



# Agriculture Employment and Wage Report

March 2014

## Executive summary

Estimates from the monthly agricultural survey indicate statewide total agricultural employment increased 6.4 percent from March 2013 to March 2014. Comparing February 2014 to March 2014, statewide total agricultural employment increased 7.2 percent. March 2014 estimates are based on 746 usable surveys that were returned.

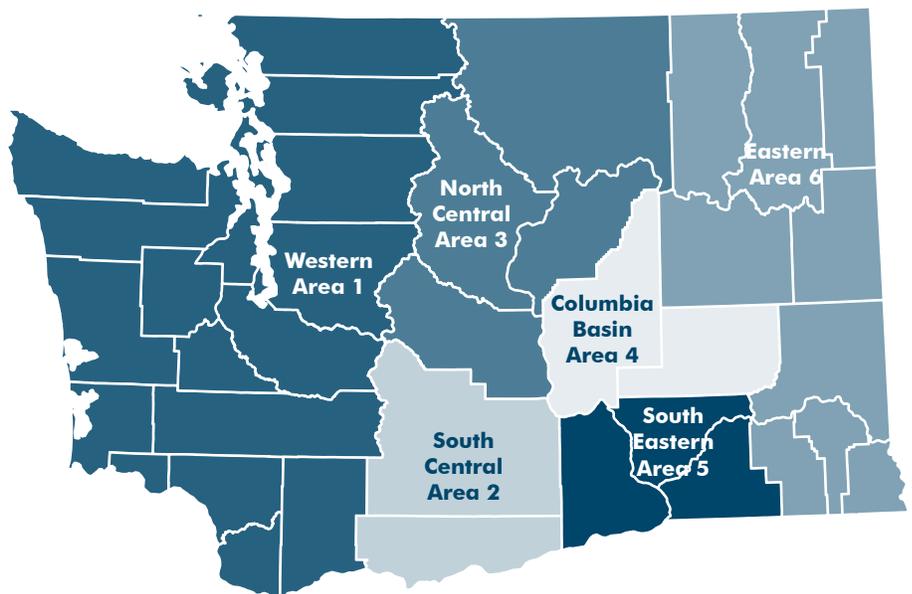
Total agricultural employment increased year over year in five of the six of the agricultural areas.

- South Eastern (Area 5) experienced the largest total agricultural employment increase (1,420 jobs).
- Western (Area 1) experienced the only decrease 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



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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](http://www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata)



Labor Market and Performance Analysis

April 2014



*Statewide total agricultural employment increased 6.4 percent from March 2013 to March 2014.*



## Total agricultural employment

Statewide total agricultural employment increased 6.4 percent comparing March 2013 to March 2014. Total agricultural employment increased 7.2 percent from February 2014 to March 2014.

Regional employment change year over year:

- Western (Area 1) total employment decreased 0.2 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) total employment increased 6.1 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased 3.7 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased 9.7 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased 11.3 percent.
- Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased 11.2 percent.

## Seasonal agricultural employment

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased by 1.5 percent comparing March 2013 to March 2014.



Agricultural activities with statewide seasonal employment increases year over year:

- Apple work (1,730)
- Hops work (1,380)
- Other tree fruit work (120)
- Potato work (90)

Agricultural activities with statewide seasonal employment decreases year over year:

- Other seasonal work (-1,340)
- Grapes work (-840)
- Raspberry work (-620)
- Miscellaneous vegetables work (-450)
- Pear work (-180)
- Nursery work (-150)
- Onion work (-100)
- Cherry work (-100)



Regional seasonal employment change year over year:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased 17 percent primarily due to decreased raspberry work (-620).
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased 9.8 percent primarily due to increased hops work (1,140).
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased 0.5 percent primarily due to increased apple work (360).
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment decreased 25.9 percent primarily due to decreased other seasonal work (-1,000).
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased 16.8 percent primarily due to increased apple work (740).
- Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment decreased 20 percent primarily due to decreased nursery work (-50).

## Statewide and regional wage trends

### Inflation-adjusted wages

Statewide, average inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates decreased 1.2 percent comparing March 2012 to March 2014. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 3.2 percent during the same two-year period.

Statewide, average inflation-adjusted agricultural seasonal employee wage rates decreased 1.1 percent comparing March 2013 to March 2014. The inflation-adjusted state minimum wage increased 1.4 percent during the same period.

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

- Western (Area 1) seasonal wage rates decreased 2.2 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates decreased 2.8 percent.

- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.9 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.1 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates increased 1 percent.

### Current-dollar wages

Statewide, average agricultural seasonal employee wage rates in current dollars increased 1.9 percent comparing March 2012 through March 2014. The Washington state current-dollar minimum wage increased 3.1 percent during this same two-year period.

Statewide, average current-dollar agricultural seasonal employee wage rates increased 0.4 percent comparing March 2013 through March 2014. The Washington state current-dollar minimum wage increased 1.4 percent during this same one-year period.

Regional wage rate changes year over year in current dollars:

- Western (Area 1) seasonal wage rates decreased 0.6 percent.
- South Central (Area 2) seasonal wage rates decreased 1.3 percent.
- North Central (Area 3) seasonal wage rates increased 0.6 percent.
- Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wage rates increased 1.5 percent.
- South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wage rates increased 2.6 percent.

## Statewide and regional employment trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment decreased 6.1 percent when comparing March 2012 through March 2014.

### Labor supply

Labor shortage as an estimated percent of total seasonal employment reported was 5.2. 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 Agricultural Employment and Wage Survey. This is a survey of 2,000 agricultural operators (defined by unique unemployment-insurance accounts) in the state. Probability of selection proportional to size (PPS) without replacement was used to select the year's sample of agricultural operators.

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 from 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](http://www.nass.usda.gov/wa)

What's new in agricultural employment:  
[www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome)

# Washington Agricultural Employment and Wage Report

## Seasonal labor abstract

### March 2014

Each month, the Employment Security Department conducts a mid-month survey of farm labor employment and wages. 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: 2,340

Nursery harvester .....	460	\$9.32/hr
Nursery and tree worker .....	280	\$9.34/hr
Blueberry pruner .....	230	\$10.00/hr
Blueberry worker .....	180	\$9.32/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,830

Apple pruner .....	2,150	\$9.56/hr or \$0.40 - \$5.00 per tree
Hops worker .....	860	\$9.39/hr
Hops planter .....	760	\$9.32/hr
Hops trainer .....	690	\$9.32/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,910

Apple pruner .....	1,980	\$9.41/hr or \$0.70 - \$5.00 per tree
Apple sorter/grader/packer .....	470	\$9.34/hr
Cherry pruner .....	280	\$10.00/hr
Pear pruner .....	190	\$9.70/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,520

Apple pruner .....	2,300	\$9.45/hr or \$0.40 - \$1.50 per tree
Potato sorter/grader/packer .....	270	\$9.32/hr
Miscellaneous onion planter .....	160	\$9.32/hr
Miscellaneous onion sorter/grader/packer .....	160	\$9.32/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,570

Apple pruner .....	1,670	\$9.63/hr or \$0.25 - \$2.50 per tree
Grapes pruner .....	680	\$9.72/hr
Apple worker .....	610	\$9.34/hr
Miscellaneous onion sorter/grader/packer .....	270	\$9.32/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 240

Nursery planter .....	170	\$9.32/hr
Wheat mechanic .....	20	\$16.00/hr
Feedlot cattle worker .....	20	\$10.22/hr
Wheat worker .....	20	\$12.50/hr

## March 2014

### 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
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>22,410</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>51,560</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>73,970</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Western	2,340	10.4%	7,130	13.8%	9,470	12.8%
South Central	6,830	30.5%	17,200	33.4%	24,030	32.5%
North Central	3,910	17.4%	10,100	19.6%	14,010	18.9%
Columbia Basin	3,520	15.7%	7,290	14.1%	10,810	14.6%
South Eastern	5,570	24.9%	8,390	16.3%	13,960	18.9%
Eastern	240	1.1%	1,450	2.8%	1,690	2.3%

### Total agricultural employment\*

Agricultural reporting area	March 2014 preliminary	February 2014 revised	March 2013 revised	Change		Percent change	
				February 2014 compared to March 2014	March 2013 compared to March 2014	February 2014 compared to March 2014	March 2013 compared to March 2014
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>73,970</b>	<b>69,010</b>	<b>69,550</b>	<b>4,960</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
Western	9,470	8,700	9,490	770	-20	8.9%	-0.2%
South Central	24,030	22,830	22,640	1,200	1,390	5.3%	6.1%
North Central	14,010	13,600	13,510	410	500	3.0%	3.7%
Columbia Basin	10,810	9,580	9,850	1,230	960	12.8%	9.7%
South Eastern	13,960	12,850	12,540	1,110	1,420	8.6%	11.3%
Eastern	1,690	1,450	1,520	240	170	16.6%	11.2%

### Seasonal agricultural employment\*

Agricultural reporting area	March 2014 preliminary	February 2014 revised	March 2013 revised	Change		Percent change	
				February 2014 compared to March 2014	March 2013 compared to March 2014	February 2014 compared to March 2014	March 2013 compared to March 2014
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>22,410</b>	<b>20,150</b>	<b>22,750</b>	<b>2,260</b>	<b>-340</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>
Western	2,340	1,770	2,820	570	-480	32.2%	-17.0%
South Central	6,830	5,750	6,220	1,080	610	18.8%	9.8%
North Central	3,910	4,120	3,890	-210	20	-5.1%	0.5%
Columbia Basin	3,520	2,610	4,750	910	-1,230	34.9%	-25.9%
South Eastern	5,570	5,740	4,770	-170	800	-3.0%	16.8%
Eastern	240	160	300	80	-60	50.0%	-20.0%

\*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 Agriculture Labor Report survey, go to the  
[March 2014 Agricultural Employment and Wage Report Tables](#).

[2014 Year-to-Date Employment Tables](#)  
are available at [www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata](http://www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata)

# Factors affecting the farm labor supply and demand situation.

## Crop, market and weather conditions by area.

### Washington state, March 2014



#### Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were nursery harvesting, nursery and tree work, blueberry pruning and general blueberry work.



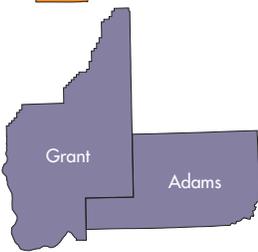
#### South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Midway through the season, Washington's fresh apple crop stands at 114.7 million 40-pound boxes. This is the second largest crop on record next to the 2012 crop of 128.8 million boxes, said Kirk Mayer, manager of the Washington Growers Clearing House Association in Wenatchee. WSU has opened a lottery on the new apple variety, named "WA 38." Growers may sign up to determine who plants the first trees of the new variety. The WA 38 (its research name) was bred from the Enterprise and HoneyCrisp in 1997 by Bruce Barritt, now retired but who was then apple breeder at WSU Tree Fruit Research Center in Wenatchee.



#### North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. According to a recent release from the National Agricultural Statistics service, sweet cherry production in Washington totaled 169,000 tons in 2013, down 36 percent from 2012.



#### Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. All of Mexico may be open to importing fresh U.S. potatoes before June, based on a final rule the Mexican government recently published setting protocols for fresh potato trade between the two countries. The announcement is the culmination of a decade of work. Industry sources estimate the announcement should eventually result in \$100 million in additional annual fresh U.S. table and chipping spud sales.



#### South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The price of wheat is climbing on concern that the ongoing tensions in Ukraine will reduce exports from that region. The price of wheat for May delivery rose 21.25 cents, or 3.1 percent, to \$7.15 a bushel. Ukraine and Russia account for 17 percent of the world's wheat exports.



#### Eastern (Area 6)

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

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