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Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

February 2011

Executive Summary

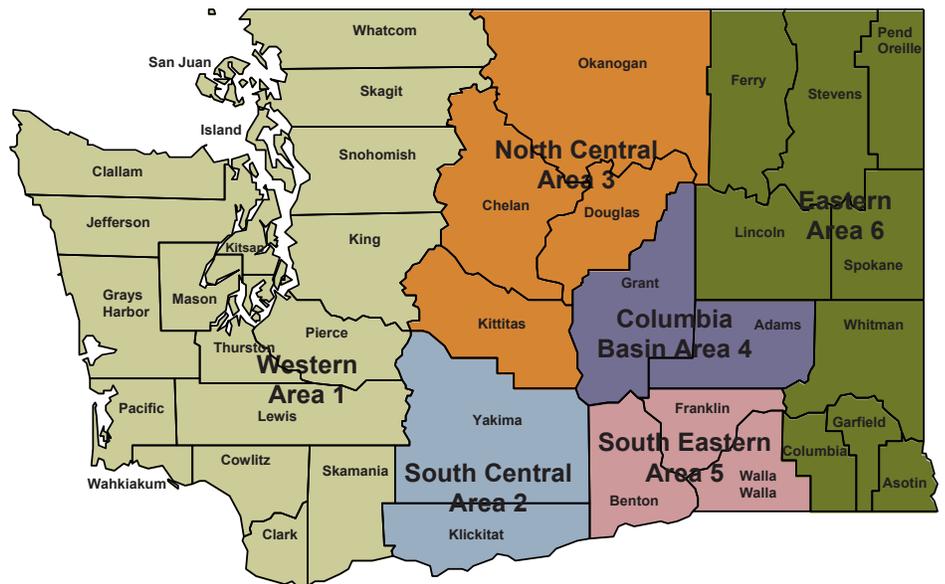
Statewide total agricultural employment decreased 1.5 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. Monthly, from January 2011 to February 2011, statewide total agricultural employment increased 9.4 percent.

- Total agricultural employment decreased over the year in three of the six agricultural areas.
 - North Central (Area 3) experienced the largest total agricultural employment decrease (-1,400).
 - South Eastern (Area 6) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (460).

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



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**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
March 2011

For additional information, call the
Labor Market Information Center:
800-215-1617

or visit our website,
www.workforceexplorer.com.



Statewide total agricultural employment decreased 1.5 percent February 2010 through February 2011.



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Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment decreased 1.5 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. From January 2011 to February 2011, total employment increased 9.4 percent.

Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment increased 4.4 percent.

South Central (Area 2) total employment decreased 1.6 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment decreased 11 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment decreased 1.7 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 4.6 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 7.3 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 22.5 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. Over-the-year employment decreases in agricultural activities were:

- apple work (-1,850),
- other seasonal work (-1,010),
- grapes work (-710),
- nursery work (-520),
- cherry work (-290),
- other tree fruit work (-290) and
- onion work (-260).

Activities with employment increases were:

- potato work (600),
- pear work (130),
- raspberry work (20) and
- wheat/grain work (10).

Across the state, Western (Area 1) seasonal employment increased 22.1 percent, due to increased potato work (270). South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 7.3 percent, due to increased

apple work (660). North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment decreased 27.3 percent, due to decreased apple work (-350) and decreased cherry work (-350). Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment decreased 28.7 percent, due to decreased apple work (-650). South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment decreased 54.1 percent, due to decreased apple work (-1,500). Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment decreased 60 percent, due to decreased nursery work (-200).

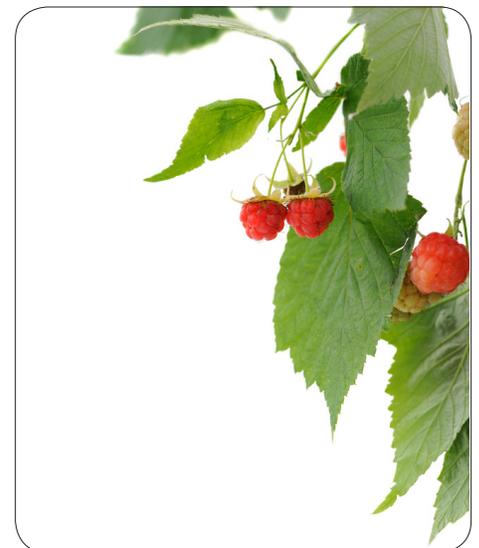


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Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 2.3 percent over the period of February 2009 through February 2011. Washington state real minimum wages increased 0.5 percent during the same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 4.3 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. The real state minimum wage increased 0.1 percent during the same time period. Western (Area 1) real seasonal wages decreased 4.9 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011.

South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages decreased 3.2 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased 3.2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 1.3 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages decreased 7.2 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 0.3 percent over the period of February 2009 through February 2011. Washington state nominal minimum wages increased 1.4 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal

employee wages decreased 3.1 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. The state minimum wage decreased 3.1 percent during this same time period. Western (Area 1) seasonal wages decreased 3.7 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages decreased 2 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased 2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 0.1 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages decreased 6 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased 8.7 percent over the period of February 2009 through February 2011. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 22.5 percent over the period of February 2010 through February 2011. Western (Area 1) seasonal employment

increased 22.1 percent during the same time period. South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 7.3 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment decreased 27.3 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment decreased 28.7 percent. South Eastern

(Area 5) seasonal employment decreased 54.1 percent. Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment decreased 60 percent.

Labor Supply

The weighted percent of labor employment reported was 0 percent. For February 2011, 1,104 usable surveys were returned. The first question on the labor supply survey asks agricultural operators if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. The second question asks operators how many more employees they could have used.

There is no agreed upon concept of a labor “shortage.” In general, in a highly competitive labor market like the agricultural labor market, if an agricultural producer experiences a shortage of labor, that producer is likely offering a wage rate that is less than the current market rate. Other factors can result in a spot shortage as well, such as an unanticipated change in weather patterns.

For a more complete discussion see “A Statement of the Employment/Shortage Debate,” *2009 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State*, Ch. 2 p. 15 and “Media Reported Reasons for Spot Shortages,” *2007 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State*, Ch. 3 pp. 30-31.

[Learn about our survey methodology.](#)

Agricultural Labor Report

Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Seasonal Labor Abstract

February 2011

Each month, the Employment Security Department conducts a mid-month survey of farm labor employment and wages. At least 15 percent of all agricultural operators 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 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 (Area 1) (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: 2,600

Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer	560	\$ 8.72/hr
Blueberry Pruner	**	**
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	400	\$ 9.17/hr
Nursery & Tree Worker	250	\$ 8.71/hr

South Central (Area 2) (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,300

Apple Pruner	3,460	\$ 8.90/hr or \$ 0.50 - \$ 3.00 per tree
Grapes Pruner	1,130	\$ 8.78/hr
Hops Worker	**	**
Cherry Pruner	420	\$ 8.82/hr or \$ 1.25 - \$ 8.00 per tree

North Central (Area 3) (Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas and Okanogan counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,510

Apple Pruner	1,590	\$ 9.07/hr or \$ 0.25 - \$ 3.50 per tree
Pear Pruner	530	\$ 9.11/hr or \$ 0.60 - \$ 3.00 per tree
Cherry Pruner	500	\$ 9.15/hr or \$ 0.35 - \$ 3.25 per tree
Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer	430	\$ 8.67/hr

Columbia Basin (Area 4) (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,560

Apple Pruner	1,280	\$ 8.89/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 2.00 per tree
Cherry Pruner	290	\$ 8.75/hr
Grapes Pruner	230	\$ 8.67/hr
Misc Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer	230	\$ 8.95/hr

South Eastern (Area 5) (Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,030

Apple Pruner	670	\$ 8.78/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 1.00 per tree
Grapes Worker	390	\$ 9.09/hr
Cherry Pruner	330	\$ 9.56/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 1.75 per tree
Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	290	\$ 8.67/hr

Eastern (Area 6) (Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 160

Wheat Worker	100	\$13.05/hr
Apple Pruner	20	\$ 8.67/hr
Nursery & Tree Worker	20	\$ 8.67/hr
Feedlot Cattle Worker	20	\$10.00/hr

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

**February 2011
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State**

Agricultural Reporting Area	Seasonal		Permanent		Total	Percent of Total
	Total	Percent of Total	Total	Percent of Total		
Western	2,600	14.3%	6,650	16.5%	9,250	15.8%
South Central	6,300	34.7%	12,890	31.9%	19,190	32.8%
North Central	3,510	19.3%	7,790	19.3%	11,300	19.3%
Columbia Basin	2,560	14.1%	4,430	11.0%	6,990	11.9%
South Eastern	3,030	16.7%	7,470	18.5%	10,500	17.9%
Eastern	160	0.9%	1,160	2.9%	1,320	2.3%
State Totals	18,140	100.0%	40,410	100.0%	58,550	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

Agricultural Reporting Area	Feb 11-Prel.	Jan 11-Rev.	Feb 10-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Jan 11-Feb 11	Feb 10-Feb 11	Jan 11-Feb 11	Feb 10-Feb 11
State	58,550	53,510	59,460	5,040	-910	9.4%	-1.5%
Western	9,250	8,220	8,860	1,030	390	12.5%	4.4%
South Central	19,190	17,490	19,510	1,700	-320	9.7%	-1.6%
North Central	11,300	10,000	12,710	1,310	-1,400	13.1%	-11.0%
Columbia Basin	6,990	6,740	7,120	250	-120	3.7%	-1.7%
South Eastern	10,500	9,820	10,030	680	460	6.9%	4.6%
Eastern	1,320	1,250	1,230	70	90	5.6%	7.3%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

Agricultural Reporting Area	Feb 11-Prel.	Jan 11-Rev.	Feb 10-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Jan 11-Feb 11	Feb 10-Feb 11	Jan 11-Feb 11	Feb 10-Feb 11
State	18,140	15,950	23,420	2,190	-5,280	13.7%	-22.5%
Western	2,600	1,540	2,130	1,060	470	68.8%	22.1%
South Central	6,300	5,500	5,870	790	430	14.4%	7.3%
North Central	3,510	2,930	4,830	590	-1,320	20.1%	-27.3%
Columbia Basin	2,560	2,570	3,590	-20	-1,030	-0.8%	-28.7%
South Eastern	3,030	3,300	6,600	-270	-3,570	-8.2%	-54.1%
Eastern	160	110	400	50	-240	45.5%	-60.0%

Due to increased sample size, over-the-month and over-the-year changes may not be comparable.

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to the [February 2011 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#).

[2011 Year-to-Date Employment Tables](#)
are available 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 2011



Western (Area 1)

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



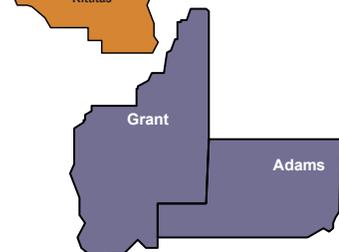
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Washington wineries produced a record high 160,000 tons of wine grapes in 2010, but industry leaders say there's no major oversupply. Large wineries bought up unclaimed fruit and state wine sales increased almost 6 percent in 2010. Washington is second only to California in U.S. wine production, and has more than doubled its wine grape production in 12 years. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes pruning, hops work and cherry pruning.



North Central (Area 3)

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



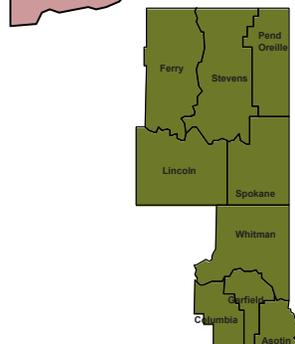
Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Declining acreage is causing tight hay supplies. Growers are switching more acreage into corn and wheat where prices are better. Hay prices topped out at \$165 per ton last season and could hit \$200 per ton this year. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, cherry pruning, grapes pruning and miscellaneous onion warehouse work.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is offering \$15 million to U.S. asparagus producers to compensate them for losses related to imports during the 2004-2007 growing seasons. A recent Washington State University study estimated the effect of the Andean Trade Preference Act in 1991 to the Washington industry was a loss of \$259 million. At the time the act passed, Washington asparagus production was more than 100 million pounds. In 2010 there were 17 million pounds grown in the state. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, grapes work, cherry pruning and potato 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 February.