



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

February 2013

Executive summary

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 7.8 percent comparing February 2012 with February 2013. Monthly, over the period of January 2013 through February 2013, estimates show statewide total agricultural employment increased 6.8 percent. For February 2013, 433 usable surveys were returned.

Total agricultural employment increased year-over-year in four of the six agricultural areas.

- South Central (Area 2) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (1,830 jobs).
- Western (Area 1) experienced the largest decrease in total agricultural employment (-290 jobs).

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

March 2013



Statewide total agricultural employment increased 7.8 percent from February 2012 through February 2013.



Total agricultural employment

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 7.8 percent over the period of February 2012 through February 2013. Estimates show total agricultural employment increased 6.8 percent over the period of January 2013 through February 2013.

Regional employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) total employment decreased 3.3 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) total employment increased 9 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 4.5 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 12.7 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 15.7 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) total employment decreased 0.8 percent.

Seasonal agricultural employment

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 6.5 percent over the period of February 2012 through February 2013.

Agricultural activities with seasonal employment increases year-over-year:

- Hop work (1,680)
- Grape work (1,430)
- Potato work (600)
- Nursery work (300)
- Miscellaneous vegetables work (210)
- Pear work (140)
- Other tree fruit work (50)
- Bulb work (30)

Agricultural activities with seasonal employment decreases year-over-year:

- Apple work (-1,450)
- Cherry work (-620)
- Raspberry work (-420)
- Onion work (-270)
- Blueberry work (-120)
- Wheat/grain work (-20)

Regional seasonal employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment increased 2.7 percent primarily due to increased nursery work (480).
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 2.6 percent primarily due to increased grape work (1,160).
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment decreased 33.6 percent primarily due to decreased apple work (-350).
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment decreased 0.8 percent due to decreased wheat/grain work (-790).
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment decreased 5.8 percent due to decreased apple work (-650).
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased 6.7 percent due to increased nursery work (60).

Statewide and regional wage trends

Inflation-adjusted wages

Statewide, inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased, on average, 5.2 percent over the two-year period of February 2011 through February 2013. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 3.5 percent during the same two-year period.

Statewide inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased, on average, 1.0 percent over the one-year period of February 2012 through February 2013. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 4.3 percent during the same period.

Regional average wage rate changes year-over-year in inflation-adjusted dollars:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.8 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.2 percent.

- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 3.1 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates increased 1.2 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates increased 2.7 percent.

Current-dollar wages

Statewide, agricultural seasonal employee wage rates in current dollars increased 7.7 percent over the two-year period of February 2011 through February 2013. The Washington state current-dollar minimum wage increased 6.0 percent during this same two-year period.

Statewide current-dollar agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased 2.7 percent over the one-year period of February 2012 through February 2013. The Washington state current-dollar minimum wage increased 1.7 percent during this same one-year period.

Regional wage rate changes year-over-year in current dollars:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal wage rates increased 0.7 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates increased 0.3 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 4.8 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates increased 2.8 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates increased 4.4 percent.

Statewide and regional employment trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 11.5 percent over the two-year period of February 2011 through February 2013.

Labor supply

The estimates on labor shortage were not available at the time of publication due to insufficient sample. This number is based on agricultural operators' responses

to the questions: 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*. This is a survey of 2,000 agricultural operators in the state. Each year's sample is composed of two parts each year. The first part is a non-random selection including all agricultural operators having an annual average employment of 50 or more employees. The second part is a random selection of agricultural operators having an annual average employment of fewer than 50 employees.

Agricultural operators 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 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. 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 previous year. 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 previous year. Crops having the greatest increase and greatest decrease in employment are highlighted in the narrative. The Seasonal Labor Abstract 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 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.

This report is intended for economists, growers' associations, educators, state agencies, labor unions, outreach workers and the public.

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

February 2013

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: 1,930

Raspberry pruner	290	\$9.73/hr
Blueberry trainer	280	\$9.19/hr
Nursery & tree pruner	190	\$9.39/hr
Nursery & tree worker	170	\$9.69/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,300

Apple pruner	2,920	\$9.98/hr or \$0.16 - \$0.80 per tree
Hops worker	1,200	\$9.27/hr
Grapes pruner	1,090	\$9.39/hr
Hops preparation	420	\$9.20/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,430

Apple pruner	1,950	\$9.53/hr
Cherry pruner	280	\$10.06/hr
Pear pruner	130	\$10.17/hr
Wheat Worker	50	\$12.00/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,600

Apple pruner	2,290	\$9.93/hr
Cherry pruner	330	\$9.19/hr
Potato sorter/grader/packer	310	\$9.19/hr
Grapes pruner	280	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,900

Apple pruner	1,520	\$9.35/hr
Walla Walla Sweet onion sorter/grader/packer	360	*
Potato worker	330	\$10.24/hr
Cherry Pruner	330	\$10.40/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 160

Nursery worker	90	\$9.19/hr
Apple pruner	50	\$10.00/hr
Wheat worker	20	\$11.00/hr

*Wages not reported.

February 2013

Agricultural farm labor employment*

Agricultural reporting area	Seasonal total employment	Percent of seasonal total employment	Permanent total employment	Percent of permanent total employment	Total employment	Percent of total employment
Western	1,930	10.5%	6,580	13.5%	8,510	12.7%
South Central	6,300	34.4%	15,890	32.7%	22,190	33.1%
North Central	2,430	13.3%	10,920	22.4%	13,350	19.9%
Columbia Basin	3,600	19.7%	5,350	11.0%	8,950	13.4%
South Eastern	3,900	21.3%	8,760	18.0%	12,660	18.9%
Eastern	160	0.9%	1,150	2.4%	1,310	2.0%
Statewide	18,320	100.0%	48,650	100.0%	66,970	100.0%

Total agricultural employment*

Agricultural reporting area	February 2013 Preliminary	January 2013 Revised	February 2012 Revised	Change		Percent change	
				January 2013 through February 2013	February 2012 through February 2013	January 2013 through February 2013	February 2012 through February 2013
Statewide	66,970	62,680	62,130	4,290	4,840	6.8%	7.8%
Western	8,510	8,050	8,800	460	-290	5.7%	-3.3%
South Central	22,190	20,530	20,360	1,660	1,830	8.1%	9.0%
North Central	13,350	13,030	12,770	320	580	2.5%	4.5%
Columbia Basin	8,950	8,060	7,940	890	1,010	11.0%	12.7%
South Eastern	12,660	11,750	10,940	910	1,720	7.7%	15.7%
Eastern	1,310	1,260	1,320	50	-10	4.0%	-0.8%

Seasonal agricultural employment*

"Agricultural reporting area"	February 2013 Preliminary	January 2013 Revised	February 2012 Revised	Change		Percent change	
				January 2013 through February 2013	February 2012 through February 2013	January 2013 through February 2013	February 2012 through February 2013
Statewide	18,320	16,510	19,600	1,810	-1,280	11.0%	-6.5%
Western	1,930	1,630	1,880	300	50	18.4%	2.7%
South Central	6,300	6,390	6,140	-90	160	-1.4%	2.6%
North Central	2,430	2,580	3,660	-150	-1,230	-5.8%	-33.6%
Columbia Basin	3,600	2,370	3,630	1,230	-30	51.9%	-0.8%
South Eastern	3,900	3,400	4,140	500	-240	14.7%	-5.8%
Eastern	160	140	150	20	10	14.3%	6.7%

* All total and seasonal employment numbers published in the report are not adjusted for multiple jobholders. The number of jobs is being counted, not the number of workers.

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to the [February 2013 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#).

[2013 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, February 2013



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. U.S. crop values climbed in 2012. Crop values across the U.S. in 2012 were up a total of almost \$14 billion over 2011. Washington state crops values climbed 7 percent over the year.



South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Sales of Washington's largest apple crop continue at a record pace and high prices. The crop is now estimated a 129.5 million boxes. Prices have been at record highs all season and, as of February 2, stood at \$26.41 per box, as the average of all varieties season-to-date compared with \$22.97 a year ago and \$20.02 two years ago.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The first-ever shipment of Northwest pears are headed to China. This ends a 20-year effort to gain market access to the world's most populous nation.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. U.S. hay production in 2012 was 18 percent below average. Two years of drought have taken their toll on U.S. hay supplies. Prices have been driven up by the shortage. The national average price in January was up \$19 per ton over January 2012.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Washington wine grapes rebounded faster than expected from the pre-Thanksgiving Day freeze of 2010. The state's vineyards produced 188,000 tons in 2012, up 32 percent from the prior year.



Eastern (Area 6)

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

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