



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

February 2009

Washington State Employment Security Department

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



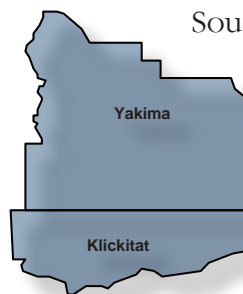
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Labor Market Information Center
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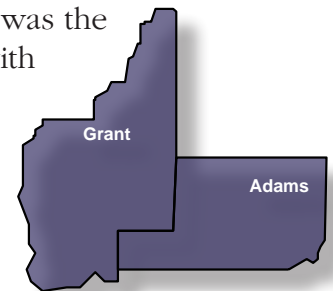
Executive Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 10.5 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. This was primarily due to an increase in apple pruning.

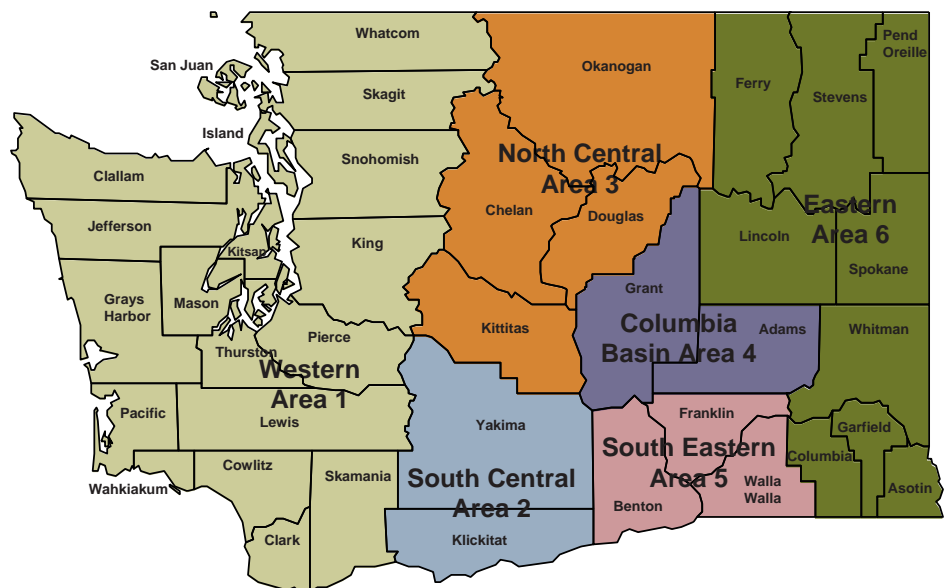


South Central (Area 2) led the three advancing areas with an increase in seasonal agricultural employment of 840.

Columbia Basin (Area 4) was the largest decreasing area with a loss of 400 in seasonal agricultural employment.




Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State




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



Statewide total agricultural employment declined by 11.2 percent from February 2008 to February 2009.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment declined by 11.2 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. Over-the-month total employment grew by 12.9 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment contracted by 2.1 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment fell by 2.3 per-

cent. North Central (Area 3) total employment decreased by 14.5 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment slumped by 18.6 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment softened by 24.8 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment stepped back by 28.4 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment advanced by 10.5 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (1,280),
- nursery work (480),
- other seasonal work (460),
- blueberry work (320),
- pear work (150),
- cherry work (60),
- asparagus work (20), and
- strawberry work (10).

Activities displaying losses were:

- other tree fruit work (-530),
- potato work (-280),
- misc. vegetables work (-210),
- raspberry work (-180),
- hops work (-50),
- bulbs work (-40),
- onion work (-40), and
- grapes work (-30).

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment increased 33.3 percent, caused by an expansion in nursery work (560). South Central seasonal employment grew by 18.2 percent, due to a growth in apple work (1,190). North Central seasonal employment increased by 28.8 percent, caused by an expansion in cherry work (320). Columbia Basin seasonal employment fell by 18.2 percent, caused by a decline in apple work (-410). South Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 11.1 percent, due to declines in cherry work (-210) and potato work (-210). Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 35.3 percent, due to a decline in other nursery work (-80).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal wages moved forward by 4.4 percent from February 2007 to February 2009. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages also advanced by 4.0 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. The real state minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages rose by 2.5 percent. South Central sea-

sonal wages advanced by 10.3 percent. North Central seasonal wages increased by 2.0 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages expanded by 2.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages increased by 2.3 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages expanded by 10.0 percent from February 2007 to February 2009. Washington state nominal minimum wages increased by 7.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide

nominal agricultural seasonal wages rose by 7.5 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. The state minimum wage grew by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages increased by 6.0 percent. South Central seasonal wages expanded by 14.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages grew by 5.5 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages advanced by 5.5 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages picked up by 5.8 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment grew by 13.5 percent from February 2007 to February 2009. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 8.8 percent from February 2008 to February 2009. Western seasonal employment advanced by 33.3 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal

employment increased by 18.2 percent. North Central seasonal employment moved ahead by 28.8 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment contracted by 16.3 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment fell by 11.1 percent. Eastern seasonal employment declined 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 February, 538 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 0.8 percent.



*In February, 538
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

February 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: 2,320

Nursery & Tree Sorter/Grader/Packer.	680	\$ 8.78/hr
Blueberry Pruner.	370	\$ 8.71/hr
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	260	\$ 9.06/hr
Raspberry Pruner	170	\$ 8.55/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,460

Apple Pruner	2,970	\$ 8.92/hr	or \$ 0.50 - \$ 4.75 per tree
Grapes Pruner.	960	\$ 8.70/hr	or \$ 0.12 - \$ 0.35 per plant
Pear Pruner.	330	\$ 8.73/hr	
Nursery & Tree Pruner	150	\$ 9.16/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,220

Apple Pruner	1,910	\$ 8.95/hr	or \$ 0.30 - \$ 2.90 per tree
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer.	540	\$ 8.69/hr	
Cherry Pruner	510	\$ 9.08/hr	or \$ 1.00 - \$ 4.00 per tree
Pear Pruner.	90	\$ 9.57/hr	

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 1,800

Apple Pruner	880	\$ 8.76/hr	or \$ 0.15 - \$ 3.75 per tree
Cherry Pruner.	290	\$ 8.75/hr	
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	180	\$ 8.59/hr	
Misc Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer	150	\$ 8.55/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,090

Apple Pruner	850	\$ 8.76/hr	or \$ 0.28 - \$ 2.75 per tree
Grapes Pruner	390	\$ 8.67/hr	
Chicken Eggs Worker	220	\$ 8.75/hr	
Grapes Trainer.	160	\$ 8.50/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 110

Nectarine Pruner	50	\$ 9.00/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator.	20	\$12.00/hr
Wheat Worker.	10	\$12.50/hr
Wheat Mechanic.	10	\$12.50/hr

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

**February 2009
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	2,320	15.5%	6,610	17.5%	8,930	16.9%
2. South Central	5,460	36.4%	13,410	35.5%	18,870	35.7%
3. North Central	3,220	21.5%	7,140	18.9%	10,360	19.6%
4. Columbia Basin	1,800	12.0%	4,180	11.1%	5,980	11.3%
5. South Eastern	2,090	13.9%	5,490	14.5%	7,580	14.4%
6. Eastern	110	0.7%	970	2.6%	1,080	2.0%
State Totals	15,000	100.0%	37,800	100.0%	52,800	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	Feb 09 Prel.	Jan 09 Rev.	Feb 08 Rev.	Change Jan 09-Feb 09	Change Feb 08-Feb 09	Percent Change Jan 09-Feb 09	Percent Change Feb 08-Feb 09
State	52,800	46,760	59,460	6,040	-6,660	12.9%	-11.2%
Western	8,930	8,510	9,120	420	-190	4.9%	-2.1%
South Central	18,870	16,920	19,300	1,950	-440	11.5%	-2.3%
North Central	10,360	8,490	12,110	1,870	-1,750	22.0%	-14.5%
Columbia Basin	5,980	5,120	7,350	860	-1,370	16.8%	-18.6%
South Eastern	7,580	6,620	10,060	960	-2,480	14.5%	-24.8%
Eastern	1,080	1,100	1,510	-20	-430	-1.8%	-28.5%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Feb 09 Prel.	Jan 09 Rev.	Feb 08 Rev.	Change Jan 09-Feb 09	Change Feb 08-Feb 09	Percent Change Jan 09-Feb 09	Percent Change Feb 08-Feb 09
State	15,000	12,030	13,580	2,980	1,420	24.8%	10.5%
Western	2,320	1,990	1,740	330	580	16.6%	33.3%
South Central	5,460	4,540	4,620	920	840	20.3%	18.2%
North Central	3,220	2,250	2,500	970	720	43.1%	28.8%
Columbia Basin	1,800	1,680	2,200	120	-400	7.1%	-18.2%
South Eastern	2,090	1,440	2,350	660	-260	45.8%	-11.1%
Eastern	110	130	170	-20	-60	-15.4%	-35.3%

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

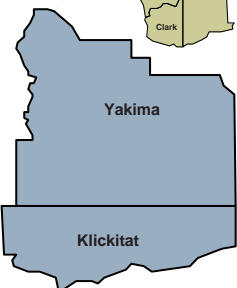
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, February 2009



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were nursery warehouse work, blueberry pruning, potato warehouse work, and raspberry pruning.



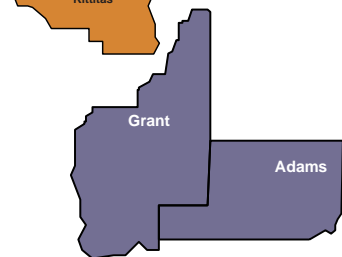
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, pear pruning, and nursery pruning.



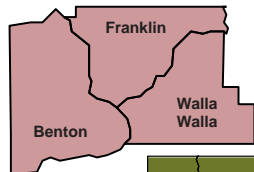
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, apple warehouse work, cherry pruning, and pear pruning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, cherry pruning, potato warehouse work, and miscellaneous onion warehouse work.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, and grapes training.



Eastern (Area 6)

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