



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

May 2013

Executive summary

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 8.7 percent comparing May 2012 with May 2013. Monthly, over the period of April 2013 through May 2013, estimates show statewide total agricultural employment increased 4.2 percent. May 2013 estimates are based on 610 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 (1,850 jobs).
- Eastern (Area 6) experienced the smallest increase in total agricultural employment (20 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



Prepared by
John Wines, *economic analyst*

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 2013



Statewide total agricultural employment increased 8.7 percent from May 2012 through May 2013.

Total agricultural employment

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 8.7 percent over the period of May 2012 through May 2013. Estimates show total agricultural employment increased 4.2 percent over the period of April 2013 through May 2013.

Regional employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) total employment increased 4.4 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) total employment increased 7.8 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 3.8 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 17.1 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 12.5 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 1.3 percent.

Seasonal agricultural employment

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 3.5 percent over the period of May 2012 through May 2013.



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

- Apple work (1,790)
- Cherry work (370)
- Hop work (320)
- Other seasonal work (200)
- Grape work (190)
- Potato work (160)
- Raspberry work (50)
- Bulb work (40)
- Pear work (10)

Regional seasonal employment change year-over-year:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased 5.6 percent primarily due to decreased other seasonal work (-460).
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 18.5 percent primarily due to increased apple work (2,310).
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment decreased 4.6 percent primarily due to decreased apple work (-700).
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment decreased 8 percent primarily due to decreased other seasonal work (-1,060).
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased 0.7 percent primarily due to increased other seasonal work (1,210).
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased 43.8 percent primarily due to increased nursery work (150).



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

- Asparagus work (-1,580)
- Onion work (-780)
- Miscellaneous vegetables work (-500)
- Nursery work (-180)
- Wheat/grain work (-170)
- Blueberry work (-90)

Statewide and regional wage trends

Inflation-adjusted wages

Statewide, average inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased 1.3 percent over the two-year period of May 2011 through May 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 decreased 1.6 percent over the one-year period of May 2012 through May 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 1.9 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates decreased 2.6 percent.

- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 1 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.9 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.6 percent.

Current-dollar wages

Statewide, average agricultural seasonal employee wage rates in current dollars increased 3.8 percent over the two-year period of May 2011 through May 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 were unchanged over the one-year period of May 2012 through May 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 decreased 0.3 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.1 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 2.6 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates increased 0.7 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates were unchanged.

Statewide and regional employment trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased 39 percent over the two-year period of May 2011 through May 2013.

Labor supply

The weighted percent of labor shortage reported was 5.7 percent. This number is based on agricultural operators' responses to the question: 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

May 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: 3,370

Raspberry worker	370	*
Nursery and tree worker	340	\$9.19/hr
Strawberry worker	320	\$9.19/hr
Potato sorter/grader/packer	290	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 12,310

Apple hand thinner	2,780	\$9.42/hr
Hops trainer	1,190	\$9.66/hr
Contract misc labor crew sorter/grader/packer	980	\$9.19/hr
Apple planter	830	\$9.21/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,160

Cherry worker	930	\$9.19/hr
Apple worker	860	\$9.29/hr
Apple hand thinner	630	\$10.16/hr
Apple pruner	490	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,850

Apple hand thinner	1,460	\$9.23/hr
Apple worker	820	\$9.19/hr
Apple trainer	650	\$9.23/hr
Potato sorter/grader/packer	590	\$9.19/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,190

Apple worker	910	\$9.19/hr
Blueberry worker	740	\$9.19/hr
Apple pruner	670	\$9.19/hr
Apple hand thinner	630	\$9.36/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 460

Misc. grain/grain seed worker	210	*
Nursery worker	180	\$9.33/hr
Nursery and tree worker	20	\$11.75/hr
Nursery and tree planter	20	\$11.00/hr

*Wages not reported.

May 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	3,370	9.8%	7,560	16.1%	10,930	13.5%
South Central	12,310	35.8%	13,360	28.5%	25,670	31.6%
North Central	5,160	15.0%	8,840	18.9%	14,000	17.2%
Columbia Basin	5,850	17.0%	6,760	14.4%	12,610	15.5%
South Eastern	7,190	20.9%	9,210	19.7%	16,400	20.2%
Eastern	460	1.3%	1,120	2.4%	1,580	1.9%
Statewide	34,340	100.0%	46,840	100.0%	81,180	100.0%

Total agricultural employment*

Agricultural reporting area	May 2013 preliminary	April 2013 revised	May 2012 revised	Change		Percent change	
				April 2013 through May 2013	May 2012 through May 2013	April 2013 through May 2013	May 2012 through May 2013
Statewide	81,190	77,890	74,690	3,300	6,500	4.2%	8.7%
Western	10,930	10,490	10,470	440	460	4.2%	4.4%
South Central	25,670	24,800	23,820	870	1,850	3.5%	7.8%
North Central	14,000	14,160	13,490	-160	510	-1.1%	3.8%
Columbia Basin	12,610	12,130	10,770	480	1,840	4.0%	17.1%
South Eastern	16,400	14,770	14,580	1,630	1,820	11.0%	12.5%
Eastern	1,580	1,540	1,560	40	20	2.6%	1.3%

Seasonal agricultural employment*

Agricultural reporting area	May 2013 preliminary	April 2013 revised	May 2012 revised	Change		Percent change	
				April 2013 through May 2013	May 2012 through May 2013	April 2013 through May 2013	May 2012 through May 2013
Statewide	34,340	31,830	33,190	2,510	1,150	7.9%	3.5%
Western	3,370	3,160	3,570	210	-200	6.6%	-5.6%
South Central	12,310	9,200	10,390	3,110	1,920	33.8%	18.5%
North Central	5,160	5,640	5,410	-480	-250	-8.5%	-4.6%
Columbia Basin	5,850	7,010	6,360	-1,160	-510	-16.5%	-8.0%
South Eastern	7,190	6,550	7,140	640	50	9.8%	0.7%
Eastern	460	270	320	190	140	70.4%	43.8%

* 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
[May 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, May 2013



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal during the reporting period. This year's Western Washington strawberry crop is expected to be "perfect" thanks to good weather. Last year, the crop was delayed by an unusually wet May and June. This year's crop is estimated to be ready on or about June 6th or 7th, a week to 10 days earlier than normal.



South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Cool season crops like lettuce, radishes, rhubarb, green onions and asparagus were harvested. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, hops training, contract miscellaneous warehouse work, and apple planting.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Preliminary indications are that the Washington state fresh cherry crop is about 20 percent lower than last season's record crop and about 3 percent higher than the five year average. Primary agricultural activities were general cherry work, apple work, apple hand thinning and apple pruning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The first cutting of alfalfa was complete in some areas. Washington state, the country's number one producer of mint, expects a normal crop this year. Last year, Washington farmers grew mint on 30,800 acres, producing 3.6 million pounds of mint oil valued at \$75.6 million, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Services. Primary agricultural activities were apple hand thinning, general apple work, apple training, and potato warehouse work.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were cooler and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Some cherries received rain damage. Green pea harvest began. Primary agricultural activities were general apple work, blueberry work, apple pruning, and apple hand thinning.



Eastern (Area 6)

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

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. Washington Relay Service: 711