Missouri
Agriculture Prevailing Wage Survey



2014

MISSOURI ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The 2014 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

Just over 2,900 agricultural operators in Missouri were sent the voluntary wage survey during March of 2015. 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 1 of 2013
- Employer data in the MERIC Workforce Information Database (InfoUSA 2013)
- 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.

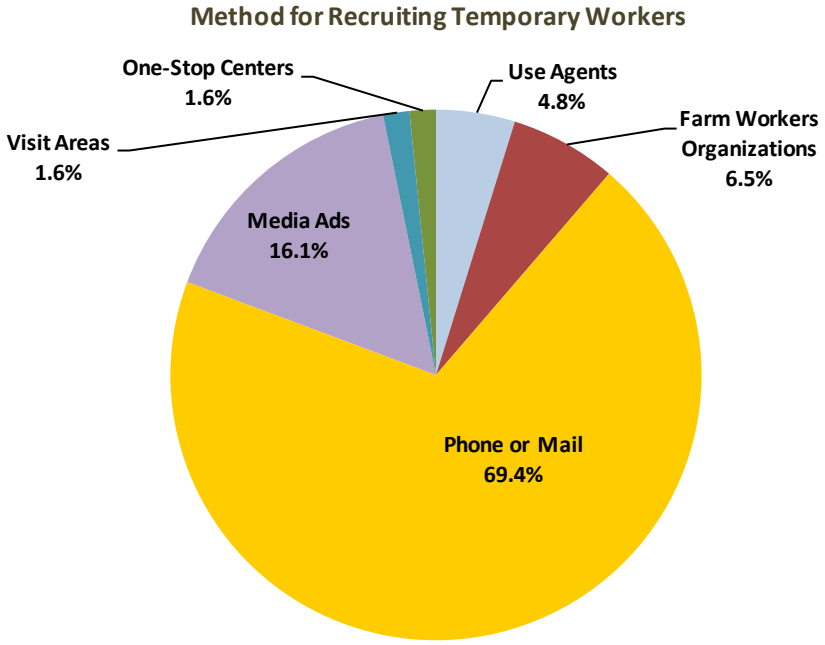
Survey Results

As of the middle of April, MERIC received 419 completed surveys out of the 2,911 questionnaires mailed to agricultural operators in the state. The response rate of completed surveys to mailed surveys is 14.4 percent.

From the completed survey results, 84 agricultural operators reported employing temporary migrant or seasonal farm workers and 4 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. Sixty-nine percent (69.4%) of the farmers reported they contact former workers by phone or mail to recruit them. Sixteen percent (16.1%) recruit by placing ads in newspapers, etc., while six percent (6.5%) reported they recruit by contacting farm worker organizations. Three other recruitment methods used are: visiting the areas where workers live, One-Stop career centers, and using an agent.



Temporary Workers by Crop

Survey respondents recorded the most temporary workers in the production of apples, multiple crops, and soybeans. Nursery plants 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	87	Grapes	35
Multiple Crops	67	Watermelons	33
Soybeans	66	Cattle	31
Nursery Plants	55	Labor, General	26
Corn, Feed	53	Christmas Trees	24
Bedding Plants	52	Trees	21
Poultry	50	Cotton Ginning	21
Cotton	41	Wheat	18

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	
Cotton Ginning	$7.65
Fish	$7.83
Blueberries	$8.00
Christmas Trees	$8.00
Labor, General	$8.50
Irises	$9.00

Highest Rate Per Hour per Crop/Livestock	
Corn	$11.96
Watermelons	$12.00
Sod	$12.24
Wheat	$12.44
Dairy Cattle	$12.50
Swine	$12.58

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 Hauling can be paid per load, Grapes by weight, and Soybeans and Wheat per acre.

Tools and Equipment

Most agriculture employers (77.4%) who hire temporary workers provide tools, supplies, and equipment. Seventy percent (70.4%) of employers require that the seasonal workers be able to operate farm equipment.

Housing

Only ten employers (12%) who hired temporary laborers provided some type of housing for their workers. Five employers provided housing for single workers. Three provided for both single and family housing. Two employers provided family housing only. From those employers who provided housing, only two charged their employees for utilities. One charged for rent and utilities, and one required 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, five employers reported providing transportation benefits to their workers. Two provided reimbursement for travel costs, one provided cash for transportation, one provided only a gas allowance, and the last provided a bus ticket and a gas allowance.

Crop/Livestock	Number Employed	Average Rate of Pay	Type of Pay
Multiple Crops	65	$10.61	Per Hour
Apples	87	$8.59	Per Hour
Bedding Plants	39	$10.37	Per Hour
Blueberries	3	$8.00	Per Hour
Cattle	31	$10.51	Per Hour
Cattle, Dairy	2	$12.50	Per Hour
Christmas Trees	24	$8.00	Per Hour
Corn	52	$11.74	Per Hour
Cotton	41	$10.51	Per Hour
Cotton Ginning	21	$7.65	Per Hour
Fish	1	$7.83	Per Hour
Fruit	5	$9.50	Per Hour
Grain	7	$9.93	Per Hour
Grapes	22	$10.51	Per Hour
Greenhouse	3	$10.00	Per Hour
Hay	11	$10.56	Per Hour
Irises	5	$9.00	Per Hour
Labor, General	26	$8.50	Per Hour
Livestock	7	$12.86	Per Hour
Mowing / Brush Hogging	3	$9.33	Per Hour
Nursery Plants	55	$9.25	Per Hour
Peaches	5	$9.50	Per Hour
Potatoes	10	$11.00	Per Hour
Poultry	50	$7.86	Per Hour
Rice	6	$10.67	Per Hour
Sod	16	$15.50	Per Hour
Soybeans	65	$11.60	Per Hour
Strawberries	5	$9.50	Per Hour
Swine	18	$15.08	Per Hour
Tomatoes	3	$9.33	Per Hour

Appendix A – Rates of Pay

Crop/Livestock	Number Employed	Average Rate of Pay	Type of Pay
Trees	21	$9.22	Per Hour
Turkey Eggs	3	$9.40	Per Hour
Vegetables	17	$9.56	Per Hour
Watermelons	12	$9.63	Per Hour
Wheat	15	$12.70	Per Hour
Other	6	$9.08	Per Hour

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.

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 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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