



# Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

**March 2009**

**Washington State  
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis  
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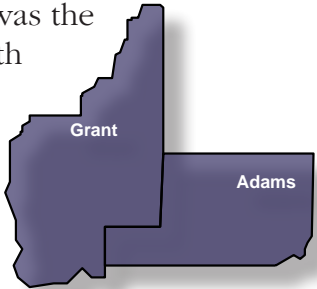
## Executive Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 15.7 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. This was primarily due to growth in miscellaneous other seasonal work.



South Central (Area 2) led the three advancing areas with an increase in seasonal agricultural employment of 2,260.

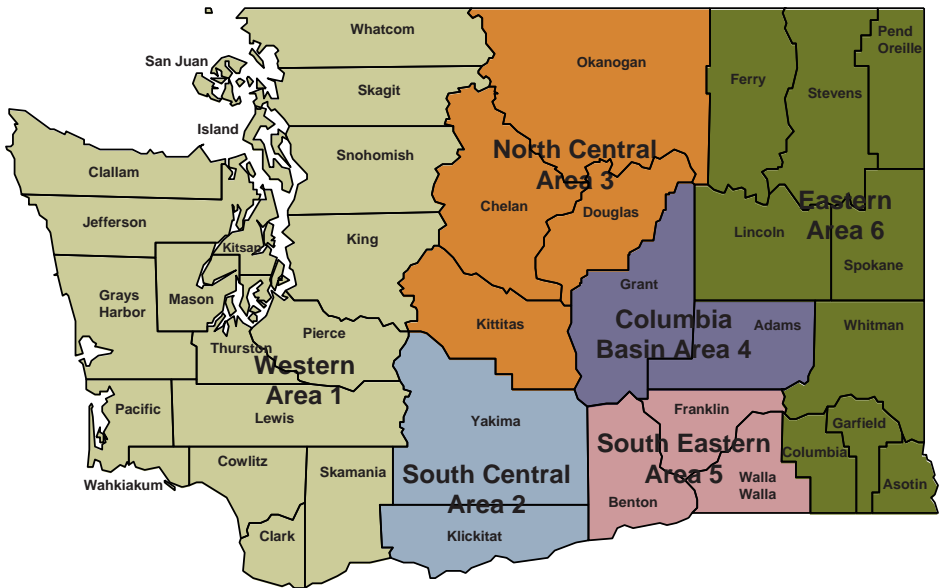
Columbia Basin (Area 4) was the largest decreasing area with a loss of 430 in seasonal agricultural employment.




Counties Within  
Agricultural Reporting Areas

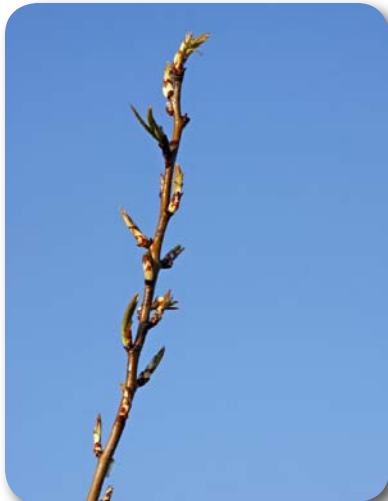

- Area 1 = Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom
- Area 2 = Klickitat and Yakima
- Area 3 = Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, and Okanogan
- Area 4 = Adams and Grant
- Area 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 total agricultural employment increased by 1.6 percent from March 2008 to March 2009.*



## **Total Agricultural Employment Summary**

Statewide total agricultural employment increased by 1.6 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. Over-the-month total employment grew by 13.3 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment expanded by 0.8 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment grew by 7.9

percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment inched ahead by 0.2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment rose by 0.4 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment declined by 7.1 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment fell by 7.6 percent.

## **Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary**

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment moved forward by 15.7 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (540),
- raspberry work (430),
- grapes work (150), and
- bulbs work (20).

Activities displaying losses were:

- cherry work (-280),
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-220),
- hops work (-110),
- other tree fruit work (-100),
- blueberry work (-90),
- asparagus work (-70),
- wheat/grain work (-60),
- onion work (-80),
- strawberry work (-20), and
- potato work (-10).

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment expanded 28.8 percent, caused by an expansion in nursery work (680). South Central seasonal employment rose by 40.0 percent, due to a growth in hops work (230). North Central seasonal employment picked up by 13.0 percent, caused by an expansion in cherry work (180). Columbia Basin seasonal employment contracted by 15.4 percent, caused by a decline in cherry work (-300). South Eastern seasonal employment pulled back by 3.9 percent, due to a decline in hops work (-340). Eastern seasonal employment scaled back by 65.5 percent, due to a decline in other nursery work (-100).

## Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages moved forward by 1.1 percent from March 2007 to March 2009. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages also advanced by 1.7 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. The real state minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages were flat from March 2008

to March 2009. South Central seasonal wages crept up by 0.5 percent. North Central seasonal wages decreased by 4.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages grew by 2.2 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages expanded by 2.6 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages grew by 6.6 percent from March 2007 to March 2009. Washington state nominal minimum wages expanded by 7.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide

nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages expanded by 5.2 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. The state minimum wage grew by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages moved ahead by 3.4 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. South Central seasonal wages advanced by 3.9 percent. North Central seasonal wages fell by 1.0 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages picked up by 5.7 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages strengthened by 6.2 percent.

## Statewide and Regional Employment Trends


Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 4.7 percent from March 2007 to March 2009. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment grew by 15.7 percent from March 2008 to March 2009. Western seasonal employment expanded by 28.8 percent during that same time period. South Central seasonal

employment moved forward by 39.8 percent. North Central seasonal employment added 13.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment fell by 15.4 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment declined by 3.9 percent. Eastern seasonal employment declined by 65.5 percent.

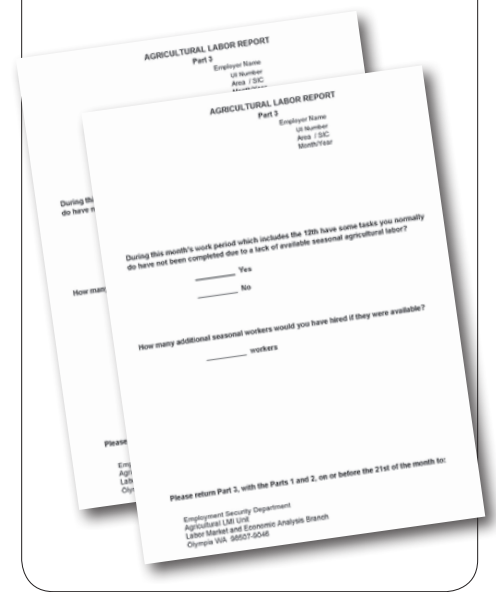

## Labor Supply

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 March, 571 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 0.5 percent.



*In March, 571  
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

#### March 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: 4,120

Nursery Harvester . . . . .	1,870	\$ 8.55/hr
Raspberry Pruner . . . . .	390	\$ 8.73/hr
Raspberry Trainer . . . . .	360	Not Reported
Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	260	\$ 8.67/hr

**South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,900

Apple Pruner . . . . .	2,480	\$ 8.55/hr or \$ 0.25 - \$ 3.75 per tree
Hops Planter . . . . .	730	\$ 8.55/hr
Grapes Pruner . . . . .	560	\$ 8.71/hr
Pear Pruner . . . . .	**	**

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,410

Apple Pruner . . . . .	1,390	\$ 8.55/hr or \$ 0.12 - \$ 30.00 per tree
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	520	\$ 8.65/hr
Cherry Pruner . . . . .	490	\$ 8.55/hr or \$ 0.40 - \$ 3.25 per tree
Apple Trainer . . . . .	380	\$ 8.55/hr

**Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)**

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,360

Apple Pruner . . . . .	1,580	\$ 8.84/hr or \$ 0.15 - \$ 4.70 per tree
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer . . . . .	210	\$ 8.62/hr
Grass Seed / Hay Seed Weeder . . . . .	160	\$ 8.93/hr
Cherry Pruner . . . . .	110	\$ 8.61/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,940

Grapes Pruner . . . . .	1,110	\$ 8.76/hr or \$ 0.12 - \$ 0.30 per plant
Apple Pruner . . . . .	710	\$ 8.67/hr or \$ 0.80 - \$ 2.75 per tree
Hops Hand Thinner . . . . .	140	Not Reported
Hops Trainer . . . . .	130	\$ 8.95/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 100

Nursery Planter . . . . .	60	\$ 8.57/hr
Nursery Harvester . . . . .	20	\$ 8.55/hr
Nursery Loader . . . . .	**	**
Nursery Irrigator . . . . .	**	**

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

**March 2008**  
**Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State**

<b>Agricultural Reporting Area</b>	<b>Seasonal Area Total</b>	<b>Seasonal Area % of Total</b>	<b>Permanent Area Total</b>	<b>Permanent Area % of Total</b>	<b>Total Area Total</b>	<b>Total Area % of Total</b>
1. Western	4,120	19.8%	6,070	13.5%	10,190	15.5%
2. South Central	7,900	37.9%	15,560	34.7%	23,460	35.7%
3. North Central	3,410	16.4%	9,910	22.1%	13,320	20.3%
4. Columbia Basin	2,360	11.3%	5,500	12.3%	7,860	12.0%
5. South Eastern	2,940	14.1%	6,650	14.8%	9,590	14.6%
6. Eastern	100	0.5%	1,120	2.5%	1,220	1.9%
State Totals	20,830	100.0%	44,800	100.0%	65,630	100.0%

**Total Agricultural Employment**

	<b>Mar 09-Prel.</b>	<b>Feb 09-Rev.</b>	<b>Mar 08-Rev.</b>	<b>Change</b>		<b>Percent Change</b>	
				<b>Feb 09- Mar 09</b>	<b>Mar 08- Mar 09</b>	<b>Feb 09- Mar 09</b>	<b>Mar 08- Mar 09</b>
State	65,640	57,960	64,620	7,680	1,020	13.3%	1.6%
Western	10,190	8,940	10,110	1,250	80	14.0%	0.8%
South Central	23,460	20,810	21,740	2,650	1,720	12.7%	7.9%
North Central	13,320	11,300	13,300	2,020	20	17.9%	0.2%
Columbia Basin	7,860	6,770	7,830	1,090	30	16.1%	0.4%
South Eastern	9,590	9,040	10,320	550	-730	6.1%	-7.1%
Eastern	1,220	1,100	1,320	120	-100	10.9%	-7.6%

**Seasonal Agricultural Employment**

	<b>Mar 09-Prel.</b>	<b>Feb 09-Rev.</b>	<b>Mar 08-Rev.</b>	<b>Change</b>		<b>Percent Change</b>	
				<b>Feb 09- Mar 09</b>	<b>Mar 08- Mar 09</b>	<b>Feb 09- Mar 09</b>	<b>Mar 08- Mar 09</b>
State	20,830	16,690	18,000	4,150	2,830	24.9%	15.7%
Western	4,120	2,790	3,200	1,330	920	47.7%	28.8%
South Central	7,900	5,970	5,650	1,930	2,260	32.3%	39.8%
North Central	3,410	3,200	3,010	210	390	6.6%	13.3%
Columbia Basin	2,360	2,040	2,790	330	-430	16.2%	-15.4%
South Eastern	2,940	2,670	3,060	270	-120	10.1%	-3.9%
Eastern	100	20	290	80	-190	400.0%	-65.5%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to  
[March 2009 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)  
at [www.workforceexplorer.com](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)

# Agricultural Labor Report

## Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

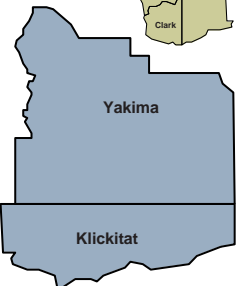
### Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

#### Washington State, March 2009



#### **Western (Area 1)**

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



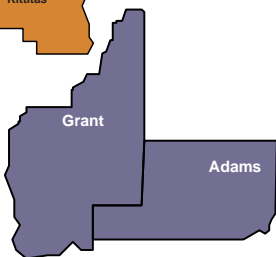
#### **South Central (Area 2)**

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



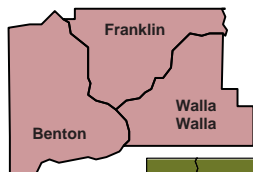
#### **North Central (Area 3)**

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



#### **Columbia Basin (Area 4)**

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, potato warehouse work, grass seed and hay seed weeding, and cherry pruning.



#### **South Eastern (Area 5)**

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



#### **Eastern (Area 6)**

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