



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

November 2008

**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
Greg Weeks, Ph.D., LMEA Director



Prepared by
John Wines, Economist
(360) 438-4843
jwines@esd.wa.gov

Judy Anderson, *Data Compiler*

For additional
labor market information:
Labor Market Information Center
(LMIC)
1-800-215-1617
or visit us on the Web
www.workforceexplorer.com

Executive Summary

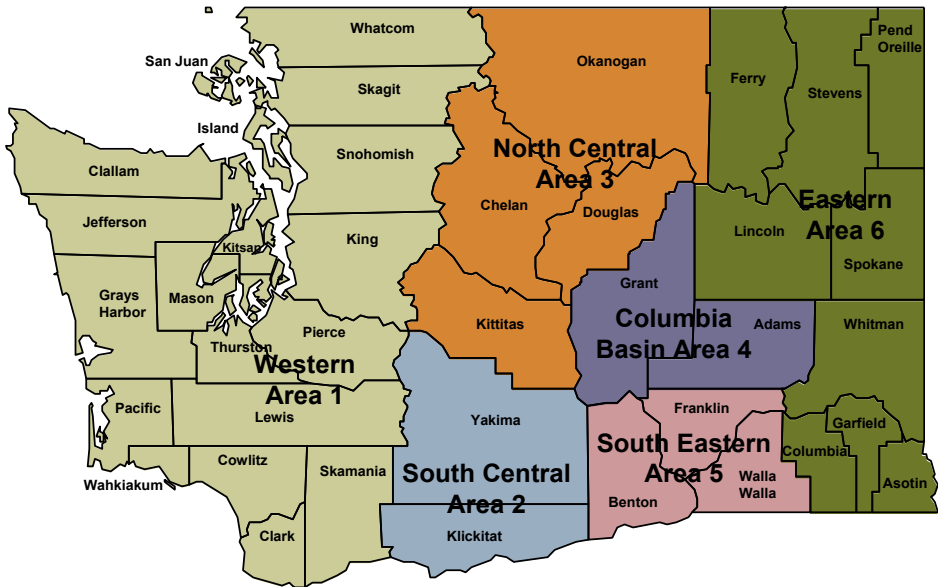
The statewide seasonal employment grew by 12.0 percent from November 2007 to November 2008 due to a record apple harvest. This year's harvest was 113 million boxes, a 14.1 percent increase over last year's 99 million box crop.


- South Eastern (Area 5) led the four advancing areas with an increase in seasonal employment of 1,330.
- Western (Area 1) was the largest declining area with a loss of 500 in seasonal employment.

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 Reporting Areas in Washington State





Statewide seasonal agricultural employment contracted by 5.9 percent from November 2007 to November 2008.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment contracted by 5.9 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. Over-the-month total employment stepped back by 40.0 percent, due to the winding down of the apple harvest. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment declined by 5.0 percent. South Central (Area 2) total

employment lagged by 1.8 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment softened by 10.2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment fell by 5.5 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment dipped by 10.4 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment moved forward by 2.6 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment grew by 12.0 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (2,320)
- other seasonal work (400)
- hops work (300)
- nursery work (240)
- miscellaneous vegetables work (150)
- bulbs work (120)
- wheat/grain work (40)
- asparagus work (10)

Activities displaying losses were:

- cherry work (-390)
- blueberry work (-160)
- onion work (-50)

Crops showing no significant change over the year were grapes work and strawberry work.

Across the state, Western seasonal employment fell by 20.8 percent, caused by a decrease in raspberry work (-640). South Central seasonal employment inched up by 3.7 percent, due to an increase in apple work (470). North Central seasonal employment slipped by 0.5 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment bounded ahead by 25.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment boomed ahead by 130.7 percent, due to an increase in apple work (1,470). Eastern seasonal employment expanded by 9.9 percent, due to an increase in wheat/grain work (30).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages grew by 4.4 percent from November 2006 to November 2008. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages also increased by 0.5 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages expanded by 5.5 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. South Central seasonal wages fell

by 4.2 percent. North Central seasonal wages slipped by 1.2 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages rose by 1.1 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages increased by 4.8 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages moved forward by 9.8 percent from November 2006 to November 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages expanded by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages increased by 2.4 percent from November 2007 to

November 2008. The state minimum wage grew by 1.8 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages advanced by 7.5 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. South Central seasonal wages declined by 2.4 percent. North Central seasonal wages inched up by 0.7 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages grew by 3.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages increased by 6.8 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 7.7 percent from November 2006 to November 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 12.0 percent from November 2007 to November 2008. Western seasonal employment fell by 20.7 percent during that same time period. South Central

seasonal employment grew by 3.5 percent. North Central seasonal employment slipped by 0.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment moved forward by 24.8 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment expanded by 130.4 percent, due to the record apple harvest. Eastern seasonal employment pulled ahead by 9.1 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 November, 500 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 0.4 percent.

In November, 500 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

November 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, and wages. Based on these data, estimates are developed on the size of the workforce and average wages for each crop activity. 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: 1,910

Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	440	\$ 8.60/hr
Nursery & Tree Harvester	340	\$10.94/hr
Blackberry Harvester	**	**
Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer	220	Not Available

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 4,400

Apple Harvester	1,990	\$ 8.09/hr or \$15.00 - \$35.00 per bin
Hops Worker	410	\$ 9.26/hr
Apple Worker	350	\$ 8.87/hr
Apple Preparation	350	\$ 8.07/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,130

Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer	950	\$ 8.44/hr
Apple Harvester	910	\$ 8.07/hr or \$16.00 - \$35.00 per bin
Apple Preparation	300	\$ 8.20/hr
Apple Trainer	240	\$ 8.41/hr

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,220

Apple Harvester	1,010	\$ 9.34/hr or \$18.00 - \$28.00 per bin
Nursery & Tree Harvester	500	\$ 8.12/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**
Apple Pruner	230	\$ 8.09/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,350

Apple Harvester	1,380	\$ 8.07/hr or \$12.00 - \$28.00 per bin
Apple Preparation	310	\$ 8.07/hr
Apple Pruner	110	\$ 8.77/hr
Apple Worker	80	\$ 8.64/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 240

Wheat Worker	40	\$10.05/hr
Nursery Worker	30	\$ 8.50/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator	30	\$11.00/hr
Wheat Mechanic	30	\$13.00/hr

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

**November 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	1,910	7,260	7,260	18.5%	9,174	16.8%
2. South Central	4,400	12,560	12,560	32.0%	16,962	31.1%
3. North Central	3,130	7,450	7,450	19.0%	10,578	19.4%
4. Columbia Basin	3,220	4,270	4,270	10.9%	7,487	13.7%
5. South Eastern	2,350	6,410	6,410	16.3%	8,758	16.1%
6. Eastern	240	1350	1350	3.4%	1594	2.9%
State Totals	15,260	39,300	39,290	100.0%	54,553	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	Nov 08 Prel.	Oct 08 Rev.	Nov 07 Rev.	Change Oct 08-Nov 08	Change Nov 07-Nov 08	Percent Change Oct 08-Nov 08	Percent Change Nov 07-Nov 08
State	54,550	90,940	57,970	-36,390	-3,410	-40.0%	-5.9%
Western	9,170	10,540	9,660	-1,370	-480	-13.0%	-5.0%
South Central	16,960	28,700	17,270	-11,740	-310	-40.9%	-1.8%
North Central	10,580	20,530	11,780	-9,950	-1,200	-48.5%	-10.2%
Columbia Basin	7,490	13,880	7,930	-6,390	-440	-46.0%	-5.5%
South Eastern	8,760	15,470	9,780	-6,710	-1,020	-43.4%	-10.4%
Eastern	1,590	1,820	1,560	-230	40	-12.6%	2.6%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Nov 08 Prel.	Oct 08 Rev.	Nov 07 Rev.	Change Oct 08-Nov 08	Change Nov 07-Nov 08	Percent Change Oct 08-Nov 08	Percent Change Nov 07-Nov 08
State	15,260	51,200	13,620	-35,950	1,640	-70.2%	12.0%
Western	1,910	3,150	2,410	-1,240	-500	-39.4%	-20.7%
South Central	4,400	15,490	4,250	-11,090	160	-71.6%	3.8%
North Central	3,130	15,900	3,140	-12,770	-20	-80.3%	-0.6%
Columbia Basin	3,220	8,850	2,580	-5,630	650	-63.6%	25.2%
South Eastern	2,350	7,810	1,020	-5,460	1,330	-69.9%	130.4%
Eastern	240	470	220	-230	20	-48.9%	9.1%

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

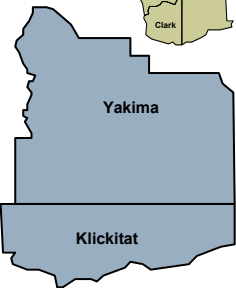
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, November 2008



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Christmas tree harvest was in full swing as growers rushed to fill orders for Thanksgiving weekend sales. Commercial dahlia growers finished up harvesting tubers.



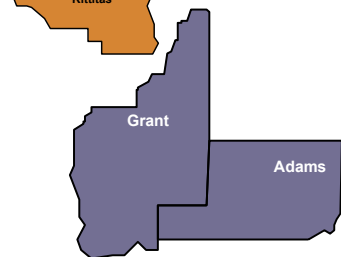
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The apple harvest was complete for the most part. Primary agricultural activities were apple harvest and hops work.



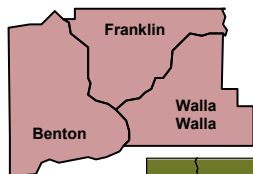
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Apple harvest was winding down for Fuji and Pink Lady varieties.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. However, more rain is still needed for the crops. Primary agricultural activities were apple harvest, nursery and tree harvest, potato warehouse work and apple pruning.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Apple and field corn harvesting was finishing up. Winter wheat was improving due to some needed rain, however crops overall were still showing stress from the continued drought conditions.



Eastern (Area 6)

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