



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

June 2009

Washington State Employment Security Department

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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Labor Market Information Center (LMIC)
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

Executive Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 11.8 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. This was largely driven by an increase in apple thinning.

Four agricultural areas saw gains in over-the-year seasonal employment.

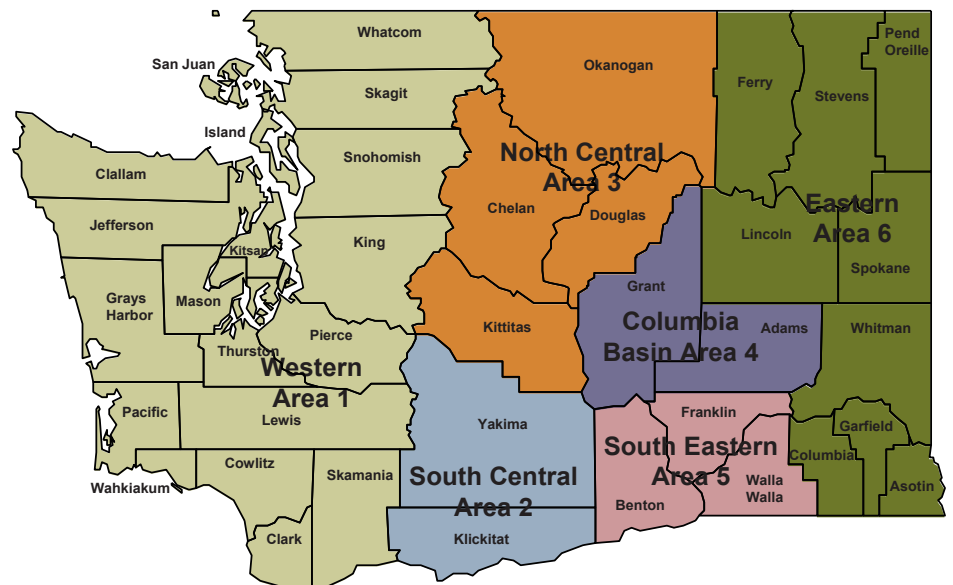



South Central (Area 2) led the advancing areas with an increase in seasonal agricultural employment of 3,020.

Western (Area 1) showed the largest decline of 330 in seasonal agricultural employment.

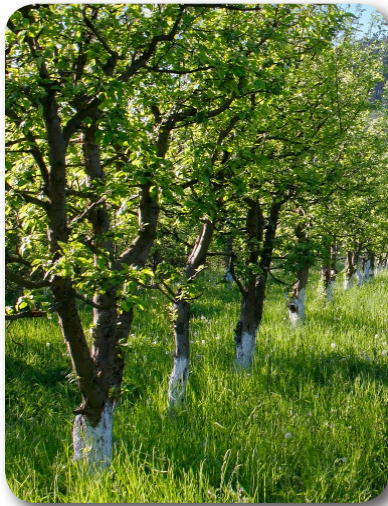



Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State





Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 3.8 percent from June 2008 to June 2009.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment grew by 3.8 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. Over-the-month total employment advanced by 37.0 percent due to the seasonal increase in apple thinning. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment increased by 0.4 percent. South Central (Area 2)

total employment expanded by 3.7 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment rose by 3.9 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment moved forward by 2.7 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment picked up by 7.6 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment fell by 13.9 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 11.8 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (4,780),
- asparagus work (1,420),
- other tree fruit work (960),
- pear work (590),
- grapes work (340),
- strawberry work (340),
- hops work (210), and
- bulbs work (10).

Activities displaying losses were:

- other seasonal work (-760),
- cherry work (-640),
- potato work (-550),
- raspberry work (-360),
- onion work (-340),
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-280),
- nursery work (-200),
- wheat/grain work (-110), and
- blueberry work (-30).

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment contracted by 8.5 percent (-360); this was caused by a decrease in raspberry work. South Central seasonal employment grew by 21.0 percent (2,400) and North Central advanced by 20.3 percent (1,720), both due to expansions in apple work. Columbia Basin seasonal employment moved ahead by 2.8 percent (790) caused by an increase in other seasonal work. South Eastern seasonal employment ramped up by 5.0 percent (1,790) due to an expansion in asparagus work. Eastern seasonal employment fell by 7.0 percent (-60) due to a decline in wheat/grain work.



Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages advanced by 3.0 percent from June 2007 to June 2009. Real minimum wages increased by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages slipped by 0.1 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. The real minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages increased by 1.4 percent from June 2008 to June

2009. South Central seasonal wages were flat with no change. North Central seasonal wages fell by 2.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages also slipped by 0.6 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages inched up by 0.4 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages grew by 8.6 percent from June 2007 to June 2009. Nominal minimum wages rose by 7.8 percent during this same time period. Nomi-

nal agricultural seasonal employee wages expanded by 3.3 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. The minimum wage grew by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages advanced by 4.9 percent. South Central seasonal wages rose by 3.4 percent. North Central seasonal wages increased by 0.4 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages moved upward by 2.8 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages moved ahead by 3.8 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 4.9 percent from June 2007 to June 2009. Seasonal agricultural employment grew by 11.8 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. Western seasonal employment fell by 8.5 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal

employment advanced by 21.0 percent. North Central seasonal employment expanded by 20.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment increased by 2.8 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment eased upward by 5.0 percent. Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 7.0 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 June, 576 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 1.1 percent.

*In June, 576
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

June 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: 3,540

Strawberry Harvester.....	1,080	\$ 8.55/hr
Nursery Worker	540	\$10.09/hr
Other General Farm Harvester	190	\$ 9.18/hr
Nursery Sorter/Grader/Packer	140	\$ 8.89/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 17,370

Apple Hand Thinner	6,980	\$ 8.66/hr or \$ 0.06 - \$ 2.50 per tree
Hops Trainer.....	830	\$ 8.64/hr
Asparagus Harvester	780	\$ 8.75/hr or \$ 0.20 - \$ 0.34 per pound
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer.....	760	\$ 8.75/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 12,080

Apple Hand Thinner	5,120	\$ 8.80/hr or \$ 0.25 - \$ 9.00 per tree
Cherry Harvester	2,000	\$12.34/hr
Apple Pruner.....	990	\$ 8.67/hr
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer.....	830	\$ 8.55/hr

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,230

Apple Hand Thinner	2,570	\$ 8.75/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 3.50 per tree
Cherry Harvester	620	\$ 8.63/hr
Grapes Hand Thinner	450	\$ 8.58/hr
Asparagus Harvester	390	Not Reported

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 11,630

Apple Hand Thinner	4,470	\$ 8.73/hr or \$ 0.50 - \$ 4.50 per tree
Asparagus Sorter/Grader/Packer	2,280	\$ 9.33/hr
Cherry Harvester	1,640	\$ 8.55/hr
Grapes Hand Thinner.....	570	\$ 8.99/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 400

Nursery & Tree Harvester.....	80	\$ 8.55/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	50	\$ 9.00/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator.....	40	\$11.68/hr
Peach Hand Thinner.....	30	\$ 8.55/hr

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

**June 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	3,540	6.9%	7,220	17.1%	10,760	11.5%
2. South Central	17,370	33.9%	12,560	29.8%	29,930	32.0%
3. North Central	12,080	23.6%	7,790	18.5%	19,870	21.3%
4. Columbia Basin	6,230	12.2%	5,480	13.0%	11,710	12.5%
5. South Eastern	11,630	22.7%	8,370	19.8%	20,000	21.4%
6. Eastern	400	0.8%	780	1.8%	1,180	1.3%
State Totals	51,250	100.0%	42,200	100.0%	93,450	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	June 09-Prel.	May 09-Rev.	June 08-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				May 09- June 09	June 08- June 09	May 09- June 09	June 08- June 09
State	93,450	68,220	90,060	25,230	3,390	37.0%	3.8%
Western	10,760	10,010	10,720	750	40	7.5%	0.4%
South Central	29,930	22,320	28,870	7,610	1,060	34.1%	3.7%
North Central	19,870	12,580	19,120	7,290	750	57.9%	3.9%
Columbia Basin	11,710	8,980	11,400	2,730	310	30.4%	2.7%
South Eastern	20,000	13,090	18,580	6,910	540	52.8%	2.9%
Eastern	1,180	1,240	1,370	-60	-190	-4.8%	-13.9%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	June 09-Prel.	May 09-Rev.	June 08-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				May 09- June 09	June 08- June 09	May 09- June 09	June 08- June 09
State	51,250	27,130	45,850	24,120	5,400	88.9%	11.8%
Western	3,540	3,280	3,870	260	-330	7.9%	-8.5%
South Central	17,370	8,560	14,350	8,810	3,020	102.9%	21.0%
North Central	12,080	4,800	10,040	7,280	2,040	151.7%	20.3%
Columbia Basin	6,230	4,670	6,060	1,560	170	33.4%	2.8%
South Eastern	11,630	5,430	11,080	6,200	550	114.2%	5.0%
Eastern	400	400	430	0	-30	0.0%	-7.0%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [June 2009 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#)

For historical, year-to-date employment, go to [2009 Year-to-Date Employment Tables](#)
at www.workforceexplorer.com

Agricultural Labor Report

Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

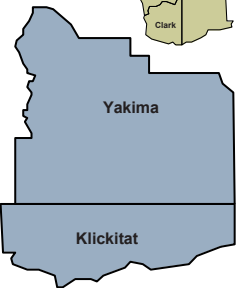
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, June 2009



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Strawberries were continuing to be harvested. The first cutting of hay was done. Raspberries were ripening rapidly in preparation for a July harvest.



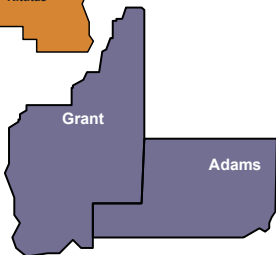
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Cherry producers continued harvesting early maturing cherry varieties with some harvest of Bing cherries. Blueberries, raspberries, and early varieties of apricots were being harvested. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, hops training, asparagus cutting, and cherry warehouse work.



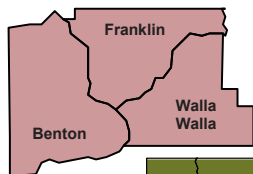
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. The first cutting of hay was completed. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, cherry picking, apple pruning, and cherry warehouse work.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Fresh pea harvest continued. First cutting of timothy hay was underway. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, cherry picking, grapes thinning, and asparagus cutting.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Winter wheat looked very good while spring wheat looked average. Green pea harvest was underway, with yield and quality about average. First cutting of hay finished up and was in good shape. Some second cutting had begun. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, asparagus warehouse work, cherry picking, and grapes thinning.



Eastern (Area 6)

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