



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

April 2013

Executive summary

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 11.8 percent comparing April 2012 with April 2013. Monthly, over the period of March 2013 through April 2013, estimates show statewide total agricultural employment increased 6.4 percent. April 2013 estimates are based on 554 usable surveys that were returned.

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

- South Central (Area 2) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (3,390 jobs).
- Eastern (Area 6) experienced the smallest increase in total agricultural employment (70 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

June 2013



Statewide total agricultural employment increased 11.8 percent from April 2012 through April 2013.



Total agricultural employment

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 11.8 percent over the period of April 2012 through April 2013. Estimates show total agricultural employment increased 6.4 percent over the period of March 2013 through April 2013.

Regional employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) total employment increased 5.4 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) total employment increased 15.2 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 5.6 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 15.6 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 15.2 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 4.9 percent.

Seasonal agricultural employment

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 16 percent over the period of April 2012 through April 2013.

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

- Apple work (2,650)
- Cherry work (1,530)
- Hop work (790)
- Miscellaneous vegetables work (380)
- Raspberry work (200)
- Other tree fruit work (110)

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

- Asparagus work (-330)
- Onion work (-250)
- Grape work (-210)
- Nursery work (-120)
- Pear work (-110)
- Wheat/grain work (-100)
- Other seasonal work (-30)
- Potato work (-10)

Regional seasonal employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased 1.9 percent primarily due to decreased other seasonal work (-510).
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 17.5 percent primarily due to increased cherry work (1,000).
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 1.4 percent primarily due to increased cherry work (450).
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased 27.9 percent primarily due to increased apple work (700).
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased 25 percent primarily due to increased apple work (1,580).
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased 4.5 percent primarily due to increased nursery work (80).

Statewide and regional wage trends

Inflation-adjusted wages

Statewide, average inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased 2.4 percent over the two-year period of April 2011 through April 2013. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 3.5 percent during the same two-year period.

Statewide, average inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates were unchanged over the one-year period of March 2012 through March 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 increased 4.7 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates increased 0.1 percent.

- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.4 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.7 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.7 percent.

Current-dollar wages

Statewide, average agricultural seasonal employee wage rates in current dollars increased 4.9 percent over the two-year period of April 2011 through April 2013. The Washington state current-dollar minimum wage increased 6.0 percent during this same two-year period.

Statewide, average current-dollar agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased 1.6 percent over the one-year period of April 2012 through April 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 6.4 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates increased 1.7 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 0.2 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates increased 0.9 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.1 percent.

Statewide and regional employment trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased 32.7 percent over the two-year period of April 2011 through April 2013.

Labor supply

The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 5.8 percent. 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

April 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: 3,060

Raspberry weeder	610	\$11.56/hr
Nursery harvester	330	\$9.27/hr
Misc vegetables planter	280	\$10.03/hr
Potato sorter/grader/packer	270	\$9.56/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 9,200

Apple hand thinner	1,560	\$9.19/hr
Cherry hand thinner	1,010	\$9.25/hr
Hops twiner	970	\$9.70/hr
Apple planter	740	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,080

Apple worker	2,090	\$9.19/hr
Apple hand thinner	1,100	\$9.19/hr
Cherry worker	340	\$9.19/hr
Apple pruner	320	\$9.82/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,700

Apple hand thinner	2,430	\$9.19/hr or \$0.35 - \$7.50 per tree
Sugar beets planter	1,040	\$9.19/hr
Apple pruner	950	\$9.28/hr
Potato cultivator	530	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,560

Apple hand thinner	2,220	\$9.19/hr or \$0.70 - \$7.00 per tree
Apple worker	710	\$9.26/hr
Apple pruner	560	\$9.21/hr
Grapes pruner	330	\$9.22/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 230

Nursery worker	130	\$9.19/hr
Nursery and tree planter	30	\$11.00/hr
Apple planter	30	\$10.00/hr
Wheat worker	30	\$9.19/hr

April 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	3,060	9.6%	7,510	15.8%	10,570	13.3%
South Central	9,200	28.9%	16,450	34.6%	25,650	32.3%
North Central	5,080	16.0%	9,520	20.0%	14,600	18.4%
Columbia Basin	7,700	24.2%	4,480	9.4%	12,180	15.3%
South Eastern	6,560	20.6%	8,360	17.6%	14,920	18.8%
Eastern	230	0.7%	1,270	2.7%	1,500	1.9%
Statewide	31,830	100.0%	47,590	100.0%	79,420	100.0%

Total agricultural employment*

Agricultural reporting area	April 2013 Preliminary	March 2013 Revised	April 2012 Revised	Change		Percent change	
				March 2013 through April 2013	April 2012 through April 2013	March 2013 through April 2013	April 2012 through April 2013
Statewide	79,420	74,640	71,030	4,780	8,390	6.4%	11.8%
Western	10,570	10,440	10,030	130	540	1.2%	5.4%
South Central	25,650	24,290	22,260	1,360	3,390	5.6%	15.2%
North Central	14,600	13,850	13,820	750	780	5.4%	5.6%
Columbia Basin	12,180	10,260	10,540	1,920	1,640	18.7%	15.6%
South Eastern	14,920	14,320	12,950	600	1,970	4.2%	15.2%
Eastern	1,500	1,480	1,430	20	70	1.4%	4.9%

Seasonal agricultural employment*

Agricultural reporting area	April 2013 Preliminary	March 2013 Revised	April 2012 Revised	Change		Percent change	
				March 2013 through April 2013	April 2012 through April 2013	March 2013 through April 2013	April 2012 through April 2013
Statewide	31,830	22,870	27,450	8,960	4,380	39.2%	16.0%
Western	3,060	3,100	3,120	-40	-60	-1.3%	-1.9%
South Central	9,200	6,250	7,830	2,950	1,370	47.2%	17.5%
North Central	5,080	3,440	5,010	1,640	70	47.7%	1.4%
Columbia Basin	7,700	4,990	6,020	2,710	1,680	54.3%	27.9%
South Eastern	6,560	4,830	5,250	1,730	1,310	35.8%	25.0%
Eastern	230	260	220	-30	10	-11.5%	4.5%

* 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 [April 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, April 2013



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were raspberry weeding, nursery harvest, miscellaneous vegetables planting, and potato warehouse work.



South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Apples in the upper Yakima Valley were in full bloom, while all other fruit trees were in post bloom. Asparagus harvest was beginning. Pricing for Washington asparagus has been good in recent years because acreage in the state has been declining. Acreage has fallen dramatically since reaching a peak of 32,000 acres in 1988. Last year, growers harvested asparagus on fewer than 5,000 acres. The newer varieties growers are trying yield as much as 13,000 pounds per acre, nearly twice the yields of older varieties.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Pollination of fruit trees was helped by warmer weather. Primary agricultural activities were general apple work, apple hand thinning, general cherry work, and apple pruning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Washington farmers are expected to increase canola acreage by about 72 percent this year, to about 25,000 acres. Washington's 14,500 acres of canola produced 27.6 million pounds in 2012. Canola is Washington's most common oilseed crop, grown in Adams, Grant, Douglas, Lincoln and Spokane counties. It can be used in food-grade oil and biodiesel. Currently, the demand appears to be for food-grade oil for healthy eating, rather than the biodiesel.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Grape growers across Washington's Columbia Valley fought temperatures as low as 25 degrees in the Horse Heaven Hills south of Prosser. Thanks to frost protection measures, the damage was minimal.



Eastern (Area 6)

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

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