



**Washington State  
Employment Security Department**  
**Labor Market and Economic Analysis**  
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# Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

**July 2007**

## Executive Summary

In July total agricultural employment moved ahead by 2.3 percent over the year. The seasonal component of agricultural employment fell 5.7 percent from July 2006 to July 2007.

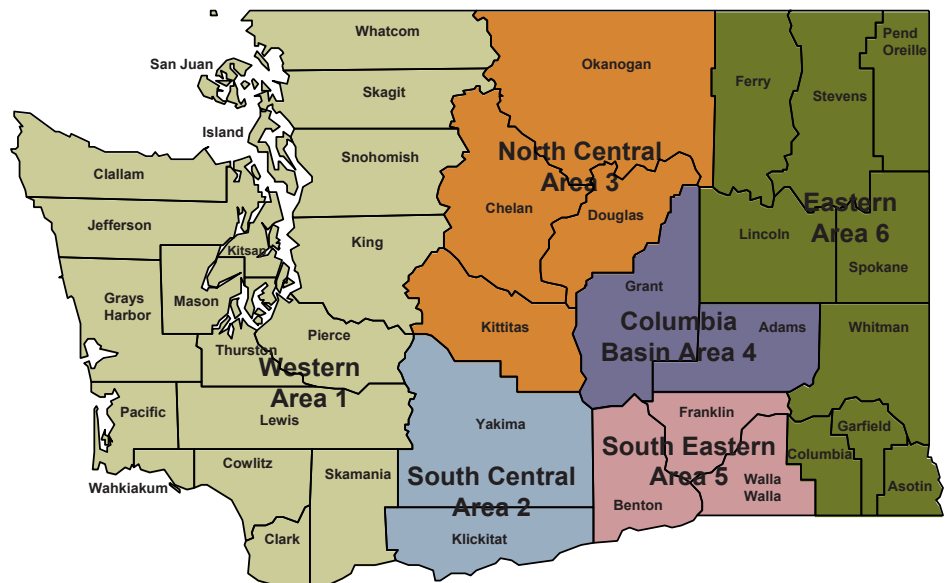
The large percentage increase in statewide seasonal employment from June 2007 to July 2007 (23.3 percent) can be attributed to the increase in apple employment of 4,521. Likewise, this same crop was up 24.4 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. This over-the-year bump was due to the large seasonal shifts that frequently occur from year to year in the larger harvested crops. These are primarily driven by weather, as well as market and horticultural reasons. The largest share of the seasonal apple employment was concentrated in South Central and North Central areas.

- Statewide apple employment led over-the-year crop growth (4,521) by 24.4 percent.
- Regionally, Eastern experienced the largest annual growth rate of 11.8 percent, due to the ramping up of the wheat/grain harvest.
- South Eastern showed the greatest over-the-year loss at 15.3 percent, caused by a decline in the cherry harvest.

### Counties Within Agricultural Reporting Areas

- Area 1 = Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom
- Area 2 = Klickitat and Yakima
- Area 3 = Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, and Okanogan
- Area 4 = Adams and Grant
- Area 5 = Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla
- Area 6 = Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman

### Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



## Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 2.3 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. Over-the-month total employment ramped up by 14.9 percent. Over-the-year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employ-

ment declined by 2.4 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment expanded by 4.4 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment inched up by 0.3 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment

moved ahead by 4.8 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment grew by 4.2 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment expanded by 2.4 percent.

## Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment fell by 5.7 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year losses were:

- cherry work (-9,001)
- nursery work (-1,198)
- onion work (-656)
- blueberry work (-646)
- raspberry work (-173)
- strawberry work (-142)

Activities displaying gains were:

- apple work (4,521)
- other tree fruit work (580)
- other seasonal work (545)

- miscellaneous vegetables work (544)
- pear work (508)
- grapes work (320)
- hops work (275)
- wheat/grain work (256)
- bulb work (231)
- potato work (154)
- cucumber work (29)

Across the state, the Western area seasonal employment fell back by 11.9 percent, caused by a decrease in nursery work (-818). South Central seasonal employment expanded by 5.4

percent, due to a surge in apple work (808). North Central seasonal employment fell by 13.2 percent, also due to a decrease in cherry work (-6,167). Columbia Basin seasonal employment expanded by 4.3 percent, caused by an uptick in potato work (308). South Eastern seasonal employment slowed by 15.3 percent, caused by a drop in cherry work (-1,536). Eastern seasonal employment moved ahead by 11.8 percent, thanks to an increase in wheat/grain work (264).

## Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages expanded by 3.6 percent from July 2005 to July 2007. Washington state real minimum wages advanced by 4.4 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages increased by 1.4 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. The real state minimum wage increased by 0.8 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages moved ahead by 3.4 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. South Central seasonal wages fell by 0.2 percent

for that same time period. North Central seasonal wages nudged up by 0.6 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages grew by 2.1 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages moved forward by 3.6 percent. Eastern (Area 6) seasonal wages inched ahead by 0.2 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages advanced by 9.6 percent from July 2005 to July 2007. Washington state nominal minimum wages expanded by 7.9 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural

wages grew by 4.7 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. The state minimum wage grew by 3.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages increased by 6.7 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. South Central seasonal wages gained 2.9 percent for that same time period. North Central seasonal wages moved ahead by 3.8 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages bumped up by 5.4 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages also picked up by 6.9 percent. Eastern seasonal wages ticked upward by 3.4 percent.

## Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 20.9 percent from July 2005 to July 2007. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 5.7 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. Western seasonal employment fell by 11.9 percent from July 2006 to July 2007. South Central seasonal employ-

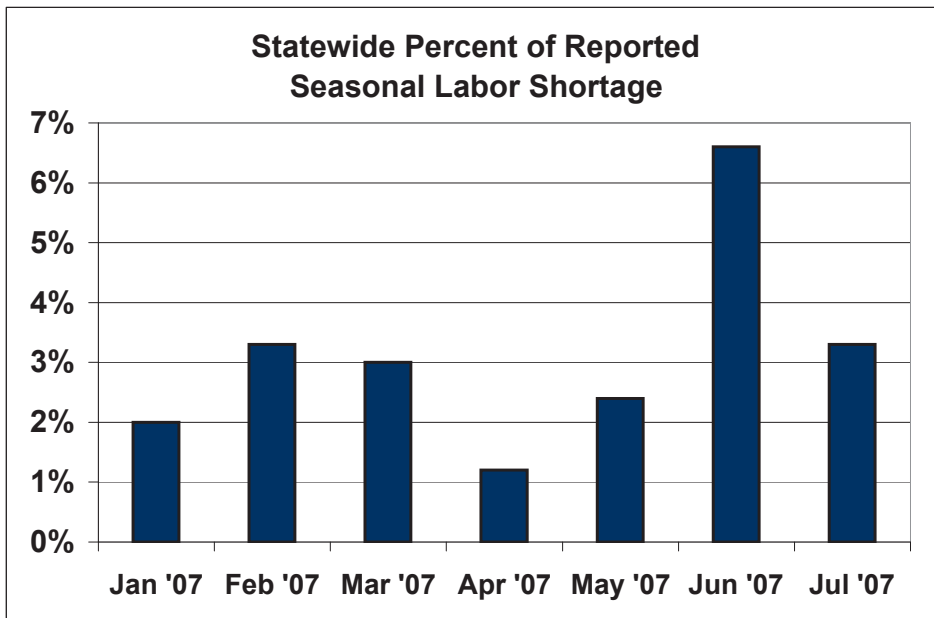
ment surged ahead by 5.4 percent. North Central seasonal employment contracted by 13.2 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment expanded by 4.3 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment scaled back by 15.3 percent. Eastern seasonal employment ramped up by 11.8 percent.




## Labor Supply

New survey questions were inserted into the July survey. The first question asked growers was if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. For July, 300


usable surveys were returned. The results are shown in the chart below. These statistics are weighted based on reported seasonal employment.



*The first question asked growers was if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor.*



*Seasonal workers, for the purpose of the Farm Labor Survey, are those working less than 150 days per year.*



## Methodology

The *Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages* report uses data from the monthly Seasonal Farm Labor Survey. This is a survey of 600 agricultural growers in the state. They report monthly the number of total and seasonal workers by crop, activity, and wage. Both hourly and piece rates are used. *Seasonal* workers for the purpose of the survey are those working less than 150 days per year. The state is grouped into six areas based on agricultural economic similarity. The tables and charts presented in this report compare the seasonal agricultural employment for the state and the six areas for the current month, previous month and year ago. Percentage increases as well as raw numbers are given. The weighted monthly wage for seasonal employment is given for the state and the six areas. Each crop activity having significant employment is noted as a percentage change for previous month and year ago. The crops having the high-

est gain and highest decline in employment are highlighted in the narrative.

The Seasonal Labor Abstract is also included. This contains the top four crop activities by employment and wage for each of the six areas. Piece rates are given in addition to hourly wages when available and disclosable. Some variation in the reporting of the seasonal data can be attributed to the requirement that employment be reported in the pay period including the 12th of the month. Due to the fact that the timing of a given crop's harvest and other activities can be affected by weather and other conditions, periods of peak employment do not always fit precisely within this reporting period. This can lead to some variation of estimated employment by crop when comparing activity in similar time periods. The report is intended for economists, growers' associations, educators, state agencies, labor unions, and outreach workers.

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## Related Ag Links

[Washington crop harvest and weather information](#)

[What's new in agricultural employment](#)

## Agricultural Labor Report

Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

### Seasonal Labor Abstract July 2007

A mid-month survey of farm labor employment and wages is conducted by the Washington State Employment Security Department. At least five percent of all growers are surveyed for employment data about seasonal workers, type of crop, work activity, wages, and their residence. Based on these data, the Washington Employment Security Department develops estimates on the size of the workforce, average wages for each crop activity, and whether workers commute, live within the state, or come in from outside of Washington state. These data are reported for each agricultural area identified as having similar farm labor characteristics and a significant supply/demand for seasonal hired workforce.

#### **Western (Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,140 (2,722 local, 12 intrastate, 2,270 interstate, 207 foreign, 1,928 unknown origin)

Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer	2,665	\$ 8.00/hr
Raspberry Harvester	909	Not Available
General Farm Harvester	435	\$ 9.06/hr
Nursery Worker	381	\$ 8.65/hr

#### **South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 21,396 (19,570 local, 354 intrastate, 193 interstate, 172 foreign, 1,106 unknown origin)

Cherry Harvester	6,262	\$ 7.95/hr or \$45.00 - \$60.00 per bin
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer	4,566	\$ 7.93/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	3,721	\$ 8.00/hr
Apple Harvester	2,013	Not Available

#### **North Central (Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, and Okanogan counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 19,282 (8,283 local, 133 intrastate, 1,431 interstate, 1,407 foreign, 8,028 unknown origin)

Cherry Harvester	6,315	\$ 9.00/hr or \$ 1.50 - \$ 8.00 per lug
Apple Hand Thinner	5,618	\$ 8.37/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 3.00 per tree
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer	2,949	\$ 8.21/hr
Apple Trainer	1,134	\$ 9.39/hr

#### **Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,264 (1,831 local, 61 intrastate, 298 interstate, 379 foreign, 4,694 unknown origin)

Apple Hand Thinner	3,012	\$ 8.19/hr or \$ 0.38 - \$ 3.00 per tree
Cherry Harvester	1,453	\$ 8.32/hr or \$ 2.50 - \$ 5.50 per lug
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	470	\$ 8.08/hr
Sweet Corn Weeder	334	\$ 7.93/hr

#### **South Eastern (Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,875 (3,003 local, 0 intrastate, 19 interstate, 807 foreign, 4,047 unknown origin)

Apple Hand Thinner	4,252	\$ 8.24/hr or \$ 0.60 - \$ 5.00 per tree
Misc Onion Harvester	286	\$ 8.00/hr
Walla Walla Sweet Onion Harvester	262	Not Available
Cherry Harvester	240	Not Available

#### **Eastern (Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 675 (668 local, 7 intrastate, 0 interstate, 0 foreign, 0 unknown origin)

Wheat Vehicle Operator	198	\$12.67/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator	152	\$10.29/hr
Wheat Combine Driver	91	\$14.50/hr
Bulbs Harvester	36	\$ 9.50/hr

# Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas Harvest Periods



Washington state crop harvest timetables are listed below by agricultural areas. The dates may vary considerably due to weather or other conditions.

Note that the five area groupings in the following timeline charts do not directly match with the six agricultural area groupings that are used in the Seasonal Farm Labor Survey data used in this report.

Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas												
Major Crops	Okanogan and Wenatchee Crop Areas											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Apples												
Cherries												
Pears												
Golden Delicious												
Red Delicious												

Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas												
Major Crops	Moses Lake Crop Areas											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Asparagus												
Apples												
Cherries												
Peaches												
Potatoes												

Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas												
Major Crops	Tri-Cities and Walla Walla Crop Areas											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Asparagus												
Apples												
Cherries												
Apricots												
Peaches												
Pears												
Onions												
Strawberries												

Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas												
Major Crops	Bellingham and Mount Vernon Crop Areas											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Flowers												
Cucumbers												
Broccoli												
Cauliflower												
Spinach												
Blueberries												
Raspberries												
Strawberries												

Washington State Agricultural Crop Areas												
Major Crops	Bingen, Sunnyside, and Yakima Crop Areas											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Asparagus												
Apples												
Cherries												
Peaches												
Pears												
Grapes												
Hops												
Vegetables												



- Apples
- Apricots
- Asparagus
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Cherries
- Cucumbers
- Flowers
- Golden Delicious
- Grapes
- Hops
- Onions
- Peaches
- Pears
- Potatoes
- Raspberries
- Red Delicious
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Vegetables

**July 2007**  
**Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State**  
**Estimated Number of Seasonal Hired Workers by Place of Origin**

Agricultural Reporting Area	Local	Intra-state	Inter-state	Foreign	Unknown	Seasonal Area Total	Permanent Area Total	Total Area Total
1. Western	2,720	10	2,270	210	1,930	7,140	7,021	14,161
2. South Central	19,570	350	190	170	1,110	21,400	13,563	34,963
3. North Central	8,280	130	1,430	1,410	8,030	19,280	15,864	35,144
4. Columbia Basin	1,830	60	300	380	4,690	7,260	5,749	13,009
5. South Eastern	3,000	0	20	810	4,050	7,880	9,593	17,473
6. Eastern	670	10	0	0	0	680	840	1,520
<b>State Totals</b>	<b>36,080</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>4,210</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>19,800</b>	<b>63,630</b>	<b>52,640</b>	<b>116,270</b>
% State Seasonal	56.7%	0.9%	6.6%	4.7%	31.1%	100%		

**Total Agricultural Employment**

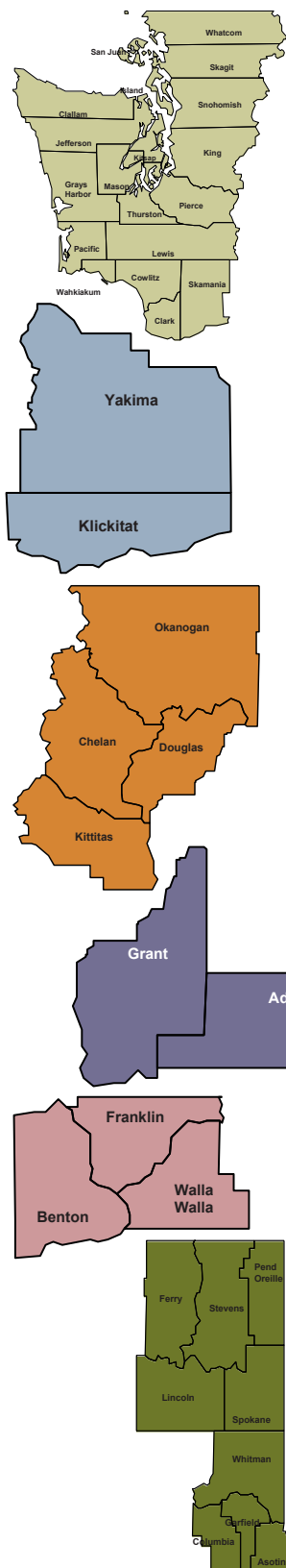
	July 07	June 07	July 06	Change		Percent Change	
				June 07- July 07	July 06- July 07	June 07- July 07	July 06- July 07
State	116,270	101,220	113,692	15,050	2,578	14.9%	2.3%
Western	14,160	11,690	14,506	2,470	-346	21.1%	-2.4%
South Central	34,960	32,440	33,482	2,520	1,478	7.8%	4.4%
North Central	35,140	22,410	35,038	12,730	102	56.8%	0.3%
Columbia Basin	13,010	12,420	12,412	590	598	4.8%	4.8%
South Eastern	17,470	20,900	16,769	-3,430	701	-16.4%	4.2%
Eastern	1,520	1,360	1,485	160	35	11.8%	2.4%

**Seasonal Agricultural Employment**

	July 07	June 07	July 06	Change		Percent Change	
				June 07- July 07	July 06- July 07	June 07- July 07	July 06- July 07
State	63,630	51,600	67,480	12,030	-3,850	23.3%	-5.7%
Western	7,140	4,330	8,110	2,810	-970	64.9%	-12.0%
South Central	21,400	19,900	20,300	1,500	1,100	7.5%	5.4%
North Central	19,280	11,650	22,210	7,630	-2,930	65.5%	-13.2%
Columbia Basin	7,260	6,270	6,970	990	290	15.8%	4.2%
South Eastern	7,880	9,050	9,300	-1,170	-1,420	-12.9%	-15.3%
Eastern	680	390	600	290	80	74.4%	13.3%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [July 2007 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables on Workforce Explorer](#)

**Agricultural Labor Report**  
**Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation**  
**Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area**  
**Washington State, July 2007**



**Western (Area 1)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Raspberry and blueberry harvest was nearing its peak. Daffodil and tulip bulb harvest was complete.

**South Central (Area 2)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Peach and nectarine harvests were under way. Multiple vegetable crops were being harvested, including sweet corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, and various melons. Primary agricultural activities were cherry harvest, cherry warehouse work, apple hand thinning, and apple harvest.

**North Central (Area 3)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Apricot harvest was complete. Cherry harvest was beginning to slow. Pear and apple development was good. Winter wheat harvest began with average yields.

**Columbia Basin (Area 4)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Winter wheat was progressing quickly, as farmers were reporting yields near historic averages and good test weight. Spring grains still await and will likely be less than average. Onion and carrot seed harvests were under way. Topping of sweet corn fields began. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, cherry harvesting, potato warehouse work, and sweet corn weeding.

**South Eastern (Area 5)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Winter wheat harvest was just getting started. Yields were good on the best ground, but average and below on the poor soils. The third cutting of alfalfa began, as well as the second cutting of timothy hay. Potatoes were being harvested. The primary agricultural activity was apple hand thinning.

**Eastern (Area 6)**

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Winter wheat harvest yields varied widely throughout the region. The second cutting of alfalfa hay was in full swing. Harvest of soft fruit was nearly complete. Primary agricultural activities were wheat vehicle, wheat tractor, and wheat combine operators.