



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

April 2009

**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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For additional
labor market information:
Labor Market Information Center
(LMIC)
1-800-215-1617
or visit us on the Web
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

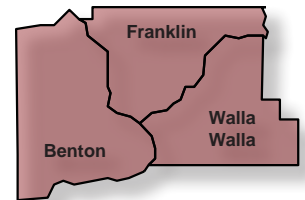
Executive Summary

The statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 5.8 percent from April 2008 to April 2009.

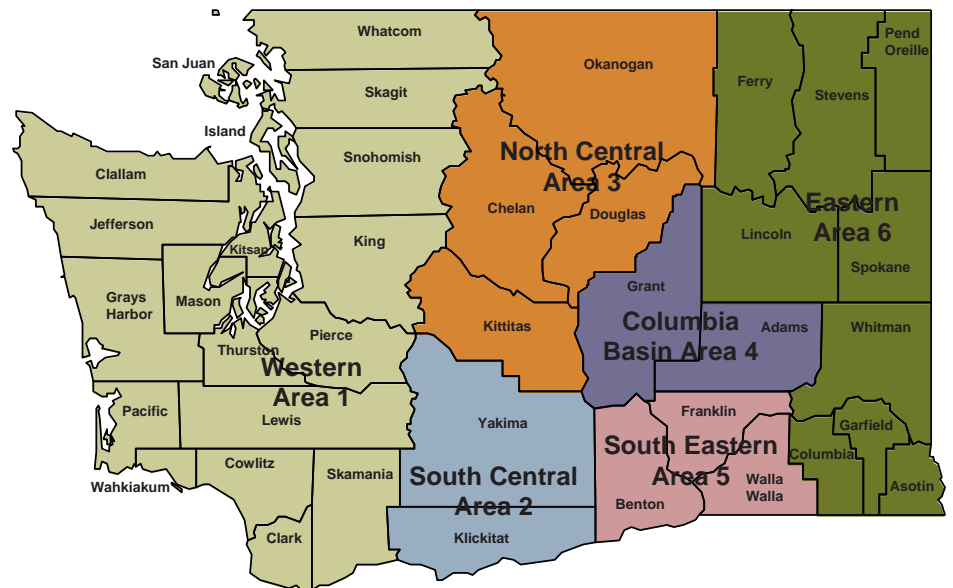


North Central (Area 3) led the two advancing areas with an increase in seasonal agricultural employment of 2,090.

South Eastern (Area 5) was the largest declining area with a loss of 760 in seasonal agricultural employment.



Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 2.3 percent from April 2008 to April 2009.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 2.3 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. Over-the-month total employment slid by 0.5 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment contracted by 1.9 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment expanded by 4.0 percent.

North Central (Area 3) total employment moved forward by 3.9 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment inched up by 0.7 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased by 4.2 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment declined by 11.8 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 5.8 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (3,130),
- cherry work (460),
- grapes work (240),
- hops work (210),
- cucumber work (20),
- nursery work (20), and
- wheat/grain work (20).

Activities displaying losses were:

- asparagus work (-960),
- potato work (-600),
- onion work (-170),
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-110),
- other seasonal work (-110),
- blueberry work (-40),
- strawberry work (-40), and
- pear work (-30).

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment contracted 4.1 percent, caused by a drop in potato work (-130). South Central seasonal employment grew by 2.8 percent, due to a growth in apple work (1,170). North Central seasonal employment moved forward by 47.0 percent, caused by an expansion in apple work (1,590). Columbia Basin seasonal employment declined by 0.2 percent, caused by a decline in potato work (-400). South Eastern seasonal employment declined by 22.0 percent, due to a decline in asparagus work (-490). Eastern seasonal employment slowed by 19.5 percent, due to a decline in nursery work (-100).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages grew by 6.2 percent from April 2007 to April 2009. Washington state real minimum wages increased by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages moved ahead by 3.2 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. The real state minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages fell 2.8 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. South Cen-

tral seasonal wages rose by 4.4 percent. North Central seasonal wages increased by 8.6 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages inched ahead by 1.2 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages advanced by 3.5 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages expanded by 11.9 percent from April 2007 to April 2009. Washington state nominal minimum wages expanded by 7.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural

seasonal employee wages expanded by 6.7 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. The state minimum wage grew by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages inched up by 0.6 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. South Central seasonal wages rose by 8.0 percent. North Central seasonal wages expanded by 12.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages grew by 4.7 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages moved forward by 7.1 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends


Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 5.2 percent from April 2007 to April 2009. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 5.8 percent from April 2008 to April 2009. Western seasonal employment fell by 4.1 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal employment

advanced by 2.8 percent. North Central seasonal employment grew by 47.0 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment slowed by 0.2 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment decreased by 22.0 percent. Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 19.5 percent.

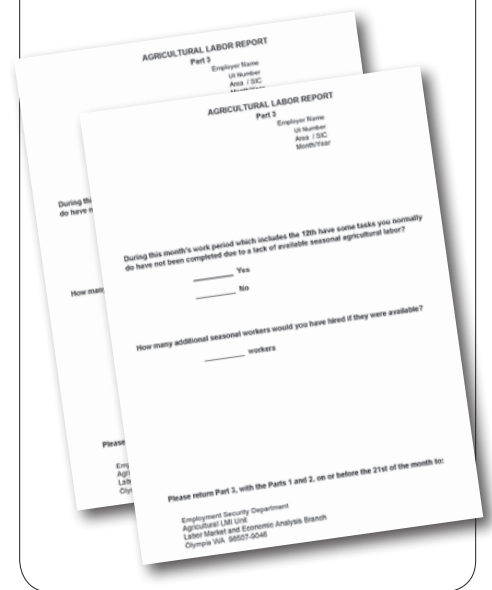

Labor Supply

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 April, 688 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 0.4 percent.



*In April, 688
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

April 2009

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: 3,040

Nursery Harvester	600	\$ 8.58/hr
Raspberry Planter	420	\$ 8.69/hr
Nursery Worker	320	\$10.14/hr
Nursery & Tree Worker	200	\$ 8.68/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,680

Apple Pruner	1,840	\$ 8.61/hr or \$ 0.07 - \$ 1.85 per tree
Hops Twiner	1,260	\$ 9.88/hr
Grapes Trainer	740	\$ 8.79/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	470	Not Reported

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,540

Apple Hand Thinner	3,170	\$10.00/hr
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer	770	\$ 8.63/hr
Apple Worker	720	\$ 8.57/hr
Cherry Trainer	420	\$ 8.56/hr

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 4,080

Apple Pruner	740	\$ 8.67/hr
Grapes Pruner	340	\$ 8.55/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	310	\$ 8.55/hr
Apple Planter	270	\$ 8.56/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,690

Asparagus Harvester	390	\$ 8.55/hr or *\$ 0.16¼ - \$ 0.26 per pound
Grapes Trainer	330	\$ 8.80/hr
Grapes Pruner	170	\$ 9.40/hr
Asparagus Sorter/Grader/Packer	150	\$ 8.55/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 330

Nursery & Tree Harvester	100	\$ 8.77/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator	50	\$12.88/hr
Apple Pruner	30	\$ 9.00/hr
Nursery Planter	20	\$ 8.58/hr

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

April 2009
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	3,040	13.0%	6,550	15.6%	9,580	14.7%
2. South Central	6,680	28.6%	14,870	35.4%	21,540	33.0%
3. North Central	6,540	28.0%	7,030	16.7%	13,570	20.8%
4. Columbia Basin	4,080	17.5%	4,830	11.5%	8,910	13.6%
5. South Eastern	2,690	11.5%	7,850	18.7%	10,540	16.1%
6. Eastern	330	1.4%	880	2.1%	1,200	1.8%
State Totals	23,340	100.0%	42,000	100.0%	65,350	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

				Change		Percent Change	
	Apr 09-Prel.	Mar 09-Rev.	Apr 08-Rev.	Mar 09-	Apr 08-	Mar 09-	Apr 08-
				Apr 09	Apr 09	Apr 09	Apr 09
State	65,350	65,660	63,870	-310	1,470	-0.5%	2.3%
Western	9,580	9,860	9,770	-280	-190	-2.8%	-1.9%
South Central	21,540	22,250	20,710	-710	830	-3.2%	4.0%
North Central	13,570	13,710	13,060	-140	510	-1.0%	3.9%
Columbia Basin	8,910	8,100	8,850	810	60	10.0%	0.7%
South Eastern	10,540	10,650	10,120	-110	420	-1.0%	4.2%
Eastern	1,200	1,090	1,360	110	-160	10.1%	-11.8%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

				Change		Percent Change	
	Apr 09-Prel.	Mar 09-Rev.	Apr 08-Rev.	Mar 09-	Apr 08-	Mar 09-	Apr 08-
				Apr 09	Apr 09	Apr 09	Apr 09
State	23,360	22,340	22,070	1,020	1,290	4.6%	5.8%
Western	3,040	3,560	3,170	-520	-130	-14.6%	-4.1%
South Central	6,680	7,910	6,500	-1,230	180	-15.5%	2.8%
North Central	6,540	4,430	4,450	2,110	2,090	47.6%	47.0%
Columbia Basin	4,080	2,940	4,090	1,140	-10	38.8%	-0.2%
South Eastern	2,690	3,310	3,450	-620	-760	-18.7%	-22.0%
Eastern	330	190	410	140	-80	73.7%	-19.5%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to
[April 2009 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

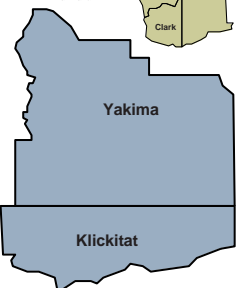
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, April 2009



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were nursery harvesting, and raspberry planting.



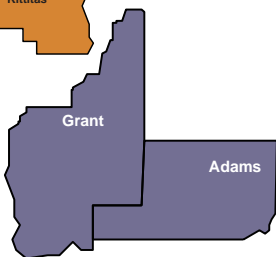
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, hops twining, grapes training, and apple hand thinning.



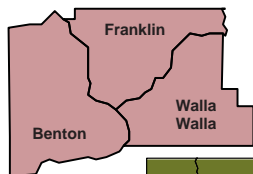
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, apple warehouse work, and cherry training.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, apple hand thinning, and apple planting.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were asparagus harvesting, grapes training, grapes pruning, and asparagus warehouse work.



Eastern (Area 6)

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