

Fewer Hired Workers on Farms This Year

The Lake Region (Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota) employed 64,000 agricultural workers during the week of July 6 – 12, 2008, down 18 percent from last year. Rain and wet conditions severely hampered most field activities in the Lake Region, creating a lesser need for field workers. The average number of hours worked per employee was 36.5. The average wage rate for all hired agricultural workers was \$10.75 per hour, up 49 cents from the July 2007 reference week. An employee is classified as a livestock worker if they were hired to tend livestock, milk cows, care for poultry, or operate machinery on livestock farms. Livestock workers in the Lake Region earned an average of \$10.09 per hour during the reference week. If an employee is engaged in planting, tending, and harvesting crops, including operating machinery on crop farms, they are considered a field worker. Field workers in the Lake Region averaged \$10.10 per hour during the July reference week.

There were 1.17 million people hired on U.S. farms and ranches the week of July 6 – 12, 2008. Of these workers, 828,000 were hired directly by farm operators. The remaining 345,000 people were hired for agricultural services. Veterinarians, hoof trimmers, and people who provide custom work to farmers are some examples of agricultural service workers. The average number of hours worked for all hired workers was 40.5. Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$10.34 per hour, up 35 cents from a year ago. Field workers earned an average of \$9.66 per hour, while livestock workers averaged \$9.98 per hour.