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Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

May 2011

Executive Summary

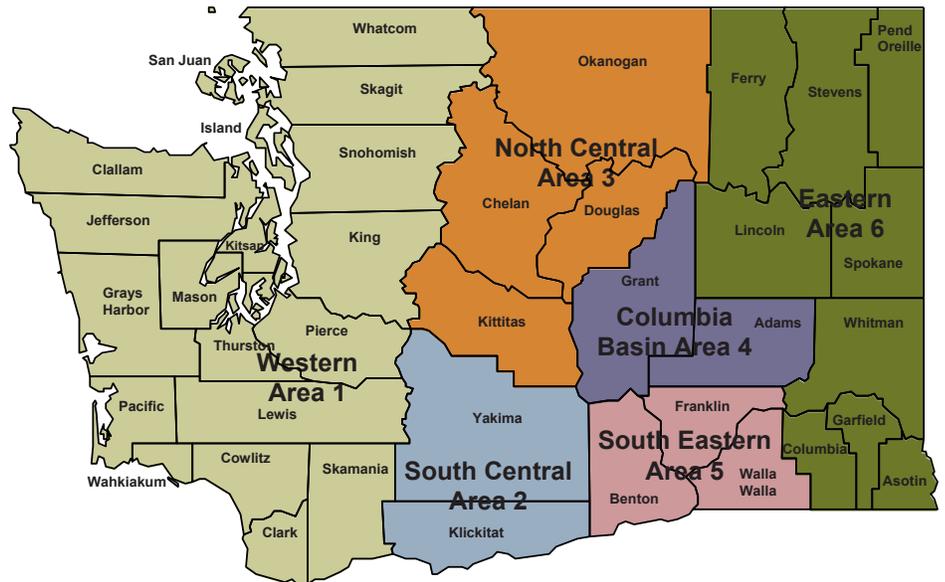
Statewide total agricultural employment increased 5.4 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. Monthly, from April 2011 to May 2011, statewide total agricultural employment increased 1 percent.

- Total agricultural employment increased over the year in all six of Washington's agricultural areas.
- South Eastern (Area 5) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (1,510).
- Eastern (Area 6) experienced the smallest total agricultural employment increase (120).

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
June 2011

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

or visit our website,
www.workforceexplorer.com.



Statewide total agricultural employment increased 5.4 percent May 2010 through May 2011.



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Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment increased 5.4 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. From April 2011 to May 2011, total employment increased 1 percent.

Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment increased 7.7 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment

increased 1.6 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 2.3 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 5.8 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 12.9 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 8.6 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 3.3 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. Over-the-year employment decreases in agricultural activities were:

- other seasonal work (-1,740),
- cherry work (-970),
- hops work (-740),
- asparagus work (-590),
- grapes work (-550),
- other tree fruit work (-280),
- nursery work (-140),
- raspberry work (-80) and
- pears work (-70).

Activities with increases were:

- apple work (3,080),
- potato work (630),
- onion work (110),
- miscellaneous vegetables work (80) and
- wheat/grain work (40).

Across the state, Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased 4.8 percent due to decreased other seasonal work (-380). South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment decreased 8.5 percent

due to decreased other seasonal work (-850). North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 22.5 percent due to increased apple work (760). Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased 19.4 percent due to increased apple work (1,200). South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment decreased 29.7 percent due to decreased grapes work (-710). Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment decreased 45.3 percent due to decreased nursery work (-170).



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Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide, inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 4.3 percent over the period of May 2009 through May 2011. Washington state-inflation adjusted minimum wages increased 0.5 percent during the same time period. Statewide inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 2.7 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 0.1 percent during the same time period. Western (Area 1) inflation adjusted seasonal wages decreased 1.8 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. South

Central (Area 2) seasonal wages decreased 3.3 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased 4.1 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 1.5 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages decreased 3.3 percent.

Statewide, current dollar agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 2.4 percent over the period of May 2009 through May 2011. Washington state current dollar minimum wages increased 1.4 percent during this same time period. Statewide current dollar agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 1.5 percent over the period of

May 2010 through May 2011. The state minimum wage decreased 3.1 percent during this same time period. Western (Area 1) seasonal wages decreased 0.5 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages decreased 2.1 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased 2.9 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 0.2 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages decreased 2.1 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 4.4 percent over the period of May 2009 through May 2011. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 3.3 percent over the period of May 2010 through May 2011. Western (Area 1) seasonal

employment decreased 4.8 percent during the same time period. South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment decreased 8.5 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 22.5 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased

19.4 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment decreased 29.7 percent. Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment decreased 45.3 percent.

Labor Supply

The weighted percent of labor employment reported was 0 percent. For May 2011, 1,106 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

May 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: 3,170

Nursery Worker	620	\$ 9.85/hr
Nursery & Tree Worker	430	\$ 8.68/hr
Nursery Harvester	270	\$ 8.70/hr
Miscellaneous Vegetables Planter	240	\$ 9.02/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,110

Apple Pruner	1,280	\$ 8.67/hr
Apple Worker	860	\$ 9.93/hr
Asparagus Harvester	610	\$ 8.67/hr or \$ 0.23 - \$ 0.26 per pound
Apple Chemical Applicator	450	\$ 8.73/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,390

Apple Hand Thinner	1,610	\$ 8.88/hr
Apple Worker	800	\$ 8.72/hr
Apple Pruner	690	\$ 9.00/hr
Cherry Worker	510	\$ 8.71/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,790

Apple Hand Thinner	1,340	\$ 8.67/hr
Apple Worker	1,330	\$ 8.72/hr
Asparagus Harvester	650	\$ 0.23 - \$ 0.25 per pound
Grapes Worker	350	\$ 8.67/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 4,150

Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer	610	\$ 8.67/hr
Apple Pruner	390	\$ 8.67/hr
Apple Trainer	350	\$ 8.67/hr
Asparagus Harvester	320	\$ 8.81/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 290

Nursery Planter	90	\$ 8.67/hr
Wheat Worker	30	\$11.71/hr
Wheat Planter	30	\$14.80/hr
Nursery & Tree Irrigator	30	\$13.00/hr

May 2011
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State

Agricultural Reporting Area	Seasonal Total	Seasonal Percent of Total	Permanent Total	Permanent Percent of Total	Total	Percent of Total
Western	3,170	12.2%	7,460	17.2%	10,630	15.4%
South Central	7,110	27.5%	13,460	31.1%	20,570	29.7%
North Central	5,390	20.8%	7,530	17.4%	12,920	18.7%
Columbia Basin	5,790	22.4%	4,460	10.3%	10,250	14.8%
South Eastern	4,150	16.0%	9,110	21.1%	13,260	19.2%
Eastern	290	1.1%	1,230	2.8%	1,520	2.2%
State Totals	25,900	100.0%	43,250	100.0%	69,150	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

Agricultural Reporting Area	May 11-Prel.	Apr 11-Rev.	May 10-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Apr 11-May 11	May 10-May 11	Apr 11-May 11	May 10-May 11
State	69,150	68,450	65,580	700	3,570	1.0%	5.4%
Western	10,630	10,660	9,870	-30	760	-0.3%	7.7%
South Central	20,570	20,670	20,240	-100	330	-0.5%	1.6%
North Central	12,920	12,760	12,630	160	290	1.3%	2.3%
Columbia Basin	10,250	9,920	9,690	330	560	3.3%	5.8%
South Eastern	13,260	12,870	11,750	390	1,510	3.0%	12.9%
Eastern	1,520	1,570	1,400	-50	120	-3.2%	8.6%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

Agricultural Reporting Area	May 11-Prel.	Apr 11-Rev.	May 10-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Apr 11-May 11	May 10-May 11	Apr 11-May 11	May 10-May 11
State	25,890	24,600	26,780	1,290	-890	5.2%	-3.3%
Western	3,170	3,110	3,330	50	-170	1.6%	-4.8%
South Central	7,110	6,360	7,770	750	-660	11.8%	-8.5%
North Central	5,390	5,130	4,400	260	990	5.1%	22.5%
Columbia Basin	5,790	5,440	4,850	340	940	6.3%	19.4%
South Eastern	4,150	4,190	5,900	-30	-1,750	-0.7%	-29.7%
Eastern	290	380	530	-80	-240	-21.1%	-45.3%

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 [May 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, May 2011



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Strawberry and fruit bloom continued. Blueberry growers were concerned about the lack of bees for pollination. The colder, wetter weather has delayed the strawberry harvest. Harvest in some areas may start between June 15 and June 20.



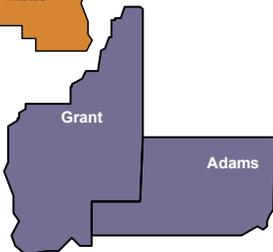
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Asparagus, green onions and rhubarb were harvested. This year's cherry harvest is expected to be later and larger than the 2010 crop. Growers from the five Northwest states (Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah and Washington) that produce fresh cherries estimate the fresh crop at 16.4 million boxes, a more than 16 percent increase over 2010's 14.2 million boxes. However, the crop is expected to be at least 10 days later than normal. Washington's crop is expected to be 13 million boxes.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Cherry fruit set was highly variable, but less than average overall. Pears looked good; the region produces more than 80 percent of the Washington winter pear crop. Apple bloom was also variable from orchard to orchard, but the tendency was average or better.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Winter wheat remained in mostly good to excellent condition. Producers continued to plant dry corn, sweet corn and dry edible beans.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were wetter and colder than normal during the reporting period. Onions and potatoes were emerging slowly. Wheat was progressing nicely. The first cutting of hay was beginning. The colder weather has delayed the beginning of asparagus harvest. Washington state's asparagus production has dropped 82 percent – from 102 million pounds in 1990 to 18 million pounds in 2010. This decline can be attributed to the Andean Trade Preferences Act of 1990, which displaced U.S. production for Peruvian production in order to reduce coca leaf production for cocaine. Asparagus is a seasonal crop in the U.S., but Peru is able to produce and export it to the U.S. year round for lower cost than it can be grown in the U.S.



Eastern (Area 6)

Seasonal employment did not meet the minimum threshold criterion of seasonal employees and therefore is not published for the month of May.