



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

January 2009

**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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Labor Market Information Center
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1-800-215-1617
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Executive Summary

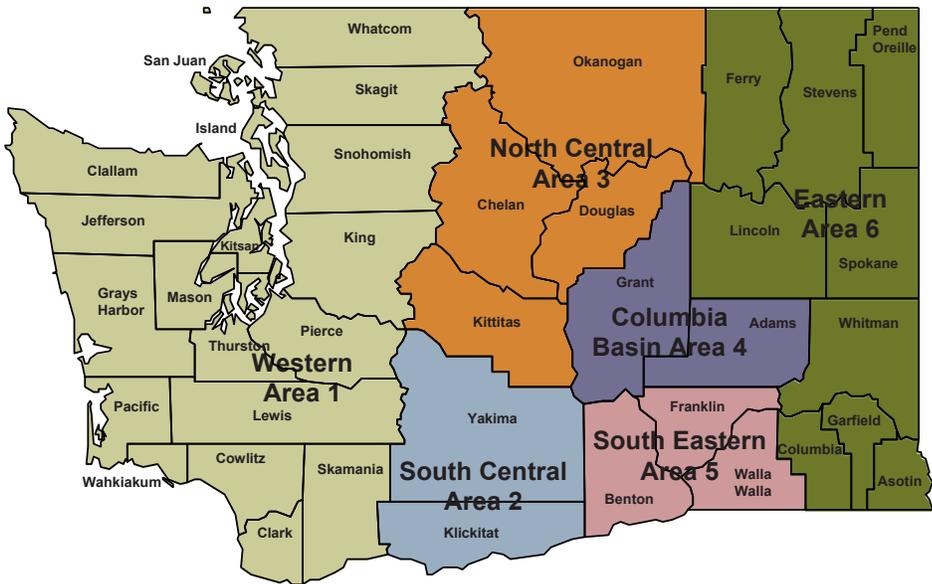
Statewide total agricultural employment fell by 6.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009.



- North Central (Area 3) led the four declining areas with a decrease in total agricultural employment of 1,850.
- Western (Area 1) was the largest increasing area with a gain of 260 in total agricultural employment.

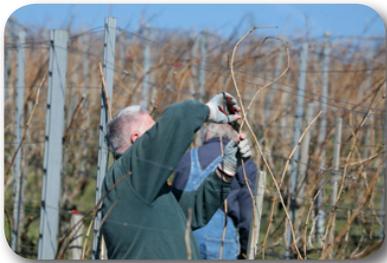


Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



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

Statewide total agricultural employment fell by 6.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment fell by 6.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009. Over-the-month total employment also declined by 5.7 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment expanded by 3.0 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment

slipped by 0.5 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment slowed by 17.2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment decreased by 10.3 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment softened by 14.4 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment moved ahead by 9.5 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment advanced by 20.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- apple work (1,980),
- cherry work (390),
- nursery work (270),
- blueberry work (220),
- onion work (70),
- other tree fruit work (20), and
- wheat/grain work (10).

Activities displaying losses were:

- other seasonal work (-180),
- potato work (-100),
- raspberry work (-90),
- bulbs work (-70),
- hops work (-70),
- pears work (-60), and
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-10).

Asparagus work and grapes work showed no over-the-year change. Across the state, Western seasonal employment increased 17.1 percent, caused by an expansion in blueberry work (220). South Central seasonal employment expanded by 19.3 percent, due to a growth in apple work (900). North Central seasonal employment moved forward by 37.9 percent, caused by an expansion in apple work (750). Columbia Basin seasonal employment grew by 14.2 percent, caused by an increase in cherry work (370). South Eastern seasonal employment jumped ahead by 7.3 percent, due to a jump in apple work (610). Eastern seasonal employment expanded by 75.0 percent, due to an increase in other seasonal work (80).

Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) seasonal agricultural wages inched ahead by 0.8 percent from January 2007 to January 2009. Washington state real minimum wages grew by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal wages also moved forward by 2.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009. The real state minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages expanded by 4.9 percent. South Central seasonal

wages crept up by 0.9 percent. North Central seasonal wages decreased by 0.7 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages expanded by 2.5 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages declined by 0.6 percent.

Statewide nominal seasonal agricultural wages moved forward by 6.2 percent from January 2007 to January 2009. Washington state nominal minimum wages grew by 7.8 percent during this same time period.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal wages advanced by 6.0 percent from January 2008 to January 2009. The state minimum wage expanded by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages grew by 8.5 percent. South Central seasonal wages advanced by 4.3 percent. North Central seasonal wages rose by 2.7 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages increased by 6.0 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages grew by 2.8 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 16.8 percent from January 2007 to January 2009. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 20.5 percent from January 2008 to January 2009. Western seasonal employment grew by 17.1 percent during that same time period. South Central sea-

sonal employment expanded by 19.3 percent. North Central seasonal employment moved forward by 37.9 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment advanced by 14.2 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment rose by 7.3 percent. Eastern seasonal employment moved ahead by 75.0 percent.

Labor Supply

The first question on the labor supply survey asks growers if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. The second question asks growers how many more employees

they could have used. For January, 510 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 2.0 percent.



*In January, 510
usable labor
supply surveys
were returned.*



Seasonal workers, for the purpose of the Farm Labor Survey, are those working less than 150 days per year.



Methodology

The *Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages* report uses data from the monthly Seasonal Farm Labor Survey. This is a survey of 600 agricultural growers in the state. They 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 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 year ago. 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 year ago. The crops having the highest

gain and highest decline in employment are highlighted in the narrative.

The Seasonal Labor Abstract is also included. This 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 the reporting of the 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 this reporting period. This can lead to some variation of estimated employment by crop when comparing activity in similar time periods. The report is intended for economists, growers' associations, educators, state agencies, labor unions, and outreach workers.

Related Ag Links

[Washington crop harvest and weather information](#)

[What's new in agricultural employment](#)

Agricultural Labor Report

Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Seasonal Labor Abstract

January 2009

A mid-month survey of farm labor employment and wages is conducted by the Washington State Employment Security Department. At least five percent of all growers 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 crop 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 (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: 2,120

| | | |
|--|-----|------------|
| Nursery & Tree Sorter/Grader/Packer. | 690 | \$ 8.77/hr |
| Potato Sorter/Grader/Packer | 370 | \$ 8.99/hr |
| Blueberry Pruner. | 320 | \$ 8.68/hr |
| Blueberry Sorter/Grader/Packer. | 220 | \$ 8.73/hr |

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 4,390

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Apple Pruner | 3,190 | \$ 8.65/hr or \$ 0.30 - \$ 6.50 per tree |
| Grapes Pruner. | 650 | \$ 8.84/hr or \$ 0.16 - \$ 0.32 per plant |
| Pear Pruner. | 240 | \$ 8.78/hr or \$ 1.10 - \$ 5.25 per tree |
| Cherry Pruner | 70 | \$10.00/hr |

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 3,130

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--|
| Apple Pruner | 1,680 | \$ 8.60/hr or \$ 0.45 - \$ 3.00 per tree |
| Apple Sorter/Grader/Packer. | 660 | \$ 8.71/hr |
| Cherry Pruner | 540 | \$ 8.99/hr or \$ 1.65 - \$ 4.00 per tree |
| Pear Pruner. | 140 | \$ 8.71/hr |

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 2,170

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| Apple Pruner | 720 | \$ 8.83/hr or \$ 0.50 - \$ 1.60 per tree |
| Cherry Pruner. | 670 | \$ 8.61/hr |
| Walla Walla Sweet Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer | 240 | \$ 8.55/hr |
| Misc Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer | 170 | \$ 8.55/hr |

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 1,920

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|--|
| Apple Pruner | 1,170 | \$ 8.63/hr or \$ 0.18 - \$ 3.50 per tree |
| Cherry Pruner. | 250 | \$ 8.59/hr or \$ 0.75 - \$ 1.25 per tree |
| Grapes Pruner | 190 | \$ 8.55/hr |
| Pear Pruner. | 90 | \$ 8.55/hr |

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 210

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|------------|
| Apple Pruner | 110 | \$ 9.00/hr |
| Nursery Planter. | 50 | \$ 8.55/hr |
| Beef Cattle Worker. | 10 | \$ 8.50/hr |
| Wheat Tractor Operator. | 10 | \$12.00/hr |

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

**January 2009
Agricultural Farm Labor Report, Washington State**

| Agricultural Reporting Area | Seasonal Area Total | Seasonal Area % of Total | Permanent Area Total | Permanent Area % of Total | Total Area Total | Total Area % of Total |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Western | 2,120 | 15.2% | 8,880 | 17.8% | 8,884 | 17.8% |
| 2. South Central | 4,390 | 31.5% | 16,920 | 33.9% | 16,919 | 33.9% |
| 3. North Central | 3,130 | 22.5% | 8,910 | 17.9% | 8,914 | 17.9% |
| 4. Columbia Basin | 2,170 | 15.6% | 5,840 | 11.7% | 5,841 | 11.7% |
| 5. South Eastern | 1,920 | 13.8% | 7,700 | 15.4% | 7,704 | 15.4% |
| 6. Eastern | 210 | 1.5% | 1,620 | 3.2% | 1,622 | 3.3% |
| State Totals | 13,940 | 100.0% | 49,880 | 100.0% | 49,884 | 100.0% |

Total Agricultural Employment

| | Jan 09 Prel. | Dec 08 Rev. | Jan 08 Rev. | Change Dec 08- Jan 09 | Change Jan 08- Jan 09 | Percent Change Dec 08- Jan 09 | Percent Change Jan 08- Jan 09 |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| State | 49,880 | 52,920 | 53,370 | -3,040 | -3,480 | -5.7% | -6.5% |
| Western | 8,880 | 9,490 | 8,630 | -610 | 260 | -6.4% | 3.0% |
| South Central | 16,920 | 17,250 | 17,000 | -330 | -80 | -1.9% | -0.5% |
| North Central | 8,910 | 10,170 | 10,760 | -1,260 | -1,850 | -12.4% | -17.2% |
| Columbia Basin | 5,840 | 6,430 | 6,510 | -590 | -670 | -9.2% | -10.3% |
| South Eastern | 7,700 | 7,910 | 9,000 | -200 | -1,300 | -2.5% | -14.4% |
| Eastern | 1,620 | 1,680 | 1,480 | -60 | 140 | -3.6% | 9.5% |

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

| | Jan 09 Prel. | Dec 08 Rev. | Jan 08 Rev. | Change Dec 08- Jan 09 | Change Jan 08- Jan 09 | Percent Change Dec 08- Jan 09 | Percent Change Jan 08- Jan 09 |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| State | 13,940 | 14,320 | 11,570 | -380 | 2,370 | -3.3% | 20.5% |
| Western | 2,120 | 1,940 | 1,810 | 180 | 310 | 9.9% | 17.1% |
| South Central | 4,390 | 4,890 | 3,680 | -500 | 710 | -13.6% | 19.3% |
| North Central | 3,130 | 3,470 | 2,270 | -340 | 860 | -15.0% | 37.9% |
| Columbia Basin | 2,170 | 2,050 | 1,900 | 120 | 270 | 6.3% | 14.2% |
| South Eastern | 1,920 | 1,740 | 1,790 | 180 | 130 | 10.1% | 7.3% |
| Eastern | 210 | 230 | 120 | -20 | 90 | -16.7% | 75.0% |

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [January 2009 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](http://www.workforceexplorer.com) at www.workforceexplorer.com

Agricultural Labor Report

Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

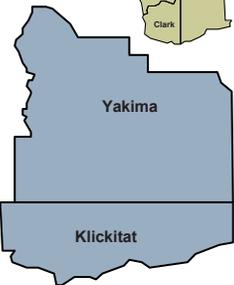
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, January 2009



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Raspberries and blueberries were being pruned. Nursery and tree warehouse work and potato warehouse work were also going on.



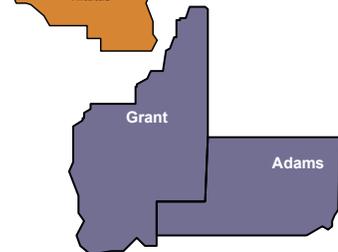
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Primary agricultural activities were apple, grapes, pear, and cherry pruning.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Fruit trees were subject to damage from the cold weather due to the snow cover melting off. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, apple warehouse work, cherry pruning, and pear pruning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Winter wheat conditions remained in fair to poor condition as dry fall conditions limited emergence or prevented seeding. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, cherry pruning, and onion warehouse work.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. There did not appear to be damage to the winter wheat crop. Some producers did not complete their winter plantings due to ground freeze up. Primary agricultural activities were apple, cherry, grapes, and pear pruning.



Eastern (Area 6)

Seasonal employment did not meet the criterion of 500 seasonal employees and therefore is not published for the month of January.