

# Missouri

## Agriculture Prevailing Wage Survey



2017

## Introduction

The 2016 Missouri Prevailing Wage Agriculture Survey was conducted by the Missouri Department of Economic Development's research arm, the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Foreign Labor Certification. The purpose of this survey was to gather data to determine the prevailing wage paid to temporary workers in Missouri for different crops or livestock. This data will assist in implementing the federal H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program by determining prevailing wage rates in the agriculture sector and ensuring that both U.S. and foreign workers receive equal pay.

This survey provides wage information for temporary migrant and/or seasonal agriculture workers based on input from agriculture operators across the state.

## About the H-2A Prevailing Wage

For purposes of foreign labor certification, a prevailing wage is defined as the average wage paid to similarly employed workers in the requested occupation in the area of intended employment. Agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of U.S. workers may file an application requesting temporary foreign agricultural labor certification. In order to establish the prevailing wage rate surveys are conducted for each agricultural crop activity in which certification is sought.

The H-2A program permits agricultural employers to apply for foreign workers (guest workers) to perform farm work of a seasonal or temporary nature. The H-2A program is designed to ensure employers a legal and adequate labor force while protecting the jobs and wages of U.S. workers.

## Survey Method

Over 3,300 agricultural operators in Missouri were sent the voluntary wage survey during March of 2017. Due to the lack of an existing comprehensive database covering agricultural businesses, MERIC created a custom database using the following resources:

- Previous agricultural surveys
- The Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) database for Quarter 2 of 2015
- Employer data in the MERIC Workforce Information Database (InfoUSA 2016)
- Previous H2A applications

A mail survey was sent to agriculture businesses during the month of March. Each establishment surveyed had the option of returning the completed form in a postal paid envelope or completing it online at a designated internet site. Some recipients, per request, were sent the link to the electronic survey by email and received no paper survey. Duplicate records in the data sources had been identified and deleted to ensure that agriculture businesses received only one survey.

## Disclosure

Due to the Federal Privacy Act, releasing any data which would divulge information that relates to any identifiable person, business or organization without the prior knowledge or written consent of that person, business or organization is prohibited by law. Various confidentiality rules are applied to all data that are released or published to prevent the publication or disclosure of any information deemed confidential.

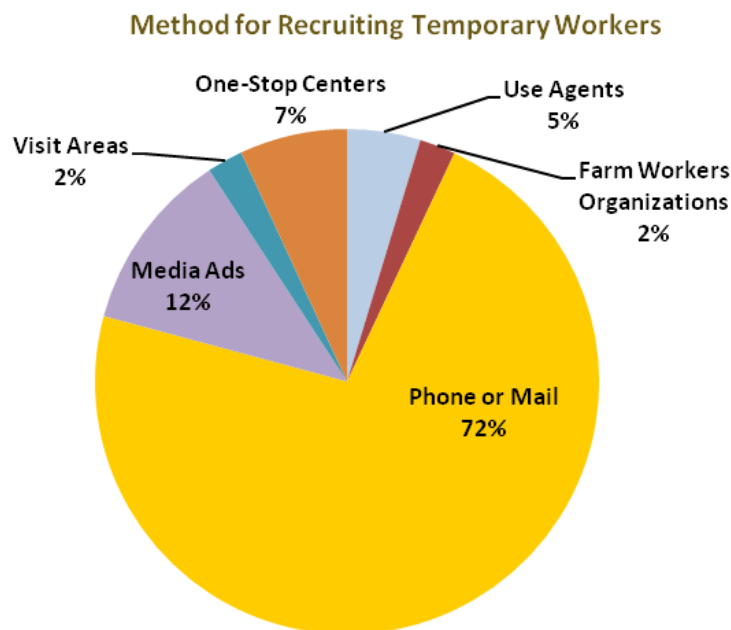
## Survey Results

As of the middle of May, MERIC received 567 completed surveys out of the 3,397 questionnaires mailed to agricultural operators in the state. The response rate of completed surveys to mailed surveys is 16.7 percent.

From the completed survey results, 111 agricultural operators reported employing temporary migrant or seasonal farm workers and 1 of those said they participated in the H-2A Prevailing Wage Program.

## Recruiting Workers

Missouri farmers report that they recruit their temporary workers in several ways. Seventy-two percent (72.1%) of the farmers reported they contact former workers by phone or mail to recruit them. Twelve percent (11.6%) recruit by placing ads in newspapers, etc., and seven percent (6.98%) recruit from One-Stop centers. Three other recruitment methods used are: using an agent, visiting the area where workers live, and contacting farm worker organizations.



## Temporary Workers by Crop

Survey respondents recorded the most temporary workers in the production of apples, bedding plants, and potatoes. Multiple crops and feed corn round out the top five. Missouri farmers hire temporary workers for over forty different crops and livestock jobs.

Crop	Temporary Workers	Crop	Temporary Workers
Apples	136	Cattle	29
Bedding Plants	111	Fruits & Vegetables	28
Potatoes	98	Fish	27
Multiple Crops	74	Hay	26
Corn, Feed	67	Grain	23
Soybeans	66	Grapes	23
Cotton Ginning	52	Cotton	21
Construction, Farm	31	Watermelons	20

## Salaries Paid

Most Missouri temporary agriculture workers are paid by the hour for their work. The amount of money the workers are paid depends on the type of crop or livestock they are tending. Below are some of the lowest and highest average hourly rates.

Lowest Rate Per Hour per Crop/Livestock	
Flowers	\$7.70
Dogs	\$8.00
Cotton Ginning	\$8.17
Irises	\$8.50
Apples	\$8.80
Dairy Cattle	\$9.00

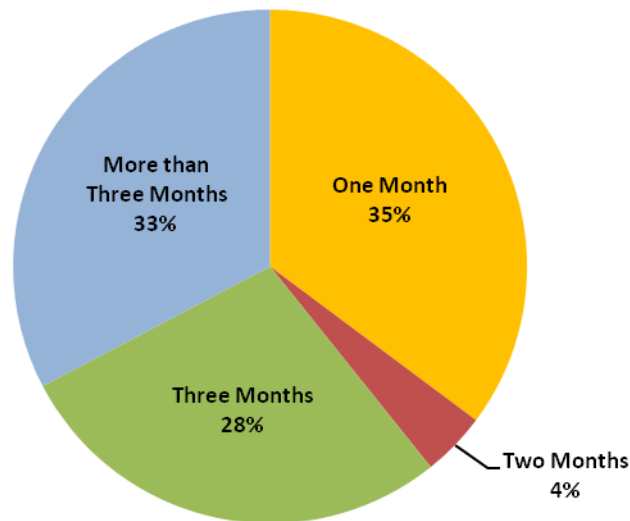
Highest Rate Per Hour per Crop/Livestock	
Berries	\$12.97
Trees	\$13.00
Sod	\$13.12
General Labor	\$13.50
Hay Hauling	\$15.00
Construction, Farm	\$16.50

Temporary farm workers are not always paid an hourly salary. The type of crop or livestock and the employer may affect the method that workers are paid. For example, Hay Harvesting can be paid per bale and Apples by the bushel or bin.

## Tools and Equipment and Occupational Qualifications

Most agriculture employers (80.2%) who hire temporary workers provide tools, supplies, and equipment. One third of employers require one month of agriculture work experience, and another third require more than three months of agriculture work experience. Sixty-one percent (60.9%) of employers require that the seasonal workers be able to operate farm equipment.

Required Agriculture Work Experience



## Housing

Only ten employers (9%) who hired temporary laborers provided some type of housing for their workers. Five employers provided housing for single workers. Two provided for both single and family housing. Two employers provided family housing only. (One respondent did not specify the type of housing provided.) From those employers who provided housing, one charged their employees for utilities, and another charged rent, utilities and a security deposit. Seven provided housing at no charge.

## Transportation

Since many of the temporary farm workers do not live close to their employer, transportation may be another benefit paid to the employees. From those responding to the survey, two employers reported providing transportation benefits to their workers. One provided cash for transportation, and another provided reimbursement for travel costs.

## Appendix A – Rates of Pay

Crop/Livestock	Number Employed	Average Rate of Pay	Type of Pay
Multiple Crops	75	\$11.85	Per Hour
Apples	110	\$8.75	Per Hour
Bedding Plants	88	\$10.02	Per Hour
Berries	8	\$12.97	Per Hour
Calf Weaning	2	\$10.00	Per Hour
Cattle	28	\$11.75	Per Hour
Cattle, Dairy	10	\$9.60	Per Hour
Christmas Trees	13	\$11.00	Per Hour
Construction, Farm	31	\$14.58	Per Hour
Corn	70	\$12.41	Per Hour
Cotton	21	\$9.56	Per Hour
Cotton Ginning	52	\$8.18	Per Hour
Deer	3	\$9.00	Per Hour
Dogs	2	\$8.00	Per Hour
Fescue	3	\$12.00	Per Hour
Fish	27	\$11.67	Per Hour
Flowers	2	\$7.70	Per Hour
Fruit & Vegetables	20	\$10.15	Per Hour
Grain	10	\$10.23	Per Hour
Grapes	33	\$8.27	Per Hour
Greenhouse	6	\$9.67	Per Hour
Hay	24	\$11.04	Per Hour
Hay Hauling	1	\$15.00	Per Hour
Irises	4	\$8.75	Per Hour
Labor, General	3	\$12.00	Per Hour
Livestock	7	\$10.86	Per Hour
Mowing/Brushhogging	5	\$10.00	Per Hour
Mushrooms	3	\$10.00	Per Hour
Nursery Plants	1	\$10.00	Per Hour
Peaches	1	\$10.00	Per Hour



## Appendix A – Rates of Pay

<b>Crop/Livestock</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>	<b>Average Rate of Pay</b>	<b>Type of Pay</b>
Peanuts	1	\$10.00	Per Hour
Perennials	20	\$13.00	Per Hour
Potatoes	80	\$9.50	Per Hour
Poultry	6	\$10.00	Per Hour
Pumpkins	5	\$11.00	Per Hour
Rice	5	\$12.00	Per Hour
Sod	10	\$13.12	Per Hour
Soybeans	65	\$12.60	Per Hour
Swine	10	\$10.50	Per Hour
Trees, Nursery	4	\$11.50	Per Hour
Watermelons	20	\$11.00	Per Hour
Wheat	13	\$11.33	Per Hour
Wheat Planting	1	\$10.00	Per Hour
Other	5	\$11.60	Per Hour

## Appendix B – Survey Letter

Dear Crop Grower/Livestock Handler:

The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) is gathering data to determine the agricultural prevailing wage in Missouri.\*\* Prevailing wage rates are used to ensure that farm workers receive equal pay. Completion of the attached survey will ensure the establishment of an accurate wage rate.

The information you supply is **confidential** and protected by the **Federal Privacy Act**. All information will be combined with that of other growers/handlers within Missouri to ensure individually identifiable information is not released. The survey answers should be based on your harvest or production season. If you are not within your harvest/production season, the survey should be completed based upon the last year's season. If you hire temporary workers who work as farm construction laborers (rather than crop workers or livestock tenders), we would appreciate you completing the survey, too.

**Please return the completed survey within 14 days** using the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed or faxing the survey to 573-751-9843. If you would like to complete this survey online, please log on to our website at: <http://www.missourieconomy.org/form.html>. For assistance or additional information about this survey, please contact Darla Horman, MERIC Prevailing Wage Project Contact, at [darla.horman@ded.mo.gov](mailto:darla.horman@ded.mo.gov) or 573-751-8634.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Alan Spell, MERIC Research Manager

*\*\*MERIC is the research unit for the Missouri Department of Economic Development. This survey is conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Division of Foreign Labor Certification.*

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MISSOURI ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER  
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Department of Economic Development