Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

June 2012

Executive summary

Statewide total agricultural employment increased 10.5 percent between June 2011 and June 2012. Monthly, over the period of May 2012 through June 2012, statewide total agricultural employment increased 30.8 percent.

Total agricultural employment increased over the year in all six of the state's agricultural reporting areas.

- South Central (Area 2) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (4,460 jobs).
- Eastern (Area 6) experienced the smallest gain in total agricultural employment (110 jobs)

Data in this report are from a monthly survey of Washington agricultural operators.

Agricultural reporting areas and their respective counties

- Area 1 – Western
  Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum and Whatcom
- Area 2 – South Central
  Klickitat and Yakima
- Area 3 – North Central
  Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas and Okanogan
- Area 4 – Columbia Basin
  Adams and Grant
- Area 5 – South Eastern
  Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla
- Area 6 – Eastern
  Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman

Agricultural reporting areas in Washington State

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

or visit our website, www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata

Washington State Employment Security Department
Labor Market and Economic Analysis
July 2012

Statewide total agricultural employment increased 10.5 percent between June 2011 and June 2012.

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Total agricultural employment

Statewide total agricultural employment increased 10.5 percent over the period of June 2011 through June 2012. Total employment increased 30.8 percent over the period of May 2012 through June 2012.

Regional employment change over the year:

- Western (Area 1) total employment increased 3.8 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) total employment increased 16.6 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 11.6 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 8.3 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 5.6 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 7.5 percent.

Seasonal agricultural employment

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 25.6 percent over the period of June 2011 through June 2012.

Agricultural activities with seasonal employment increases over the year:

- Apple work (5,920)
- Other seasonal work (2,010)
- Cherry work (1,270)
- Miscellaneous vegetables work (730)
- Onion work (650)
- Hops work (590)
- Asparagus work (580)
- Other tree fruit work (300)
- Pear work (280)
- Strawberry work (180)
- Nursery work (120)

Agricultural activities with seasonal employment decreases over the year:

- Grape work (-780)
- Potato work (-430)
- Blueberry work (-170)
- Raspberry work (-140)
- Wheat/grain work (-10)

Regional seasonal employment change over the year:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment increased 2.2 percent due to increased miscellaneous vegetables work (290).
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 63.6 percent due to increased apple work (4,980).
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 15.1 percent due to increased other seasonal work (1,850).
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased 13.8 percent due to increased cherry work (720).
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased 6.2 percent due to increased cherry work (1,250).
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased 41.9 percent due to other seasonal work (130).

Statewide and regional wage trends

Inflation-adjusted wages

Statewide, inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wages decreased 1.6 percent over the two-year period of June 2010 through June 2012. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 4.4 percent during the same two-year period.

Statewide inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wages increased 2 percent over the one-year period of June 2011 through June 2012. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 5.7 percent during the same period.

Regional wage changes over the year in inflation-adjusted dollars:

- Western (Area 1) inflation-adjusted seasonal wages increased 0.7 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages increased 2.4 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages increased 0.9 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 3.6 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages increased 6.1 percent.

Current-dollar wages

Statewide, agricultural seasonal employee wages in current dollars increased 3.1 percent over the two-year period of June 2010 through June 2012. Washington state current-dollar minimum wages increased 5.7 percent during this same two-year period.

Statewide current-dollar agricultural seasonal employee wages increased 3.2 percent over the one-year period of June 2011 through June 2012.

Regional wage changes over the year in current dollars:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal wages increased 1.9 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages increased 3.6 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages increased 2.1 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages decreased 2.5 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages increased 7.3 percent.

Statewide and regional employment trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 3.8 percent over the two-year period of June 2010 through June 2012.

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased 25.6 percent over the one-year period of June 2011 through June 2012.

Regional seasonal employment change over the year by agricultural area:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment increased 2.2 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 63.6 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 15.1 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased 13.8 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased 6.2 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased 41.9 percent.

Labor supply

The weighted percent of labor shortage reported by agricultural operators in June was 7.2 percent. This percentage is based on survey responses to questions asking operators whether they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor and how many more employees they could have used.

Methodology

Data in this report are from the monthly *Seasonal Farm Labor Survey*. Employment Security conducts this survey of 2,000 agricultural operators in the state. For June 2012, 1,114 usable surveys were returned. The survey asks agricultural operators to report the number of total and seasonal workers by crop, activity and wage during the pay period including the 12th of the month. Seasonal workers for the purpose of the survey are those working less than 150 days per year. Piece rates are given in addition to hourly wages when available and disclosable.

The number of workers employed by each operator in the sample is being collected. This means that workers may be counted more than once if they are working for multiple operators in the survey sample during the pay period including the 12th of the month.

Some variation in reporting of 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 the reporting period. This reporting condition can lead to some variation of estimated employment by crop when comparing activity in similar time periods.

Data are reported by agricultural reporting area. The state is divided into six reporting areas based on agricultural economic similarity.

Washington agriculture links

Washington crop harvest and weather information:
www.nass.usda.gov/wa
What's new in agricultural employment:
www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome

Washington Agricultural Labor Report
Seasonal labor abstract
June 2012

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: 3,720

Nursery Worker	440	$10.09/hr
Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer	270	$ 9.04/hr
Blueberry Worker	230	$ 9.10/hr
Raspberry Worker	220	$ 9.04/hr

South Central (Area 2) (Klickitat and Yakima counties)
Estimated seasonal workforce: 20,010

Apple Hand Thinner	8,680	$ 9.18/hr or $ 0.28 - $ 1.50 per tree
Cherry Harvester	2,550	$10.14/hr
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer	750	$ 9.85/hr
Asparagus Harvester	720	$10.25/hr or $ 0.23 - $ 0.33 per pound

North Central (Area 3) (Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas and Okanogan counties)
Estimated seasonal workforce: 10,980

Apple Hand Thinner	4,740	$ 9.43/hr or $ 0.65 - $ 3.00 per tree
Contract Postharvest Sorter/Grader/Packer	1,420	$ 9.04/hr
Apple Trainer	950	$ 9.05/hr
Pear Hand Thinner	900	$ 9.49/hr

Columbia Basin (Area 4) (Adams and Grant counties)
Estimated seasonal workforce: 8,570

Apple Hand Thinner	4,310	$ 9.57/hr or $ 1.00 - $ 2.00 per tree
Cherry Harvester	1,450	$ 9.04/hr
Misc Onion Weeder	760	$ 9.04/hr
Asparagus Harvester	340	$ 9.04/hr

South Eastern (Area 5) (Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla counties)
Estimated seasonal workforce: 10,680

Cherry Harvester	3,320	$ 9.25/hr or $3.00 - $ 3.75 per bucket
Apple Hand Thinner	2,030	$ 9.15/hr
Asparagus Harvester	630	$ 9.04/hr
Misc Onion Weeder	530	$ 9.08/hr

Eastern (Area 6) (Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman counties)
Estimated seasonal workforce: 450

Misc Fruit Trees Worker	**	**
Wheat Harvester	60	Not Reported
Wheat Worker	50	$12.22/hr
Peach Pruner	40	$ 9.55/hr

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

June 2012 Agricultural farm labor report, Washington state						
Agricultural reporting area	Seasonal total	Percent of seasonal total	Permanent total	Percent of permanent total	Total employment	Percent of total employment
Western	3,720	6.8%	7,060	17.9%	10,780	11.5%
South Central	20,010	36.8%	11,320	28.7%	31,330	33.4%
North Central	10,980	20.2%	8,400	21.3%	19,380	20.6%
Columbia Basin	8,570	15.8%	3,980	10.1%	12,550	13.4%
South Eastern	10,680	19.6%	7,560	19.2%	18,240	19.4%
Eastern	450	0.8%	1120	2.8%	1,570	1.7%
Statewide	54,410	100.0%	39,440	100.0%	93,850	100.0%

Total agricultural employment							
				Change		Percent change	
Agricultural reporting area	June 2012 preliminary	May 2012 revised	June 2011 revised	May 2012 - June 2012	June 2011 - June 2012	May 2012 - June 2012	June 2011 - June 2012
Statewide	93,850	71,730	84,950	22,120	8,900	30.8%	10.5%
Western	10,780	10,530	10,390	250	390	2.4%	3.8%
South Central	31,330	23,300	26,860	8,030	4,470	34.5%	16.6%
North Central	19,380	13,820	17,370	5,560	2,010	40.2%	11.6%
Columbia Basin	12,550	9,790	11,590	2,760	960	28.2%	8.3%
South Eastern	18,240	12,760	17,280	5,480	960	42.9%	5.6%
Eastern	1,570	1,530	1,460	40	110	2.6%	7.5%

Seasonal agricultural employment							
				Change		Percent change	
Agricultural reporting area	June 2012 preliminary	May 2012 revised	June 2011 revised	May 2012 - June 2012	June 2011 - June 2012	May 2012 - June 2012	June 2011 - June 2012
Statewide	54,410	31,030	43,320	23,370	11,090	43.0%	25.6%
Western	3,720	3,410	3,640	310	80	8.3%	2.2%
South Central	20,010	10,080	12,230	9,920	7,780	49.6%	63.6%
North Central	10,980	5,380	9,540	5,600	1,440	51.0%	15.1%
Columbia Basin	8,570	5,810	7,530	2,760	1,040	32.2%	13.8%
South Eastern	10,680	6,020	10,070	4,660	620	43.6%	6.2%
Eastern	450	330	310	120	130	26.7%	41.9%

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

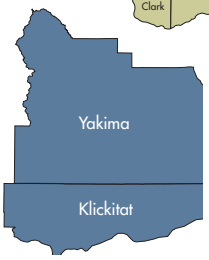
For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to the June 2012 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables.

2012 Year-to-Date Employment Tables
are available at www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata

Factors affecting the farm labor supply and demand situation
Crop, market and weather conditions by area
Washington state, June 2012

Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Strawberries were doing well. Primary agricultural activities were nursery work, raspberry warehouse work and blueberry work.

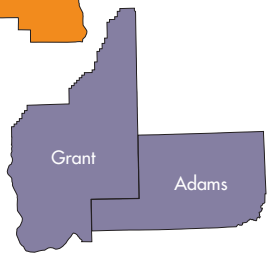


South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Apricot harvest was just beginning. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, cherry harvest, cherry warehouse work and asparagus harvest.

North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Sweet cherry harvest was getting under way. However, the cooler weather has slowed harvest and caused the cherries to be smaller and lower in sugar count. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, postharvest warehouse work, apple training and pear hand thinning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, cherry harvest, miscellaneous onion weeding and asparagus harvest.

South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The second cutting of hay was nominal. Primary agricultural activities were cherry harvest, apple hand thinning, asparagus harvest and miscellaneous onion weeding.

Eastern (Area 6)

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

The Employment Security Department is an equal-opportunity employer and provider of programs and services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to people with disabilities.

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