



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

June 2008

Washington State Employment Security Department

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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Labor Market Information Center
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1-800-215-1617
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www.workforceexplorer.com

Counties Within Agricultural Reporting Areas

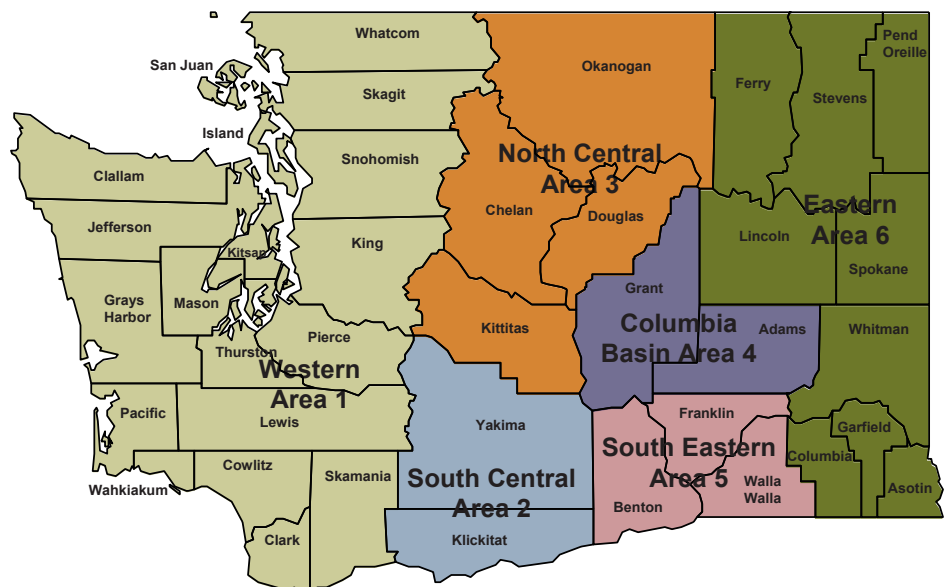
- Area 1 = Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom
- Area 2 = Klickitat and Yakima
- Area 3 = Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, and Okanogan
- Area 4 = Adams and Grant
- Area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

Executive Summary

The statewide seasonal employment fell slightly by 2.0 percent from June 2007 to June 2008 due to persistent poor weather conditions. Cold weather continued to impact all crops, especially the cherry harvest, causing delays of two weeks or more.

- North Central (Area 3) led the four declining areas with a 21.6 percent drop in seasonal employment of 2,750.
- South Eastern (Area 5) led the advancing areas with a gain of 37.0 percent in seasonal employment of 3,790.

Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



Over the year regionally, total agricultural employment decreased in all areas of the state except Western.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment contracted by 7.0 percent from June 2007 to June 2008. Over-the-month total employment expanded by 41.7 percent. Over-the-year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment increased by 4.5 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment

declined by 5.1 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment slid by 6.9 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment fell by 10.6 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment retreated by 13.4 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment experienced a loss of 2.2 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 2.0 percent from June 2007 to June 2008. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year losses were:

- raspberry work (-350)
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-180)
- cucumber work (-10)

Activities displaying gains were:

- apple work (3,190)
- asparagus work (2,430)
- grapes work (1,020)
- hops work (540)
- nursery work (510)
- pear work (450)
- potato work (260)
- wheat/grain work (140)
- bulbs work (70)
- blueberry work (30)
- strawberry work (30)

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment decreased by 10.4 percent, caused by a decline in strawberry (-550) work. South Central seasonal employment fell by 8.7 percent, due to a decrease in cherry work. North Central seasonal employment decreased by 21.6 percent, due to a decline in cherry work (-2,850). Columbia Basin seasonal employment slid by 1.4 percent, caused by a contraction in cherry work. South Eastern seasonal employment charged ahead by 37.0 percent, due to an increase in other seasonal work (1,220). Eastern seasonal employment grew by 33.3 percent, due to an increase in wheat/grain work (70).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages grew by 5.0 percent from June 2006 to June 2008. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages increased by 3.1 percent from June 2007 to June 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western area real seasonal wages moved forward

by 6.4 percent. South Central seasonal wages inched up by 1.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages expanded by 6.1 percent. Columbia Basin and South Eastern seasonal wages both increased by 3.9 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages increased by 10.3 percent from June 2006 to June 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural

seasonal wages advanced by 5.1 percent from June 2007 to June 2008. The state minimum wage advanced by 1.8 percent during this same time period. Western area seasonal wages moved forward by 5.9 percent. South Central seasonal wages grew by 5.5 percent. North Central seasonal wages increased by 8.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages climbed by 4.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages expanded by 2.9 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment dropped by 8.4 percent from June 2006 to June 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment also fell from June 2007 to June 2008 by 4.5 percent. Western area seasonal employment declined by 10.4 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal employment

declined by 8.7 percent. North Central seasonal employment contracted by 21.8 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment softened by 4.5 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment moved ahead by 26.1 percent. Eastern seasonal employment advanced by 33.0 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 June, 563 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 2.0 percent.




*In June, 563
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 highest

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.

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

June 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: 4,240

Strawberry Harvester	720	\$ 8.07/hr
Nursery Worker	600	\$ 9.60/hr
Strawberry Weeder	370	\$ 8.15/hr
Raspberry Weeder	360	\$ 8.17/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 17,530

Apple Hand Thinner	6,720	\$ 8.16/hr	or \$ 0.40 - \$ 2.75 per tree
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer.....	**	**	
Asparagus Harvester.....	1,360	\$ 8.08/hr	or \$ 0.20 - \$ 0.25 per pound
Cherry Harvester.....	**	**	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 9,980

Apple Hand Thinner.....	4,240	\$ 8.77/hr	or \$ 1.00 - \$ 9.00 per tree
Cherry Harvester.....	2,570	\$15.00/hr	
Apple Worker	580	\$ 8.07/hr	
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer.....	350	\$ 8.22/hr	

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,300

Apple Hand Thinner.....	2,800	\$ 8.40/hr	or \$ 0.35 - \$ 6.50 per tree
Cherry Harvester.....	**	**	
Asparagus Harvester	480	\$ 8.07/hr	
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	320	\$ 9.00/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 12,910

Apple Hand Thinner.....	3,630	\$ 8.26/hr	or \$ 0.68 - \$ 2.25 per tree
Cherry Harvester.....	1,870	\$ 8.50/hr	
Contract Postharvest Sorter/Grader/Packer	1,570	\$ 9.00/hr	
Asparagus Harvester	1,110	\$ 8.94/hr	or \$ 0.20 - \$ 0.30 per pound

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 480

Wheat Worker.....	150	\$10.53/hr
Beef Cattle Worker.....	60	\$10.00/hr
Nursery Worker.....	50	\$ 8.50/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator.....	30	\$11.00/hr

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

June 2008
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State

Agricultural Reporting Area	Seasonal Area Total	Seasonal Area % of Total	Permanent Area Total	Permanent Area % of Total	Total Area Total	Total Area % of Total
1. Western	4,240	8.2%	7,940	17.2%	12,180	12.5%
2. South Central	17,530	34.1%	12,660	27.4%	30,190	30.9%
3. North Central	9,980	19.4%	11,850	25.6%	21,830	22.3%
4. Columbia Basin	6,300	12.2%	5,680	12.3%	11,980	12.3%
5. South Eastern	12,910	25.1%	7,280	15.7%	20,190	20.7%
6. Eastern	480	0.9%	850	1.8%	1,330	1.4%
State Totals	51,440	100.0%	46,260	100.0%	97,700	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	Jun 08 Prel.	May 08 Rev.	Jun 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				May 08-Jun 08	Jun 07-Jun 08	May 08-Jun 08	Jun 07-Jun 08
State	97,700	68,950	105,010	28,750	-7,310	41.7%	-7.0%
Western	12,180	10,150	11,660	2,030	520	20.0%	4.5%
South Central	30,190	21,460	31,820	8,730	-1,630	40.7%	-5.1%
North Central	21,830	13,110	23,450	8,720	-1,620	66.5%	-6.9%
Columbia Basin	11,980	9,120	13,400	2,860	-1,420	31.4%	-10.6%
South Eastern	20,190	13,750	23,320	6,440	-3,130	46.8%	-13.4%
Eastern	1,330	1,360	1,360	-30	-30	-2.2%	-2.2%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Jun 08 Prel.	May 08 Rev.	Jun 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				May 08-Jun 08	Jun 07-Jun 08	May 08-Jun 08	Jun 07-Jun 08
State	51,440	25,290	53,880	26,150	-2,440	103.4%	-4.5%
Western	4,240	3,180	4,730	1,060	-490	33.3%	-10.4%
South Central	17,530	8,360	19,200	9,170	-1,670	109.7%	-8.7%
North Central	9,980	2,660	12,760	7,320	-2,780	275.2%	-21.8%
Columbia Basin	6,300	3,870	6,600	2,430	-300	62.8%	-4.5%
South Eastern	12,910	6,820	10,240	6,090	2,680	89.3%	26.2%
Eastern	480	410	360	80	120	19.5%	33.3%

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

Agricultural Labor Report

Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

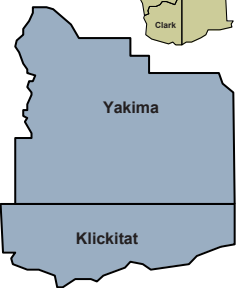
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, June 2008



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Strawberry growers finished up the harvest and red raspberries were on the way. Hay growers were busy cutting and baling. Primary agricultural activities were strawberry harvest, nursery work, strawberry weeding, and raspberry weeding.



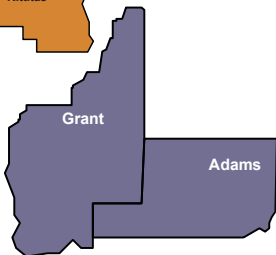
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Peak cherry harvest and apple fruit thinning activities continued. Summer squashes, melons, green onions, and peas were being harvested. Hops were reaching the top wires of trellis systems.



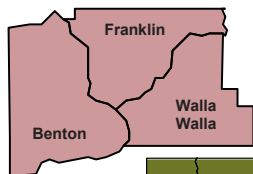
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. The cherry harvest finally started and progressed quickly. Yields were significantly down, as predicted. Cherry market prices remained high due to a short supply. Spring wheat plantings were not growing at normal rates due to the cool weather.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

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



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Most crops were growing well. Apple hand thinning and cherry harvest continued. Timothy hay was being cut but overall hay production was behind schedule due to the poor weather conditions. Cereal grains looked good throughout the area. Asparagus harvest was nearly completed while cherry harvest was in full swing.



Eastern (Area 6)

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