



Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages

April 2010

Washington State Employment Security Department

Labor Market and Economic Analysis



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Executive Summary

The statewide total agricultural employment increased by 10.6 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. The employment increase was mainly due to apple pruning and thinning.

- There were over-the-year increases in total employment in five of the six agricultural areas.



- North Central (Area 3) total employment increased by 2,480 workers and was the largest area increase.

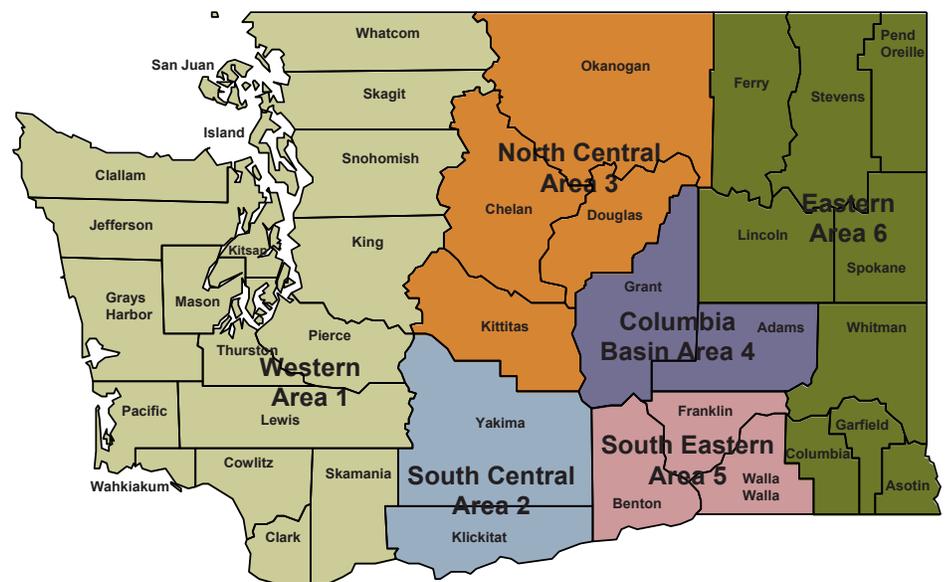
- Western (Area 1) total employment had the only employment decrease of 290 workers.



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 increased by 10.6 percent from April 2009 to April 2010.



Photo by ©iStock/MireXa



Photo by Edyta Pawlowska/©Dreamstime.com

Total Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide total agricultural employment increased by 10.6 percent from April 2009 to April 2010 primarily due to apple pruning and thinning. Over-the-month total employment increased 5.1 percent. Over the year regionally, Western (Area 1) total employment decreased by 2.9 percent. South Central

(Area 2) total employment increased by 8.8 percent. North Central (Area 3) total employment increased by 18.2 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) total employment increased by 10.4 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) total employment increased by 16.2 percent. Eastern (Area 6) total employment increased by 14.1 percent.

Seasonal Agricultural Employment Summary

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 24.5 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. Over-the-year increases in agricultural activities were:

- cherry work (1,430),
- apple work (1,340),
- onion work (1,260),
- grapes work (970),
- pear work (780),
- other tree fruit work (620),
- asparagus work (400),
- nursery work (150),
- wheat/grain work (120), and
- strawberry work (50).

Activities with decreases were:

- hops work (-850),
- raspberry work (-190), and
- other seasonal work (-30).

Across the state, Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased by 0.3 percent, due to decreased raspberry work (-190). South Central (Area 2) seasonal employment increased by 18.6 percent, due to increased asparagus work (500). North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased by 8.1 percent, due to increased cherry work (890). Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased by 33.0 percent due to increased apple work (1,160). South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased by 59.7 percent due to increased grapes work (1,160). Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased by 55.3 percent due to increased nursery work (130).



Statewide and Regional Wage Trends

Statewide real (inflation-adjusted) agricultural seasonal employee wages increased by 3.1 percent from April 2008 to April 2010. Washington state real minimum wages increased 1.7 percent during this same time period. Statewide real agricultural seasonal employee wages showed no change from April 2009 to April 2010. The real state minimum wage increased by 0.7 percent during this same time period. Western (Area 1) real seasonal wages increased by 1.4 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. South Central (Area 2)

seasonal wages increased by 0.2 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased by 2.7 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages increased by 1.1 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages increased by 1.2 percent.

Statewide nominal agricultural seasonal employee wages increased by 7.4 percent from April 2008 to April 2010. Washington state nominal minimum wages increased by 5.9 percent during this same time period. Statewide nominal agricultural

seasonal employee wages increased by 0.7 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. The state minimum wage did not increase during this time period. Western (Area 1) seasonal wages increased by 2.1 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. South Central (Area 2) seasonal wages increased by 0.9 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal wages decreased by 2.0 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal wages increased by 1.8 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal wages increased by 1.9 percent.

Statewide and Regional Employment Trends

Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 39.0 percent from April 2008 to April 2010. Statewide seasonal agricultural employment increased by 24.5 percent from April 2009 to April 2010. Western (Area 1) seasonal employment decreased by 0.3 percent during the same time period. South Central (Area 2) seasonal

employment increased by 18.6 percent. North Central (Area 3) seasonal employment increased by 8.1 percent. Columbia Basin (Area 4) seasonal employment increased by 33.0 percent. South Eastern (Area 5) seasonal employment increased by 59.7 percent. Eastern (Area 6) seasonal employment increased by 55.3 percent.

Labor Supply

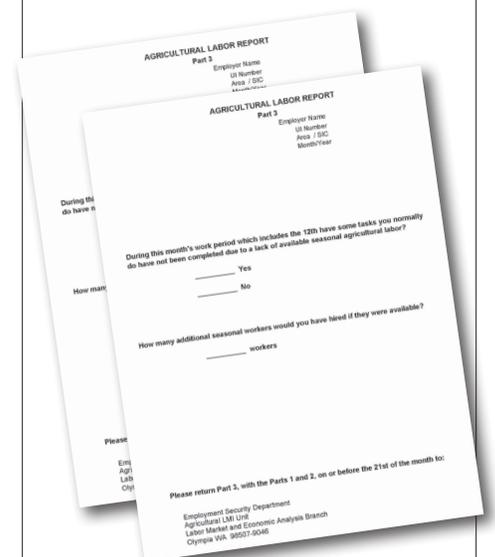
The first question on the labor supply survey asks growers if they failed to complete some work due to lack of available seasonal labor. The second question asks growers how

many more employees they could have used. For April, 1,496 usable surveys were returned. The weighted percent of labor shortage employment reported was 0.0 percent.

[Link to Survey Methodology](#)



*In April, 1,496
usable labor
supply surveys
were returned.*



Agricultural Labor Report

Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Seasonal Labor Abstract

April 2010

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: 3,250

Nursery Worker	460	\$ 9.78/hr
Nursery & Tree Worker	340	\$ 9.00/hr
Misc Vegetables Planter	220	\$ 8.81/hr
Nursery Harvester	210	\$ 8.55/hr

South Central (Klickitat and Yakima counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 7,270

Apple Pruner	1,400	\$ 8.80/hr	or \$ 0.10 - \$ 5.00 per tree
Asparagus Worker	540	\$ 9.33/hr	
Pear Pruner	450	\$ 8.63/hr	
Apple Hand Thinner	380	\$ 9.00/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 5,490

Apple Worker	1,130	\$ 8.98/hr	
Apple Pruner	980	\$ 8.94/hr	or \$ 1.25 - \$ 5.00 per tree
Cherry Pruner	550	\$ 8.89/hr	
Cherry Worker	500	\$ 9.32/hr	

Columbia Basin (Adams and Grant counties)

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,120

Apple Hand Thinner	2,460	\$ 8.55/hr	or \$ 0.20 - \$ 1.25 per tree
Apple Pruner	490	\$ 9.19/hr	
Apple Worker	370	\$ 8.81/hr	
Asparagus Harvester	330	\$ 9.00/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 6,770

Grapes Pruner	1,300	\$ 9.26/hr	
Apple Pruner	1,270	\$ 8.77/hr	or \$ 0.60 - \$ 2.88 per tree
Walla Walla Sweet Onion Sorter/Grader/Packer	**	**	
Apple Hand Thinner	520	\$ 8.56/hr	

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

Estimated seasonal workforce: 590

Nursery & Tree Harvester	120	\$ 8.90/hr
Nursery & Tree Planter	90	\$ 8.55/hr
Nursery Worker	70	\$ 9.33/hr
Wheat Worker	50	\$11.83/hr

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

April 2010
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	3,250	11.0%	6,400	14.4%	9,650	13.1%
2. South Central	7,270	24.7%	15,780	35.5%	23,050	31.2%
3. North Central	5,490	18.6%	10,620	23.9%	16,110	21.8%
4. Columbia Basin	6,150	20.9%	3,960	8.9%	10,110	13.7%
5. South Eastern	6,770	23.0%	6,770	15.2%	13,540	18.3%
6. Eastern	590	2.0%	870	2.0%	1,460	2.0%
State Totals	29,490	100.0%	44,400	100.0%	73,920	100.0%

Total Agricultural Employment

	Apr 10-Prel.	Mar 10-Rev.	Apr 09-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Mar 10-Apr 10	Apr 09-Apr 10	Mar 10-Apr 10	Apr 09-Apr 10
State	73,920	70,300	66,850	3,620	7,070	5.1%	10.6%
Western	9,650	9,250	9,940	400	-290	4.3%	-2.9%
South Central	23,050	22,320	21,190	730	1,860	3.3%	8.8%
North Central	16,110	16,100	13,630	10	2,480	0.1%	18.2%
Columbia Basin	10,110	8,580	9,160	1,530	950	17.8%	10.4%
South Eastern	13,540	12,690	11,650	850	1,890	6.7%	16.2%
Eastern	1,460	1,360	1,280	100	180	7.4%	14.1%

Seasonal Agricultural Employment

	Apr 10-Prel.	Mar 10-Rev.	Apr 09-Rev.	Change		Percent Change	
				Mar 10-Apr 10	Apr 09-Apr 10	Mar 10-Apr 10	Apr 09-Apr 10
State	29,490	26,040	23,690	3,450	5,800	13.2%	24.5%
Western	3,250	2,670	3,260	580	-10	21.7%	-0.3%
South Central	7,270	7,010	6,130	260	1,140	3.7%	18.6%
North Central	5,490	5,410	5,080	80	410	1.5%	8.1%
Columbia Basin	6,120	3,890	4,600	2,230	980	57.3%	37.0%
South Eastern	6,770	6,600	4,240	170	2,530	2.6%	59.7%
Eastern	590	470	380	120	210	25.5%	55.3%

Due to increased sample size, over-the-month and over-the-year changes may not be comparable.

For more data and a sample of the Agricultural Labor Report survey, go to
[April 2010 Agricultural Labor Employment and Wages Tables](#)

For historical, year-to-date employment, go to
[2010 Year-to-Date Employment Tables](#)
at www.workforceexplorer.com

Agricultural Labor Report

Factors Affecting the Farm Labor Supply and Demand Situation

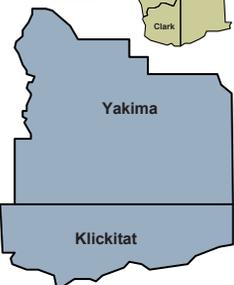
Crop, Market, and Weather Conditions by Area

Washington State, April 2010



Western (Area 1)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Strawberries were blooming but were about two weeks behind schedule. Potato planting was also behind schedule. Raspberries were re-planted. Blueberry and apple bloom continued.



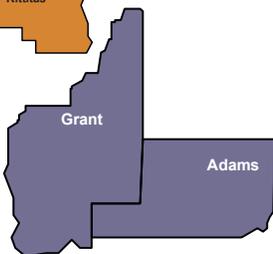
South Central (Area 2)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Apple bloom and blossom thinning activities continued. All tree fruits except pears were in the early fruit development stages. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning, asparagus harvest, pear pruning, and apple thinning.



North Central (Area 3)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Moderate to poor fruitset was reported in sweet cherries, indicating a sharp reduction in crop potential compared to last year. Primary agricultural activities were apple pruning and cherry pruning.



Columbia Basin (Area 4)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Gentle rains improved spring grain conditions and rangeland. Primary agricultural activities were apple thinning, apple pruning, and asparagus harvest.



South Eastern (Area 5)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. The winter wheat crop looked good though some of it showed cold and drought damage. Primary agricultural activities were grapes pruning, apple pruning, onion warehouse work, and apple thinning.



Eastern (Area 6)

Weather conditions were colder and wetter than normal during the reporting period. Spring cereal seeding was delayed due to the precipitation. Primary agricultural activities were nursery and tree harvesting and planting.