



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

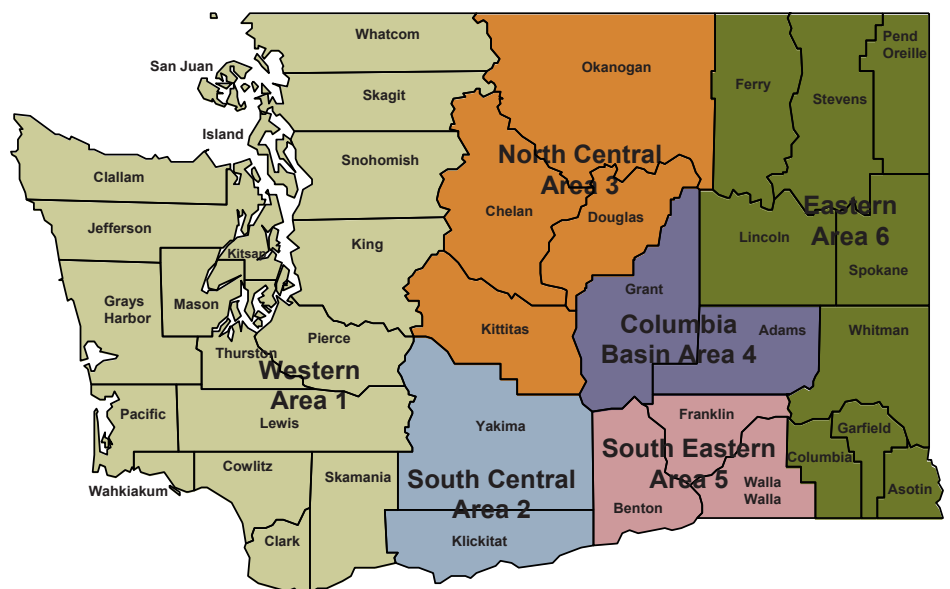
May 2008

Executive Summary

The statewide seasonal employment only increased slightly at 0.8 percent from May 2007 to May 2008 due to colder weather conditions. This month's colder weather has had a large impact on all crops. Harvests of asparagus and cherries have been delayed 2 weeks. Spring frosts have caused the cherry harvest forecast to be down 30 to 40 percent.

- Statewide miscellaneous seasonal work displayed the greatest seasonal employment gain of 47.5 percent over the year (1,070).
- Over-the-year gains were led by South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment at 32.1 percent, caused by an employment increase of 550 in grape work.

Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



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



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment expanded by 3.8 percent from May 2007 to May 2008. Over-the-month total employment grew by 2.5 percent. Over-the-year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment inched ahead by 0.3 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment ex-

panded by 3.7 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment grew by 5.6 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased by 3.4 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment moved forward by 5.6 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment fell slightly by 0.7 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 0.8 percent from May 2007 to May 2008. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- other seasonal work (1,070)
- grape work (1,050)
- potato work (450)
- nursery work (390)
- asparagus work (380)
- onion work (170)
- strawberry work (110)
- blueberry work (90)
- hops work (30)

Activities displaying losses were:

- apple work (-4,100)
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-380)
- raspberry work (-310)

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment fell by 4.2 percent, caused by a decline in raspberry work (-310). South Central seasonal employment inched up by 0.1 percent, due to an increase in grape work (500). North Central seasonal employment contracted by 44.7 percent, due to a decline in apple work (-1,650). Columbia Basin seasonal employment moved forward by 12.7 percent, caused by an expansion in cherry work (70). South Eastern seasonal employment expanded by 32.1 percent, due to an increase in grape work (550). Eastern seasonal employment fell by 18.4 percent, due to a decline in other seasonal work (-50).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages expanded by 3.1 percent from May 2006 to May 2008. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages slipped by 1.7 percent from May 2007 to May 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western area real seasonal wages increased by 5.1 percent. South Central

seasonal wages advanced by 1.7 percent. North Central seasonal wages moved forward by 2.6 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages expanded by 2.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages rose by 1.7 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages expanded by 8.4 percent from May 2006 to May 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 5.8 percent during this same time period.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages advanced by 3.7 percent from May 2007 to May 2008. The state minimum wage advanced by 1.8 percent during this same time period. Western area seasonal wages increased by 7.1 percent. South Central seasonal wages advanced by 3.6 percent. North Central seasonal wages moved ahead by 4.6 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages by rose by 3.9 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages increased by 3.6 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment fell by 5.3 percent from May 2006 to May 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment inched up by 0.9 percent from May 2007 to May 2008. Western area seasonal employment fell by 4.2 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal employment

was almost flat with a 0.1 percent gain. North Central seasonal employment dropped by 44.7 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment grew by 12.7 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment leaped ahead by 32.1 percent. Eastern seasonal employment dipped by 18.4 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 May, 539 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 1.3 percent.



*In May, 539
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

May 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: 3,170

Nursery Worker	560	\$ 9.58/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	360	\$ 8.88/hr
Nursery & Tree Planter	230	\$ 8.65/hr
Nursery Harvester	220	\$ 8.16/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,620

Asparagus Harvester	2,300	\$ 8.19/hr or \$ 0.23 - \$ 0.26 per pound
Apricot Hand Thinner	960	\$ 8.24/hr
Apple Trainer	440	\$ 8.25/hr
Asparagus Sorter/Grader/Packer	430	\$ 8.50/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 1,930

Apple Trainer	810	\$ 8.07/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	260	\$ 8.07/hr
Apple Preparation	250	\$ 8.07/hr
Apple Worker	130	\$ 8.50/hr

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,730

Apple Preparation	840	\$ 8.51/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	550	\$ 8.14/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**
Asparagus Harvester	**	**

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,380

Contract Postharvest Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**
Asparagus Harvester	1,480	\$ 8.24/hr or \$ 0.17 - \$ 0.26½ per pound
Grape Suckering Worker	470	\$ 8.12/hr
Grape Trainer	440	\$ 8.33/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 400

Nursery Loader	130	\$ 8.50/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator	90	\$11.26/hr
Wheat Worker	50	\$10.25/hr
Grass Seed / Hay Seed Weeder	30	\$ 8.07/hr

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

May 2008
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State

Agricultural Reporting Area	Seasonal Area	Seasonal Area	Permanent Area	Permanent Area	Total Area	Total Area
	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total
1. Western	3,170	13.7%	6,960	15.1%	10,130	14.6%
2. South Central	7,620	32.8%	13,900	30.2%	21,520	31.1%
3. North Central	1,930	8.3%	11,170	24.3%	13,100	18.9%
4. Columbia Basin	3,730	16.1%	5,510	12.0%	9,240	13.4%
5. South Eastern	6,380	27.5%	7,460	16.2%	13,840	20.0%
6. Eastern	400	1.7%	960	2.1%	1360	2.0%
State Totals	23,220	100.0%	45,960	100.0%	69,180	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	May 08 Prel.	Apr 08 Rev.	May 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Apr 08- May 08	May 07- May 08	Apr 08- May 08	May 07- May 08
State	69,180	67,480	66,650	1,710	2,530	2.5%	3.8%
Western	10,130	9,720	10,100	400	30	4.1%	0.3%
South Central	21,520	20,360	20,750	1,160	770	5.7%	3.7%
North Central	13,100	14,420	12,400	-1,330	690	-9.2%	5.6%
Columbia Basin	9,240	9,070	8,940	170	300	1.9%	3.4%
South Eastern	13,840	12,580	13,100	1,260	740	10.0%	5.6%
Eastern	1,360	1,320	1,350	40	-10	3.0%	-0.7%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	May 08 Prel.	Apr 08 Rev.	May 07 Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Apr 08- May 08	May 07- May 08	Apr 08- May 08	May 07- May 08
State	23,220	22,380	23,030	850	200	3.8%	0.8%
Western	3,170	2,970	3,310	200	-140	6.7%	-4.2%
South Central	7,620	7,390	7,610	230	10	3.1%	0.1%
North Central	1,930	4,250	3,490	-2,320	-1,560	-54.6%	-44.7%
Columbia Basin	3,730	4,240	3,310	-510	420	-12.0%	12.7%
South Eastern	6,380	3,170	4,830	3,210	1,550	101.3%	32.1%
Eastern	400	360	490	40	-90	11.1%	-18.4%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to
[May 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

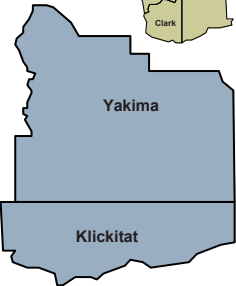
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, May 2008



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Sweet corn growers took advantage of some nice weather to cultivate fields and plant. Strawberries and raspberries were in bloom. Beet seed planting was complete but was a month and a half behind schedule.



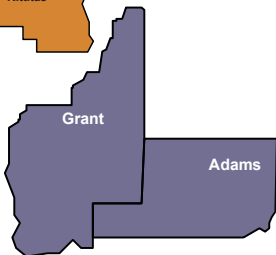
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Crop progress slowed due to cool and overcast weather. Early summer vegetables such as radishes and lettuce were harvested.



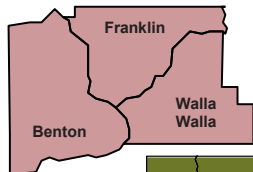
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Early reports indicate a normal pear and apple crop, but the stone fruit crop will be down. There will be a fair to poor crop in some important cherry production areas and a good crop in the far north. The overall crop will be significantly lower than last year's record.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. Grain corn planting was nearing completion. Potato planting continued. The first cutting of alfalfa was behind schedule. Storage onions were being planted.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal for the reporting period. The area was assessing damage to fruit crops as a result of late frosts. The first cutting of wheat had begun. New seeding of peas and garbanzo beans looked good.



Eastern (Area 6)

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