



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

September 2008

**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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Executive Summary

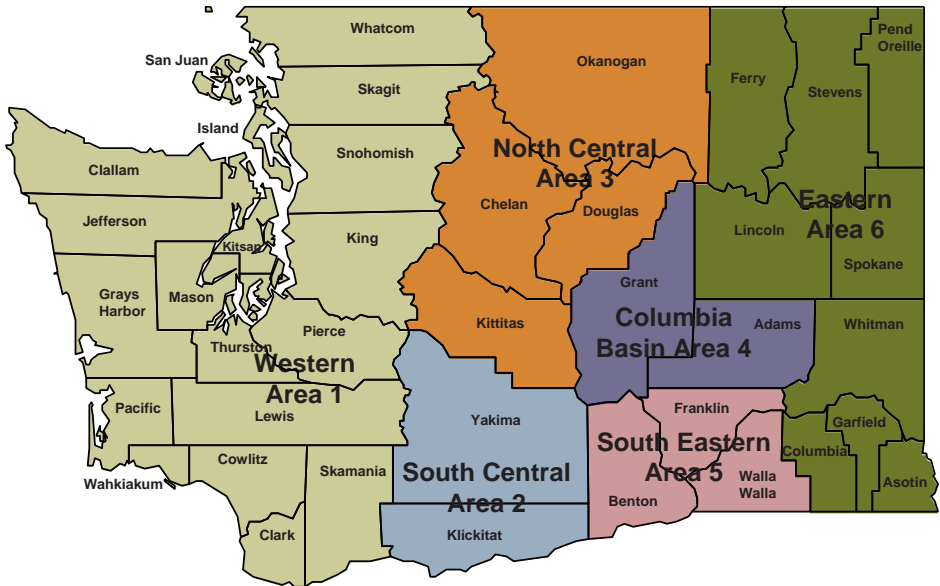
The statewide seasonal employment fell by 7.1 percent from September 2007 to September 2008 due to later apple and pear harvests. This was caused by the cold weather and frosts during the Spring, delaying blossom dates and impacting the size and timing of tree fruit harvests.

- North Central (Area 3) led the four declining areas with a decrease in seasonal employment of 2,380.
- South Eastern (Area 5) led the two increasing areas with a gain of 490 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 fell by 7.1 percent from September 2007 to September 2008.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 1.8 percent from September 2007 to September 2008. Over-the-month total employment rose by 14.0 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment expanded by 4.7 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment expanded by 6.9 per-

cent. North Central (Area 3) total employment increased by 2.6 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment scaled back by 2.0 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment contracted by 6.8 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment softened by 1.1 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment fell by 7.1 percent from September 2007 to September 2008. Agricultural activities displaying gains were:

- miscellaneous vegetables work (750)
- grapes work (430)
- blueberry work (250)
- wheat/grain work (150)
- onion work (130)
- bulbs work (110)
- nursery work (20)
- strawberry work (20)

Activities displaying over-the-year losses were:

- apple work (-3,150)
- pear work (-1,880)
- other tree fruit work (-1,720)
- cherry work (-230)
- potato work (-220)
- hops work (-100)
- raspberry work (-70)
- asparagus work (-10)

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment decreased by 0.6 percent, caused by a decline in potato work (-370). South Central seasonal employment fell by 7.3 percent, due to a decline in other tree fruit work (-690). North Central seasonal employment slowed by 15.9 percent, due to a decline in apple work (-1,750). Columbia Basin seasonal employment contracted by 10.0 percent, caused by a contraction in apple work (-1,210). South Eastern seasonal employment expanded by 6.0 percent, due to a gain in other seasonal work (330). Eastern seasonal employment advanced by 30.8 percent, due to an increase in other seasonal work (220).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages grew by 5.9 percent from September 2006 to September 2008. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 0.6 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages expanded by 1.9 percent from September 2007 to September 2008. The real state minimum wage slipped by 0.2 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages rose by 3.4 percent. South Central seasonal wages declined by 3.5 percent. North Central seasonal wages

slipped by 4.5 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages advanced by 2.6 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages expanded by 1.5 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages advanced by 11.3 percent from September 2006 to September 2008. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 5.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages increased by 3.8 percent from September 2007 to September 2008. The state minimum wage advanced by

1.8 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages moved ahead by 5.3 percent. South Central seasonal wages dipped by 1.6 percent. North Central seasonal wages decreased by 2.7 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages moved forward by 4.6 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages rose by 3.5 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 4.5 percent from September 2006 to September 2008. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment also declined by 7.1 percent from September 2007 to September 2008. Western seasonal employment fell by 0.6 percent. South Central seasonal employ-

ment declined by 7.3 percent. North Central seasonal employment contracted by 15.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment slid by 10.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment moved forward by 6.0 percent. Eastern seasonal employment advanced by 30.8 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 em-

ployees they could have used. For September, 511 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 1.3 percent.


In September, 511 usable labor supply surveys were returned.



Methodology



Seasonal workers, for the purpose of the Farm Labor Survey, are those working less than 150 days per year.



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

September 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: 4,590

Blueberry Harvester	**	**
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer.	510	\$ 8.54/hr
Blackberry Harvester	**	**
Blueberry Sorter/Grader/Packer.	**	**

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 13,480

Apple Harvester	6,710	\$ 8.55/hr or \$13.00 - \$25.00 per bin
Hops Mechanized Harvester.	**	**
Pear Harvester.	**	**
Grapes Hand Thinner	740	\$ 8.11/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 12,600

Apple Harvester	10,770	\$ 8.75/hr or \$14.50 - \$30.00 per bin
Pear Harvester	**	**
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer.	270	\$ 9.85/hr
Apple Worker.	260	\$10.83/hr

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,420

Apple Harvester	4,160	\$ 8.67/hr or \$10.00 - \$27.50 per bin
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer.	450	\$ 8.36/hr
Pear Harvester	**	**
Contract Postharvest Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 8,660

Apple Harvester	4,890	\$ 8.62/hr or \$12.00 - \$25.00 per bin
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer.	300	\$ 9.49/hr
Alfalfa Hay Tractor Operator	270	\$ 9.15/hr
Grapes Hand Thinner	260	\$10.33/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 680

Wheat Vehicle Operator.	130	\$13.73/hr
Wheat Combine Driver.	70	\$12.64/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator.	60	\$11.33/hr
Misc Grain/Grain Seed Mechanized Harvester.	**	**

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

September 2008
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State

Agricultural Reporting Area	Seasonal Area	Seasonal Area	Permanent Area	Permanent Area	Total Area	Total Area
	Total	Percent of Total	Total	Percent of Total	Total	% of Total
1. Western	4,590	9.7%	7,500	15.6%	12,000	11.9%
2. South Central	13,480	28.4%	15,880	33.0%	33,220	32.9%
3. North Central	12,600	26.6%	10,410	21.6%	24,370	24.2%
4. Columbia Basin	7,420	15.6%	5,640	11.7%	13,410	13.3%
5. South Eastern	8,660	18.3%	7,880	16.4%	16,060	15.9%
6. Eastern	680	1.4%	780	1.6%	1,780	1.8%
State Totals	47,420	100.0%	48,110	100.0%	100,840	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	Sep 08	Aug 08	Sep 07	Change		Percent Change	
	Prel.	Rev.	Rev.	Aug 08- Sep 08	Sep 07- Sep 08	Aug 08- Sep 08	Sep 07- Sep 08
State	100,840	88,480	99,040	12,380	1,810	14.0%	1.8%
Western	12,000	13,470	11,470	-1,460	540	-10.8%	4.7%
South Central	33,220	27,610	31,080	5,620	2,140	20.4%	6.9%
North Central	24,370	20,240	23,760	4,130	610	20.4%	2.6%
Columbia Basin	13,410	11,280	13,680	2,130	-280	18.9%	-2.0%
South Eastern	16,060	13,640	17,250	2,420	-1,180	17.7%	-6.8%
Eastern	1,780	2,240	1,800	-460	-20	-20.5%	-1.1%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Sep 08-Prel.	Aug 08-Rev.	Sep 07-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
	Sep 08-Prel.	Aug 08-Rev.	Sep 07-Rev.	Aug 08- Sep 08	Sep 07- Sep 08	Aug 08- Sep 08	Sep 07- Sep 08
State	47,420	41,480	51,060	5,940	-3,640	14.3%	-7.1%
Western	4,590	5,890	4,620	-1,300	-30	-22.1%	-0.6%
South Central	13,480	11,020	14,540	2,460	-1,060	22.3%	-7.3%
North Central	12,600	11,320	14,980	1,280	-2,380	11.3%	-15.9%
Columbia Basin	7,420	5,960	8,240	1,460	-820	24.5%	-10.0%
South Eastern	8,660	6,110	8,170	2,550	490	41.7%	6.0%
Eastern	680	1,180	520	-500	160	-42.4%	30.8%

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

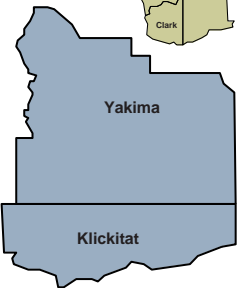
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, September 2008



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal during the reporting period. Late season vegetables including squash and potatoes were being harvested. Blueberry harvest was nearly done, and blackberries were coming on strong.



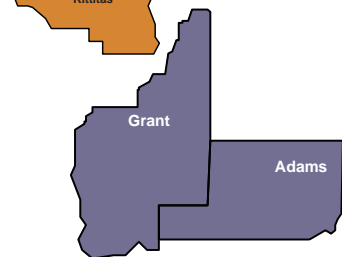
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal during the reporting period. Hop harvest peaked and soft fruit harvest finished up. Apple harvest was proceeding but running about two weeks late. Grapes hand thinning continued. Harvest of hot peppers, winter squash, and pumpkin was ongoing.



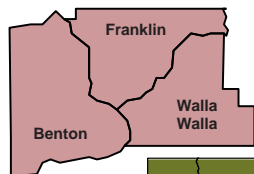
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal during the reporting period. Apple and pear harvest continued. The 2009 winter wheat crop seeding was finishing up. Sweet corn harvest was being completed.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal during the reporting period. Winter wheat seeding was mostly completed and the remaining acreage will be seeded after more precipitation received. Primary agricultural activities were apple harvest, potato warehouse work, pear harvest, and contract post harvest warehouse work.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal during the reporting period. Lack of precipitation has made it difficult to finish seeding winter wheat. Bean harvest concluded and the fourth cutting of hay began. Potato harvest continued, while sweet corn harvest neared completion. Primary agricultural activities were apple harvest, apple warehouse work, alfalfa hay tractor operations, and grapes hand thinning.



Eastern (Area 6)

Weather conditions were cooler and drier than normal for the reporting period. Seeding of winter wheat progressed slowly with a need for additional moisture.