism over individualism, people tend to avoid conflicts and prefer dispute resolutions that preserve relationships rather than focus on individual gains. Building good relationships is more important than quick deals, and trust is often strengthened through hospitality.

## COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYERS

In this dynamic, Central Asian workers tend to be respectful and deferential. **They may fear that making a grievance will affect their work opportunities in the UK.** They may avoid direct confrontation and express their concerns or suggestions in a humble and polite way. It is important for employers to be aware that **Central Asian workers might not always speak up about issues directly** and may instead hint at problems indirectly. If someone is frustrated, or disagrees, they may show signs of discomfort, such as hesitation, silence, avoiding eye contact, or body tension. Non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice can be crucial in understanding their true feelings.

### *Relevance to UK farms:*

- If you ask a worker for feedback or opinions, they may hesitate before speaking so

encouraging people to speak up is important.

- Provide clear expectations and guidelines regarding work and behaviour. This can help avoid misunderstandings further down the line.
- Regularly raise awareness and socialise grievance procedures
- Watch out for non-verbal cues, as they may indicate that a conversation needs to be adjusted.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITH EMPLOYERS

If disagreements, misunderstandings or conflicts arise with employers/supervisors, workers may prefer to address the issue in a private setting, away from the public eye, to avoid embarrassment or loss of face. They may seek the assistance of a mediator or an intermediary who can facilitate communication and help find a mutually acceptable solution. Employers/supervisors should be patient and listen actively, showing empathy and understanding.

Good Practice for Conflict Resolution:

**If disagreements, misunderstandings or conflicts do arise, UK farms can follow these suggestions to resolve them effectively:**

- **Private conversations:** Address conflicts in a private setting to avoid public embarrassment. This can help maintain the dignity of the workers and foster a more open dialogue.
- **Active listening:** Show genuine interest in the workers' concerns by listening actively. Acknowledge their feelings and perspectives to demonstrate empathy and understanding.
- **Non-confrontational approach:** Avoid aggressive or confrontational behavior. Use a calm and respectful tone to discuss the issue and seek a collaborative solution. Speak gently, use polite suggestions or questions, and avoid direct criticism, which can seem rude.
- **Mediation:** If necessary, involve a neutral third party or mediator who can facilitate communication and help both parties reach a resolution (possibly an older person).
- **Cultural awareness:** Be mindful of cultural differences and adapt conflict resolution strategies to align with the workers' cultural norms and values.
- **Follow-up:** After resolving the conflict, follow up with the worker to ensure that the solution is effective and that no further issues have arisen.
- **Avoid publicly confronting workers** can lead to loss of face and damage relationships. Always address conflicts privately.
- **Avoid dismissing or minimizing workers' concerns** can lead to frustration and resentment. Take their concerns seriously and address them promptly.
- **Avoid making culturally insensitive remarks or assumptions.** Respect the workers' cultural practices and beliefs.