



**Washington State  
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis  
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1-800-215-1617  
or visit us on the Web  
[www.workforceexplorer.com](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)

**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 Labor Employment and Wages

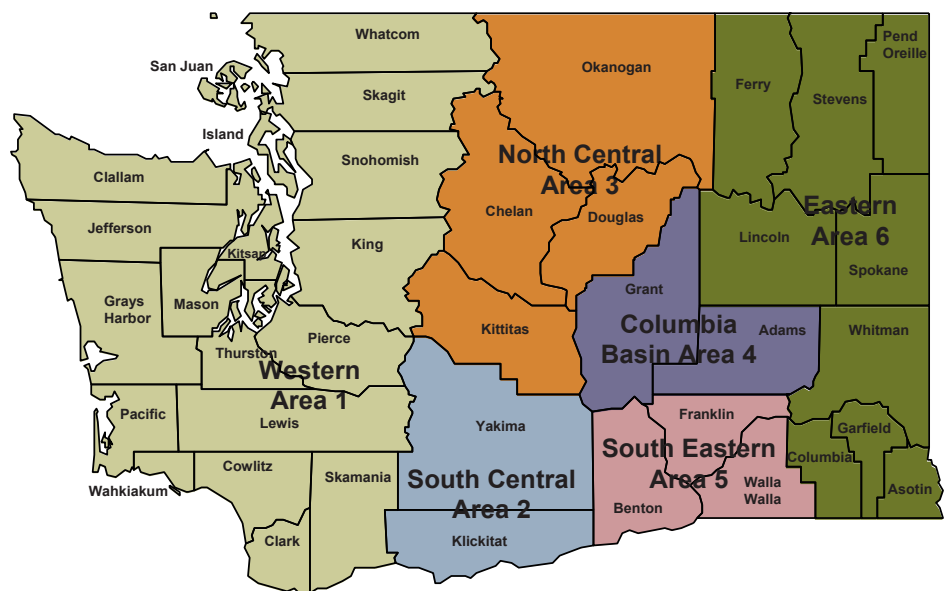
**April 2008**

## Executive Summary

The 6.9 percent decline in statewide seasonal employment from April 2007 to April 2008 was due to fewer apple pruners. This over-the-year decrease was caused by 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.

- Statewide apple pruning employment displayed the greatest seasonal employment loss of 17.9 percent over the year (-1,590) due to poor weather.
- Over-the-year declines were led by North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment at 21.7 percent, caused by an employment decrease of 1,390 in apple work.

**Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State**



*Over the year regionally, total agricultural employment increased in all areas of the state.*



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS



Photo by Ron Nichols, USDA NRCS



## Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment expanded by 6.1 percent from April 2007 to April 2008. Over-the-month total employment grew by 6.0 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment advanced by 1.7 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment increased

by 6.7 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment moved ahead by 8.9 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment grew by 3.1 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment picked up by 8.2 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment inched up by 0.8 percent.

## Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 6.9 percent from April 2007 to April 2008.

Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year losses were:

- apple work (-1,590)
- hops work (-330)
- cherry work (-210)
- other seasonal work (-100)
- nursery work (-30)
- raspberry work (-20)
- other tree fruit work (-10)
- wheat/grain work (-10)

Activities displaying gains were:

- grapes work (1,080)
- miscellaneous vegetables work (380)
- potato work (340)
- onion work (130)

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment decreased by 11.2 percent, caused by a decline in miscellaneous vegetables work (-130). South Central seasonal employment edged down by 1.6 percent, due to a decrease in asparagus work (-490). North Central seasonal employment fell by 21.7 percent, due to a decline in apple work (-1,390). Columbia Basin seasonal employment moved ahead by 15.0 percent, caused by an expansion in potato work (440). South Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 10.4 percent. Eastern seasonal employment dropped by 30.0 percent, due to a decline in nursery work (-40).

## Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages expanded by 0.2 percent from April 2006 to April 2008. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages slipped by 0.2 percent from April 2007 to April 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages decreased by 1.8 percent.

South Central seasonal wages inched up by 0.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages grew by 1.2 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages dipped by 0.3 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages contracted by 0.7 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages grew by 8.7 percent from April 2006 to April 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricul-

tural seasonal wages advanced by 4.9 percent from April 2007 to April 2008. The state minimum wage grew by 1.8 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages advanced by 7.9 percent. South Central seasonal wages increased by 2.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages rose by 3.4 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages ramped up by 5.2 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages moved forward by 3.3 percent.

## Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 5.5 percent from April 2006 to April 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment fell by 13.9 percent from April 2007 to April 2008. Western seasonal employment declined by 10.5 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal employ-

ment decreased by 5.6 percent. North Central seasonal employment plummeted by 23.6 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment expanded by 24.3 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment reversed by 44.6 percent. Eastern seasonal employment grew by 12.5 percent.

## Labor Supply

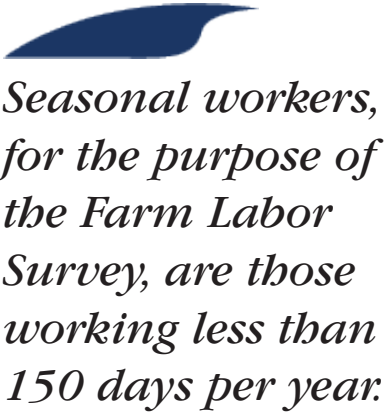
The first question on the labor supply survey asks growers if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. The second question asks growers how

many more employees they could have used. For April, 503 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 2.8 percent.



*In April, 503  
usable labor  
supply surveys  
were returned.*





*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

#### April 2008

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, estimates are developed 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: 2,800 (1,400 local, 0 intrastate, 110 interstate, 160 foreign, 1,130 unknown origin)

Nursery Worker .....	500	\$ 9.89/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer .....	380	\$ 8.90/hr
Raspberry Planter .....	280	\$ 8.24/hr
Nursery Harvester .....	250	\$ 8.07/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,210 (6,510 local, 90 intrastate, 90 interstate, 400 foreign, 120 unknown origin)

Peach Hand Thinner .....	**	**
Nectarine Hand Thinner .....	**	**
Nursery & Tree Planter .....	650	\$ 8.60/hr
Apple Pruner .....	590	\$ 8.23/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,980 (3,330 local, 60 intrastate, 120 interstate, 100 foreign, 360 unknown origin)

Apple Hand Thinner .....	2,250	\$ 8.07/hr
Apple Trainer .....	400	\$ 8.15/hr
Apple Worker .....	380	\$ 8.15/hr
Cherry Trainer .....	200	\$ 8.07/hr or \$ 0.50 - \$ 1.75 per tree

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 4,150 (3,200 local, 160 intrastate, 0 interstate, 180 foreign, 610 unknown origin)

Apple Preparation .....	1,030	\$ 8.57/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer .....	560	\$ 8.51/hr
Asparagus Harvester .....	360	Not Available
Apple Pruner .....	320	\$ 8.41/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,720 (1,670 local, 0 intrastate, 590 interstate, 120 foreign, 340 unknown origin)

Asparagus Harvester .....	**	**
Grape Trainer .....	290	\$ 8.51/hr
Grape Pruner .....	280	\$ 8.23/hr
Misc Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer .....	250	\$ 8.55/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 360 (330 local, 10 intrastate, 0 interstate, 20 foreign, 0 unknown origin)

Nursery Planter .....	130	\$ 8.43/hr
Green Pea Vehicle Operator .....	**	**
Wheat Tractor Operator .....	40	\$11.33/hr
Peach Pruner .....	**	**

\*\* Not published due to lack of statistical significance and/or to ensure employers' confidentiality.

**April 2008**  
**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	Permanent	Total
						Area Total	Area Total	Area Total
1. Western	1,400	0	110	160	1,130	2,800	7,030	9,830
2. South Central	6,510	90	90	400	120	7,210	13,670	20,880
3. North Central	3,330	60	120	100	360	3,980	10,400	14,380
4. Columbia Basin	3,200	160	0	180	610	4,150	4,920	9,070
5. South Eastern	1,670	0	590	120	340	2,720	10,000	12,720
6. Eastern	330	10	0	20	0	360	960	1,320
State Totals	16,440	310	900	980	2,570	21,210	46,990	68,200
% State Seasonal	77.5%	1.5%	4.3%	4.6%	12.1%	100%		

**Total Agricultural Employment**

	Apr 08 Prel.	Mar 08 Rev.	Apr 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Mar 08-Apr 08	Apr 07-Apr 08	Mar 08-Apr 08	Apr 07-Apr 08
State	68,200	64,350	64,300	3,850	3,900	6.0%	6.1%
Western	9,830	9,490	9,670	340	160	3.6%	1.7%
South Central	20,880	20,080	19,570	800	1,310	4.0%	6.7%
North Central	14,380	13,820	13,200	560	1,180	4.1%	8.9%
Columbia Basin	9,070	8,150	8,800	920	270	11.3%	3.1%
South Eastern	12,720	11,130	11,760	1,590	960	14.3%	8.2%
Eastern	1,320	1,380	1,310	-60	10	-4.3%	0.8%

**Seasonal Agricultural Employment**

	Apr 08 Prel.	Mar 08 Rev.	Apr 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Mar 08-Apr 08	Apr 07-Apr 08	Mar 08-Apr 08	Apr 07-Apr 08
State	21,210	16,770	24,620	4,440	-3,410	26.5%	-13.9%
Western	2,800	2,820	3,130	-20	-330	-0.7%	-10.5%
South Central	7,210	5,430	7,640	1,780	-430	32.8%	-5.6%
North Central	3,980	2,370	5,210	1,610	-1,230	67.9%	-23.6%
Columbia Basin	4,150	2,690	3,340	1,460	810	54.3%	24.3%
South Eastern	2,720	3,170	4,910	-450	-2,190	-14.2%	-44.6%
Eastern	360	280	400	80	-40	28.6%	-10.0%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to  
[April 2008 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)  
at [www.workforceexplorer.com](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)

# Agricultural Labor Report

## Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

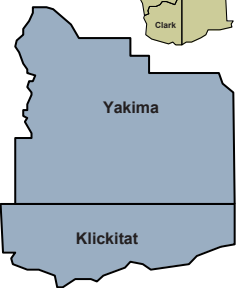
### Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

#### Washington State, April 2008



#### **Western (Area 1)**

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were nursery work, potato warehouse work, raspberry planting, and nursery harvesting.



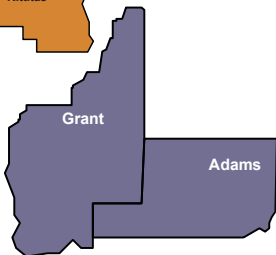
#### **South Central (Area 2)**

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were peach hand thinning, nectarine hand thinning, nursery and tree planting, and apple pruning.



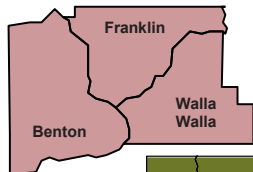
#### **North Central (Area 3)**

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, apple training, and cherry training.



#### **Columbia Basin (Area 4)**

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple preparation, potato warehouse work, asparagus harvest, and apple pruning.



#### **South Eastern (Area 5)**

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were asparagus harvest, grapes training and pruning, and miscellaneous onion warehouse work.



#### **Eastern (Area 6)**

Seasonal employment did not meet the criterion of 500 seasonal employees and therefore is not published for the month of April.