



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

August 2009

**Washington State
Employment Security Department**

Labor Market and Economic Analysis
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For additional
labor market information:
Labor Market Information Center
(LMIC)
1-800-215-1617
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www.workforceexplorer.com

Executive Summary

The statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 3.6 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. This was due to the large cherry harvest.



- There were over-the-year gains in seasonal employment in two of the six agricultural areas. Those areas were South Central (Area 2) and North Central (Area 3).



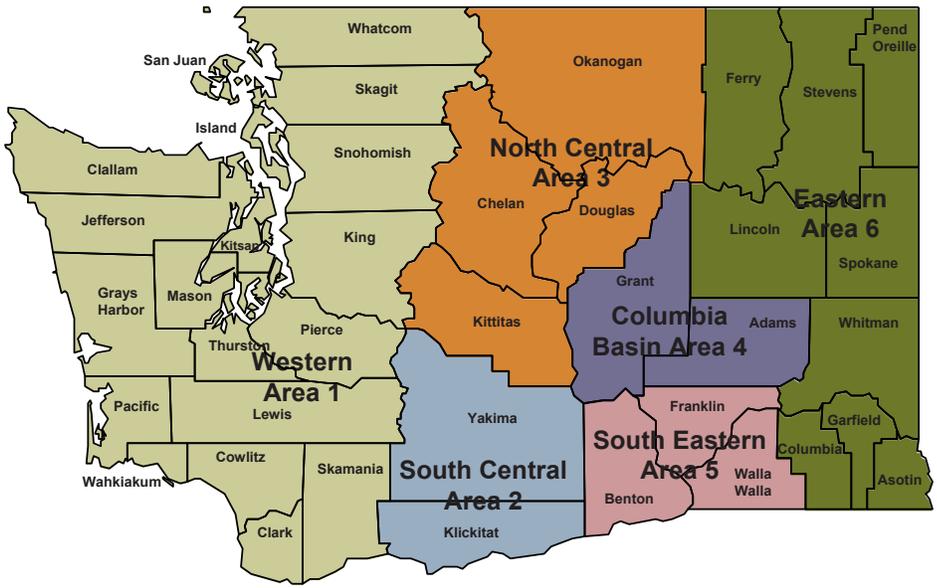
- An increase in seasonal agricultural employment of 4,470 in North Central led the advancing areas.

- The largest decline in seasonal agricultural employment was 4,580 in South Eastern (Area 5).

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

Agricultural Reporting Areas in Washington State



Statewide total agricultural employment rose by 3.0 percent from August 2008 to August 2009.



Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment rose by 3.0 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. Over-the-month total employment fell by 17.3 percent due to the winding down of the cherry harvest. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment declined by 3.6 percent. South Central (Area 2) total employment was

unchanged. North Central (Area 3) total employment grew by 6.1 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment crept up by 0.8 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment advanced by 12.8 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment moved forward by 3.3 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment rose by 3.6 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. Agricultural activities displaying over-the-year gains were:

- cherry work (4,020),
- pear work (910),
- other seasonal work (670), and
- other tree fruit work (280).

Activities displaying losses were:

- raspberry work (-960),
- onion work (-750),
- potato work (-500),
- apple work (-490),
- miscellaneous vegetables work (-480),
- strawberry work (-270),
- nursery work (-200),
- grapes work (-170),
- wheat/grain work (-120),
- hops work (-80), and
- bulbs work (-30).

Asparagus and cucumber seasonal employment numbers were unchanged over the year.

Across the state, Western area seasonal employment declined by 4.9 percent, caused by a decrease in raspberry work (-960). South Central seasonal employment grew by 25.0 percent, due to a growth in apple work (2,200). North Central seasonal employment grew by 38.4 percent, caused by an expansion in cherry work (4,920). Columbia Basin seasonal employment declined by 7.4 percent, caused by a decline in apple work (-470). South Eastern seasonal employment fell by 46.1 percent, due to a contraction in apple work (-2,120). Eastern seasonal employment decreased by 11.8 percent, due to a decline in nursery work (-80).



Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages rose by 1.8 percent from August 2007 to August 2009. Washington state real minimum wages increased by 2.3 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages fell by 0.8 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. The real state minimum wage grew by 2.4 percent during this same time period. Western real seasonal wages advanced by 3.9 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. Both South Central and North

Central seasonal wages declined by 4.4 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages contracted by 1.3 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages decreased by 0.7 percent. Eastern seasonal wages fell by 8.6 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages grew by 7.3 percent from August 2007 to August 2009. Washington state nominal minimum wages rose by 7.8 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages rose by 2.6

percent from August 2008 to August 2009. The state minimum wage grew by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Western seasonal wages expanded by 7.4 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. South Central seasonal wages declined by 1.1 percent. North Central seasonal wages fell by 1.2 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal wages moved forward by 2.1 percent. South Eastern seasonal wages grew by 2.7 percent. Eastern seasonal wages contracted by 5.4 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment grew by 17.7 percent from August 2007 to August 2009. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment expanded by 3.6 percent from August 2008 to August 2009. Western seasonal employment decreased by 4.9 percent during that same time period.

South Central seasonal employment expanded by 25.0 percent. North Central seasonal employment moved ahead by 38.3 percent. Columbia Basin seasonal employment fell by 7.5 percent. South Eastern seasonal employment fell by 46.1 percent. Eastern seasonal employment contracted by 11.8 percent.

Labor Supply

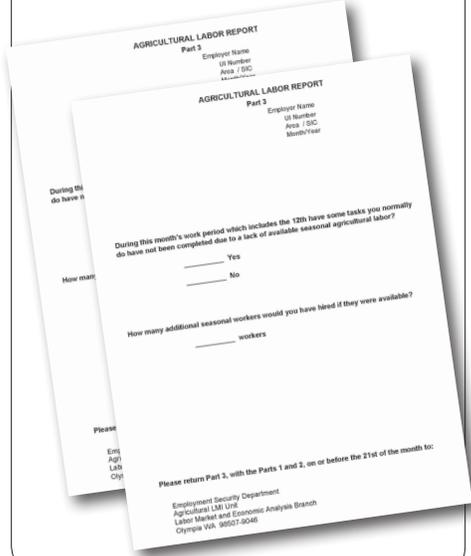
The first question on the labor supply survey asks growers if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. The second question asks growers how

many more employees they could have used. For August, 564 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 0.6 percent.

[Link to Survey Methodology](#)



*In August, 564
usable labor
supply surveys
were returned.*



AGRICULTURAL LABOR REPORT
Part 3
Employer Name
U# Number
Area / SIC
Month/Year

During this month's work period which includes the 12th have some tasks you normally do have not been completed due to a lack of available seasonal agricultural labor?

How many _____
Yes
_____ No

How many additional seasonal workers would you have hired if they were available?
_____ workers

Please
Em:
Ag:
L&D
C&E

Please return Part 3, with the Parts 1 and 2, on or before the 21st of the month to:
Employment Security Department
Agricultural L&M Unit
Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch
Olympia WA 98512-5048

Agricultural Labor Report

Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Seasonal Labor Abstract

August 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: 7,490

Blueberry Harvester	1,860	\$ 8.55/hr or \$ 0.20 - \$ 3.00 per pound
Raspberry Harvester	820	\$ 8.55/hr
Raspberry Sorter/Grader/Packer	740	\$ 8.67/hr
Raspberry Mechanized Harvester	460	\$ 8.55/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 14,160

Apple Hand Thinner	4,560	\$ 8.60/hr
Pear Harvester	1,750	\$14.00 - \$18.60 per bin
Peach Harvester	1,340	\$ 8.63/hr
Nectarine Harvester	1,160	\$ 9.00/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 16,100

Cherry Harvester	6,390	\$10.02/hr
Apple Pruner	1,940	\$ 8.61/hr
Cherry Sorter/Grader/Packer	1,580	\$ 8.65/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	1,230	\$ 8.79/hr or \$ 1.00 - \$ 2.50 per tree

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,910

Apple Pruner	1,230	\$ 8.84/hr or \$ 0.15 - \$ 2.50 per tree
Apple Worker	590	\$ 8.81/hr
Apple Hand Thinner	550	\$ 8.91/hr
Apple Trainer	400	\$ 8.86/hr

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,340

Apple Preparation	710	\$ 8.5/hr
Grapes Hand Thinner	530	\$ 8.63/hr
Apple Pruner	450	\$ 8.79/hr
Apple Harvester	400	\$ 8.79/hr or \$ 8.50 - \$20.00 per bin

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 820

Wheat Vehicle Operator	230	\$12.77/hr
Wheat Combine Driver	220	\$13.40/hr
Wheat Tractor Operator	40	\$11.63/hr
Apple Irrigator	30	\$ 8.55/hr

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

August 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	7,490	15.0%	6,760	15.9%	14,250	15.4%
2. South Central	14,160	28.4%	13,040	30.6%	27,200	29.4%
3. North Central	16,100	32.3%	4,720	11.1%	20,820	22.5%
4. Columbia Basin	5,910	11.9%	5,540	13.0%	11,450	12.4%
5. South Eastern	5,350	10.7%	11,510	27.0%	16,860	18.2%
6. Eastern	820	1.6%	1,070	2.5%	1,890	2.0%
State Totals	49,830	100.0%	42,640	100.0%	92,470	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

				Change		Percent Change	
	Aug 09-Prel.	July 09-Rev.	Aug 08-Rev.	July 09-Aug 09	Aug 08-Aug 09	July 09-Aug 09	Aug 08-Aug 09
State	92,470	111,860	89,750	-19,390	2,720	-17.3%	3.0%
Western	14,250	14,500	14,780	-250	-530	-1.7%	-3.6%
South Central	27,200	34,220	27,200	-7,020	0	-20.5%	0.0%
North Central	20,820	31,200	19,630	-10,380	1,190	-33.3%	6.1%
Columbia Basin	11,450	12,430	11,360	-980	90	-7.9%	0.8%
South Eastern	16,860	17,980	14,950	-1,120	1,910	-6.2%	12.8%
Eastern	1,890	1,530	1,830	360	60	23.5%	3.3%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

				Change		Percent Change	
	Aug 09-Prel.	July 09-Rev.	Aug 08-Rev.	July 09-Aug 09	Aug 08-Aug 09	July 09-Aug 09	Aug 08-Aug 09
State	49,830	70,860	48,080	-21,030	1,750	-29.7%	3.6%
Western	7,490	7,770	7,880	-280	-390	-3.6%	-4.9%
South Central	14,160	22,860	11,330	-8,710	2,830	-38.1%	25.0%
North Central	16,100	22,220	11,640	-6,110	4,470	-27.5%	38.4%
Columbia Basin	5,910	7,340	6,390	-1,430	-470	-19.5%	-7.4%
South Eastern	5,350	10,120	9,930	-4,780	-4,580	-47.2%	-46.1%
Eastern	820	550	930	280	-110	50.9%	-11.8%

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to [August 2009 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#)

For historical, year-to-date employment, go to [2009 Year-to-Date Employment Tables](#)
at www.workforceexplorer.com

Agricultural Labor Report

Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

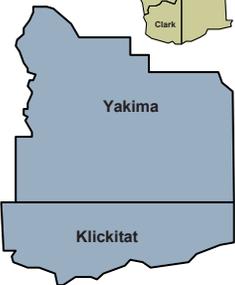
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, August 2009



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Blueberry harvest was winding down. Raspberry growers reported a minimal loss of crop due to the high temperatures. Warm season vegetable crops were being harvested with good results.



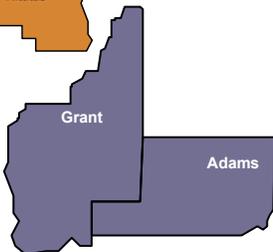
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. The third cutting of alfalfa was finishing. Vegetable harvest continued. Gala apple harvest started in some areas. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, pear harvest, peach harvest, and nectarine harvest.



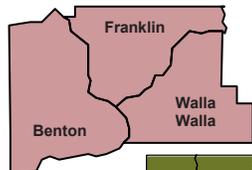
North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Dryland wheat farmers continued seeding even though moisture was limited. Soft fruit harvest continued. Pear harvest had begun and the crop looked good. Primary agricultural activities were cherry harvest, apple pruning, cherry warehouse work, and apple thinning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Sweet corn harvest continued and dry bean cutting began. The third cutting of alfalfa was in progress and potato harvest was to begin soon. Dryland wheat harvest was mostly complete, with seeding of the 2010 crop beginning. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, apple thinning, and apple training.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Wheat harvest was about 95 percent complete. Yields overall were quite good. Seeding for next year's crop had started in some areas. Harvest was beginning for potatoes and beans. Primary agricultural activities were apple field preparation, grapes thinning, apple pruning, and apple harvest.



Eastern (Area 6)

Weather conditions were warmer and drier than normal during the reporting period. Wheat harvest was being completed, with yields average to slightly above average. The quality of grain was reported excellent in most locations. The third cutting of hay was being completed. Soil preparation for fall winter wheat seeding began.