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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

Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

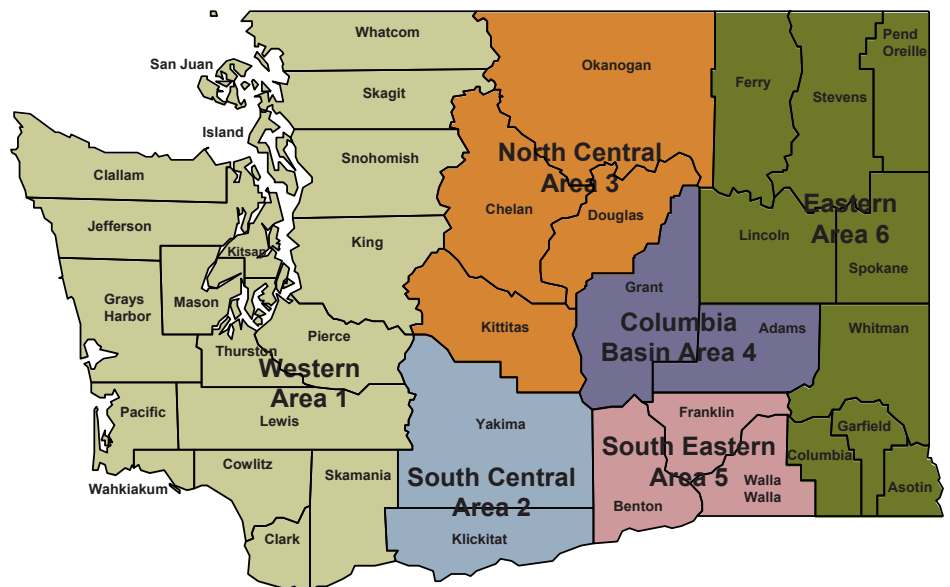
March 2008

Executive Summary

The 8.6 percent decline in statewide seasonal employment from March 2007 to March 2008 was due to fewer grape 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 grape pruning employment displayed the largest crop loss of 21.8 percent over the year (-750) due to inclement weather.
- Over-the-year declines were led by North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment at 30.6 percent, caused by an employment decrease of 610 in apple work.

Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment moved ahead by 1.3 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. Over-the-month total employment rose by 9.1 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total

employment slipped by 1.6 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment fell by 0.3 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment decreased by 1.3 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment grew by

5.0 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment ramped up by 7.3 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment edged up by 0.7 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 8.6 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year losses were:

- grapes work (-750)
- other seasonal work (-490)
- cherry work (-150)
- onion work (-150)
- potato work (-120)
- misc. vegetable work (-100)
- raspberry work (-90)
- apple work (-10)

Activities displaying gains were:

- hops work (510)
- asparagus work (180)
- nursery work (80)

Across the state, Western seasonal employment fell by 10.7 percent, caused by a decline in potato work (-190). South Central seasonal employment slipped by 2.1 percent, due to a decrease in other seasonal work (-160). North Central seasonal employment contracted by 30.6 percent, due to a decline in ap-

ple work (-610). Columbia Basin seasonal employment expanded by 18.1 percent, caused by an expansion in apple work (530). South Eastern seasonal employment softened by 12.4 percent, due to a decline in grapes work (-850). Eastern seasonal employment dropped by 35.3 percent, due to a decline in other seasonal work (-20).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages expanded by 1.2 percent from March 2006 to March 2008.

Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages declined by 0.5 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages increased by 0.9 percent. South Central sea-

sonal wages contracted by 0.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages expanded by 0.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages moved forward by 2.7 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages advanced by 0.4 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages rose by 6.4 percent from March 2006 to March 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages

advanced by 1.3 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. The state minimum wage grew by 1.8 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages expanded by 2.8 percent. South Central seasonal wages increased by 1.8 percent. North Central seasonal wages rose by 2.8 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages by ramped up by 4.7 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages moved ahead by 2.3 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 4.5 percent from March 2006 to March 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment lagged by 8.6 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. Western seasonal employment fell by 10.7 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal employment slid by 1.9 percent. North

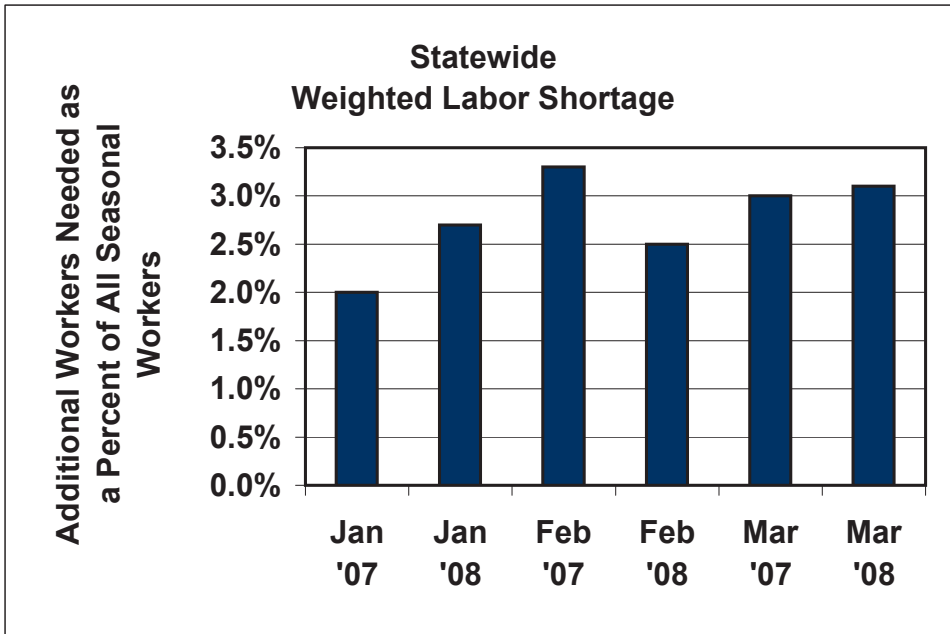
Central seasonal employment decreased by 30.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment expanded by 18.1 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment softened by 12.4 percent. Eastern seasonal employment plunged by 35.3 percent.



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 March, 453 usable surveys were returned. The chart below estimates additional workers needed as a percent of all seasonal workers.



In March, 453 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.

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

March 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: 2,929 (1,329 local, 58 intrastate, 117 interstate, 50 foreign, 1,375 unknown origin)

Nursery Harvester	707	\$ 8.07/hr	
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	384	\$ 8.72/hr	
Raspberry Pruner	**	**	
Nursery Worker	228	\$ 9.58/hr	

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,608 (5,197 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 101 foreign, 310 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner	1,528	\$ 8.08/hr	or \$ 0.35 - \$ 5.00 per tree
Grape Pruner	903	\$ 8.74/hr	or \$ 0.08 - \$ 0.40 per plant
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer	321	\$ 8.09/hr	
Asparagus Planter	**	**	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,562 (2,284 local, 14 intrastate, 0 interstate, 0 foreign, 264 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner	**	**	
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**	
Apple Preparation	**	**	
Cherry Pruner	**	**	

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,258 (2,787 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 70 foreign, 401 unknown origin)

Apple Pruner	1,756	\$ 8.54/hr	or \$ 1.00 - \$ 4.50 per tree
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	225	\$ 8.14/hr	
Cherry Worker	161	\$ 8.08/hr	
Grapes Pruner	154	\$ 8.07/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,603 (2,160 local, 87 intrastate, 8 interstate, 39 foreign, 1,309 unknown origin)

Grape Pruner	844	\$ 8.29/hr	or \$ 0.10 - \$ 0.26 per plant
Apple Pruner	712	\$ 8.12/hr	or \$ 0.60 - \$ 5.25 per tree
Hops Preparation	425	Not Available	
Grapes Preparation	**	**	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 224 (158 local, 0 intrastate, 0 interstate, 18 foreign, 48 unknown origin)

Nursery Planter	84	\$ 8.44/hr	
Nursery Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**	
Wheat Preparation	**	**	
Apple Pruner	20	\$ 8.35/hr	

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

March 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	1,330	60	120	50	1,380	2,940	6,420	9,360
2. South Central	5,200	0	0	100	310	5,610	13,410	19,020
3. North Central	2,280	10	0	0	260	2,550	10,180	12,730
4. Columbia Basin	2,790	0	0	70	400	3,260	5,000	8,260
5. South Eastern	2,160	90	10	40	1,310	3,610	7,730	11,340
6. Eastern	160	0	0	20	50	230	1,140	1,370
State Totals	13,910	160	130	280	3,710	18,190	38,710	56,900
% State Seasonal	76.5%	0.9%	0.7%	1.5%	20.4%	100%		

Total Agricultural Employment

	Mar 08 Prel.	Feb 08 Rev.	Mar 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Feb 08-Mar 08	Mar 07-Mar 08	Feb 08-Mar 08	Mar 07-Mar 08
State	62,070	56,890	61,270	5,180	800	9.1%	1.3%
Western	9,360	8,350	9,500	1,010	-150	12.1%	-1.6%
South Central	19,020	17,740	19,070	1,280	-60	7.2%	-0.3%
North Central	12,730	11,900	12,900	830	-170	7.0%	-1.3%
Columbia Basin	8,260	7,330	7,870	930	390	12.7%	5.0%
South Eastern	11,340	10,410	10,570	930	770	8.9%	7.3%
Eastern	1,370	1,160	1,360	210	10	18.1%	0.7%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Mar 08 Prel.	Feb 08 Rev.	Mar 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Feb 08-Mar 08	Mar 07-Mar 08	Feb 08-Mar 08	Mar 07-Mar 08
State	18,180	15,040	19,900	3,150	-1,710	20.9%	-8.6%
Western	2,930	1,650	3,280	1,280	-350	77.6%	-10.7%
South Central	5,610	6,080	5,720	-470	-120	-7.7%	-2.1%
North Central	2,560	2,420	3,690	150	-1,130	6.2%	-30.6%
Columbia Basin	3,260	2,250	2,760	1,010	500	44.9%	18.1%
South Eastern	3,600	2,520	4,110	1,080	-510	42.9%	-12.4%
Eastern	220	130	340	100	-120	76.9%	-35.3%

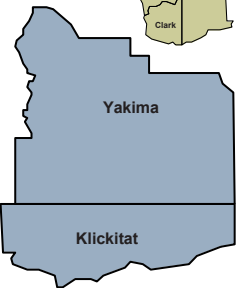
For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [March 2008 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](http://www.workforceexplorer.com) at www.workforceexplorer.com

Agricultural Labor Report
Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area
Washington State, March 2008



Western (Area 1)

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



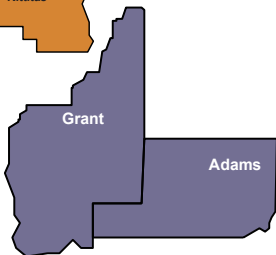
South Central (Area 2)

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



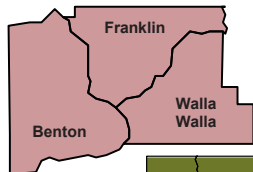
North Central (Area 3)

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



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were grape pruning, apple pruning, hops preparation, and grape preparation.



Eastern (Area 6)

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