



## Washington State Employment Security Department

Labor Market and Economic Analysis  
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January 2008



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1-800-215-1617  
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[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

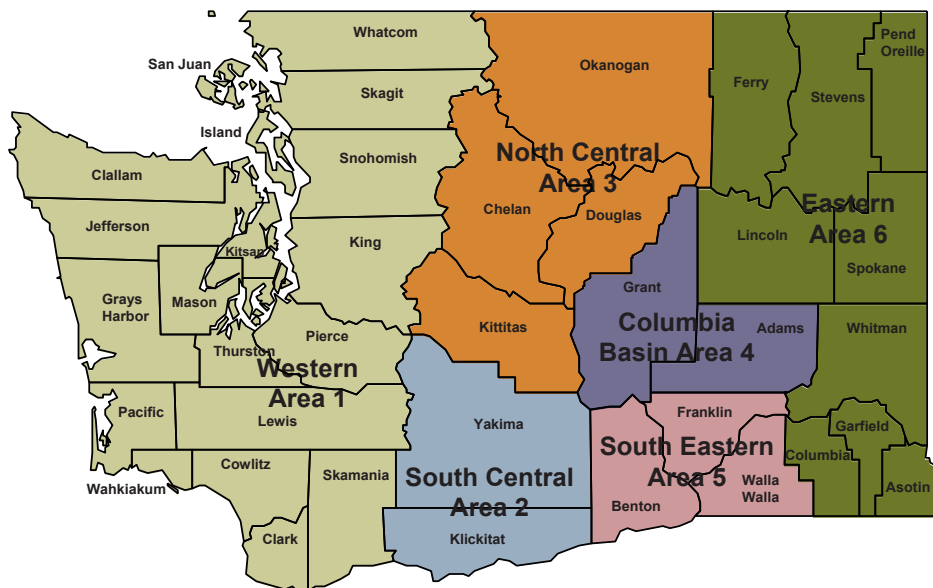
January 2008

## Executive Summary

The 14.7 percent increase in statewide seasonal employment from January 2007 to January 2008 was due to more apple pruning. This over-the-year increase 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 production employment led the over-the-year crop increase (1,170) by 18.1 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment displayed the largest over-the-year gain at 77.4 percent, caused by a 1,300 increase in apple work.

### Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



## Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 2.9 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. Over-the-month total employment increased by 2.7 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total

employment contracted by 3.2 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment expanded by 1.3 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment fell by 2.3 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment advanced

by 10.8 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment moved forward by 12.7 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment inched up by 0.9 percent.

## Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 14.7 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (1,170)
- grapes work (800)
- cherry work (240)
- pear work (200)
- blueberry work (130)
- other seasonal work (80)
- nursery work (20)
- potato work (10)

Activities displaying losses were:

- raspberry work (-390)
- bulb work (-250)
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-140)
- wheat/grain work (-50)
- hops work (-40)
- other tree fruit work (-10)

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment fell by 35.6 percent, caused by a decline in raspberry work (-390). South Central area seasonal employment increased by 77.4 percent due to an increase in ap-

ple work (1,300). North Central area seasonal employment contracted by 18.5 percent, due to a decline in apple work (-330). Columbia Basin area seasonal employment expanded by 14.5 percent, caused by a bump in cherry work (310). South Eastern area seasonal employment expanded by 6.9 percent, due to an expansion in apple work (200). Eastern area seasonal employment fell by 46.7 percent, due to a slowing in wheat/grain work (-70).

## Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages advanced by 2.6 percent from January 2006 to January 2008. Washington state real minimum wages expanded by 0.4 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages decreased by 0.8 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. The real state minimum wage decreased by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western area real seasonal wages grew by 1.1 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. South Central area

seasonal wages contracted by 0.4 percent for that same time period. North Central area seasonal wages fell by 5.2 percent. Columbia Basin area seasonal wages expanded by 0.8 percent; and South Eastern area seasonal wages grew by 1.9 percent over the year.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages grew by 7.9 percent from January 2006 to January 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages rose by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nomi-

nal agricultural seasonal wages inched ahead by 1.1 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. The state minimum wage moved ahead by 1.8 percent over the year. Western area seasonal wages expanded by 3.1 percent. South Central area seasonal wages grew by 1.5 percent. North Central area seasonal wages declined by 3.4 percent. Columbia Basin area seasonal wages rose by 2.7 percent; and South Eastern area seasonal wages advanced by 3.8 percent during the same time period.

## Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

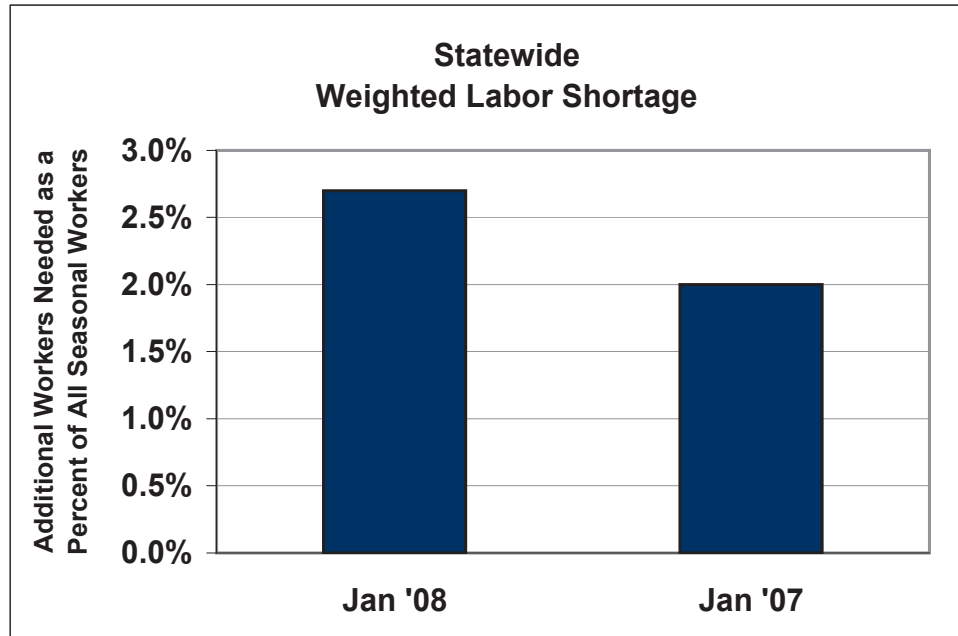
Statewide seasonal agricultural employment grew by 7.2 percent from January 2006 to January 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 14.8 percent from January 2007 to January 2008. Western area seasonal employment declined by 35.1 percent during that same time period. South Central area seasonal

employment increased by 77.7 percent. North Central area seasonal employment fell by 18.1 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment moved ahead by 14.5 percent. South Eastern area seasonal employment picked up by 6.4 percent. Eastern area seasonal employment retreated by 46.7 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 January, 362 usable surveys were returned. The chart below estimates additional workers needed as a percent of all seasonal workers.



*In January, 362  
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 January 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: 1,236 (1,030 local, 158 intrastate, 0 interstate, 12 foreign, 36 unknown origin)

Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	442	\$ 8.81/hr
Blueberry Pruner . . . . .	257	\$ 8.07/hr
Bulbs Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	113	\$ 8.09/hr
Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	95	\$ 8.43/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,826 (5,207 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 337 foreign, 282 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner. . . . .	3,192	\$ 8.22/hr	or \$ 0.45 - \$ 4.00 per tree
Grapes Pruner. . . . .	1,177	\$ 8.37/hr	or \$ 0.15 - \$ 0.25 per plant
Pear Pruner . . . . .	634	\$ 8.07/hr	or \$ 0.75 - \$ 6.00 per tree
Cherry Pruner . . . . .	373	\$ 8.54/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,077 (1,851 local, 5 intrastate, 0 interstate, 0 foreign, 221 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner. . . . .	896	\$ 8.14/hr
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer. . . . .	851	\$ 8.70/hr
Pear Pruner . . . . .	140	\$ 8.25/hr
Cherry Pruner. . . . .	92	\$ 9.40/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,294 (1,636 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 241 foreign, 417 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner. . . . .	1,122	\$ 8.30/hr	or \$ 0.70 - \$ 1.75 per tree
Cherry Pruner . . . . .	422	\$ 8.18/hr	
Misc Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	359	\$ 8.07/hr	
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	147	\$ 8.12/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,173 (1,778 local, 0 intrastate, 16 interstate, 0 foreign, 379 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner . . . . .	1,161	\$ 8.20/hr	or \$ 0.50 - \$ 2.25 per tree
Grapes Pruner . . . . .	292	Not Available	
Cherry Pruner . . . . .	177	\$ 8.08/hr	
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	116	\$ 8.13/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 81 (75 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 6 foreign, 0 unknown origin)

Nursery Planter . . . . .	25	\$ 8.50/hr
Wheat Preparation . . . . .	19	\$12.00/hr
Apple Hand Thinner. . . . .	15	\$ 8.35/hr
Misc Other Fruit Tractor Operator . . . . .	13	\$ 8.35/hr



**January 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 Area Total	Permanent Area Total	Total Area Total
1. Western	1,030	160	0	10	40	1,240	6,390	7,630
2. South Central	5,210	0	0	340	280	5,830	10,170	16,000
3. North Central	1,850	0	0	0	220	2,080	8,300	10,380
4. Columbia Basin	1,640	0	0	240	420	2,290	4,400	6,690
5. South Eastern	1,780	0	20	0	380	2,170	7,250	9,420
6. Eastern	70	0	0	10	0	80	1,020	1,100
State Totals	11,580	160	20	600	1,330	13,690	37,530	51,220
% State Seasonal	84.6%	1.2%	0.1%	4.4%	9.7%	100%		

**Total Agricultural Employment**

	Jan 08	Dec 07	Jan 07	Change Dec 07- Jan 08	Change Jan 07- Jan 08	Percent Change Dec 07- Jan 08	Percent Change Jan 07- Jan 08
State	51,200	49,840	49,760	1,360	1,440	2.7%	2.9%
Western	7,630	8,200	7,870	-580	-250	-7.1%	-3.2%
South Central	16,000	15,250	15,800	750	200	4.9%	1.3%
North Central	10,380	10,140	10,610	240	-240	2.4%	-2.3%
Columbia Basin	6,690	6,200	6,030	480	650	7.7%	10.8%
South Eastern	9,420	8,850	8,360	570	1,060	6.4%	12.7%
Eastern	1,100	1,200	1,090	-110	10	-9.2%	0.9%

**Seasonal Agricultural Employment**

	Jan 08	Dec 07	Jan 07	Change Dec 07- Jan 08	Change Jan 07- Jan 08	Percent Change Dec 07- Jan 08	Percent Change Jan 07- Jan 08
State	13,690	11,350	11,930	2,340	1,750	20.6%	14.7%
Western	1,240	2,310	1,910	-1,080	-680	-46.8%	-35.6%
South Central	5,830	2,700	3,280	3,130	2,540	115.9%	77.4%
North Central	2,080	2,330	2,540	-260	-470	-11.2%	-18.5%
Columbia Basin	2,290	1,860	2,000	440	290	23.7%	14.5%
South Eastern	2,170	2,070	2,040	100	140	4.8%	6.9%
Eastern	80	80	150	0	-70	0.0%	-46.7%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [January 2008 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#) on Workforce Explorer

# Agricultural Labor Report

## Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

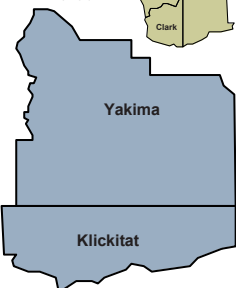
### Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

#### Washington State, December 2007



#### Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were potato warehouse work, blueberry pruning, bulbs warehouse work, and raspberry warehouse work.



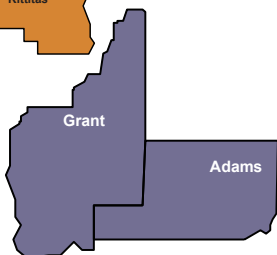
#### South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, pear pruning, and cherry pruning.



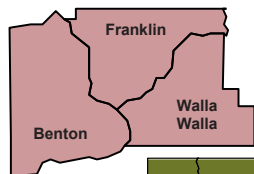
#### North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, apple warehouse work, pear pruning, and cherry pruning.



#### Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, cherry pruning, miscellaneous onion warehouse work, and potato warehouse work.



#### South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, cherry pruning and potato 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 January.