

Food System Committee Sector Report May 2026

Labor

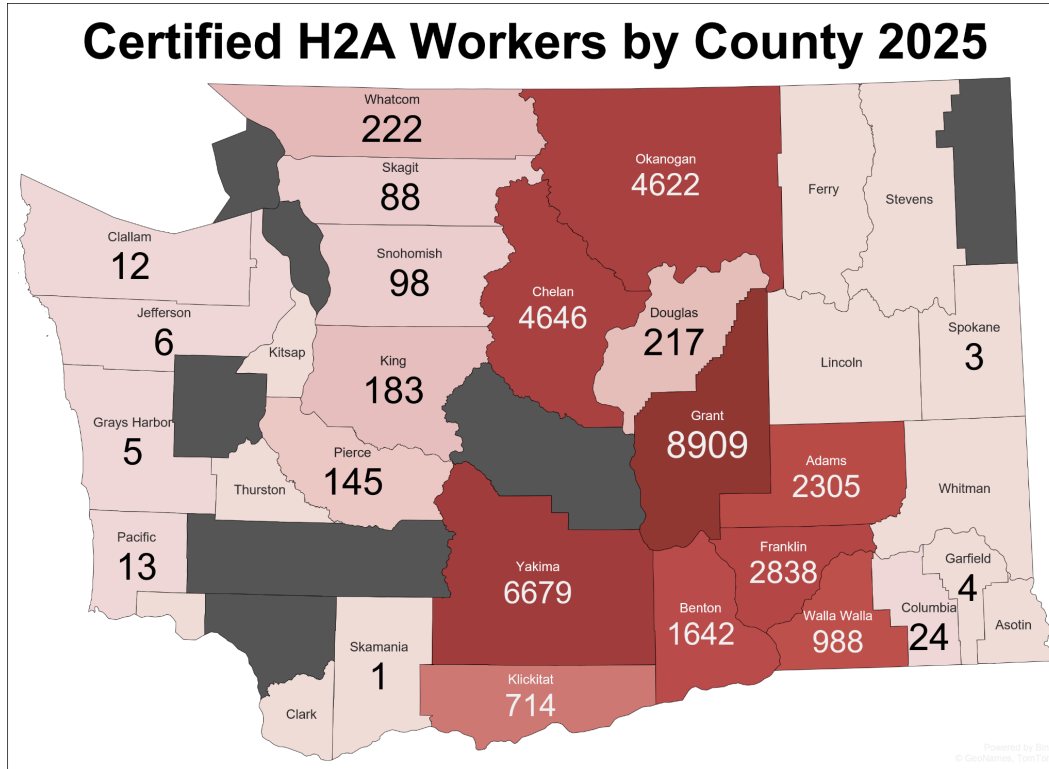
State of H2A Contracts in Whatcom County in 2026

- Current estimates of US Agriculture Workforce nationally
 - At least [2.4 million](#) workers
 - Only [32%](#) of agricultural workers are US born
 - About [40%](#) of agricultural workers are undocumented
- Current Estimates of H-2A in US as a whole
 - About [15%](#) of agricultural workers in the US are employed through the H-2A Visa Program
 - Only 6% of H-2A positions are connected to animal agriculture

In 2025, Washington was the state with the 4th largest count of new H2-A positions in the country with [8.7%](#) of the total certified positions in the nation. Of these 34,560 new positions [34,298](#) were filled by new H2A workers.



Over the last 18 years the H2A program has grown significantly in Washington to the point where Washington has become one of the top 4-5 states that use the H2A Visa Program. Much of this growth has occurred on the east side of the state.



This map highlights all counties that have had H2A workers present over the last 16 years. The numbers are the amount of H2A workers that were contracted for 2025.

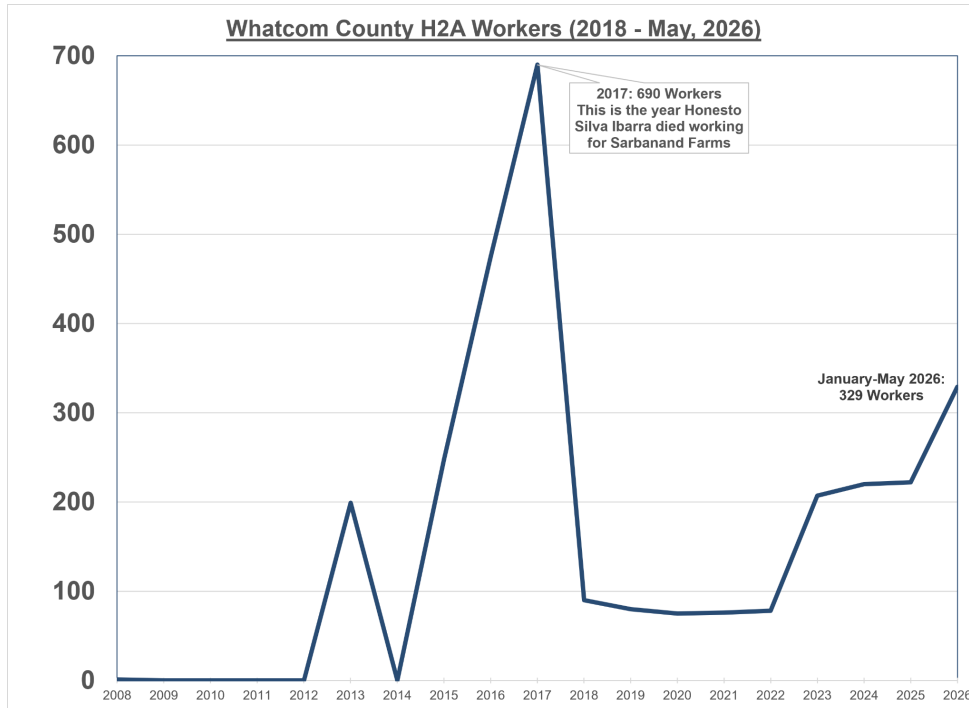
Statewide only 77 H-2A visa recipients, about 0.2% of those present in the state in 2025, were allowed to change employers under the same visa. This shows how tied H-2A visas are to the beneficiaries' employer.

Whatcom

Over the past 16 years the use of H-2A Contracts in Whatcom County has grown from nonexistent to over 300 workers. This amount does not reach the concentration of the use on the east side of the state, however we have seen its impacts in the past and we are seeing its impact in the present day.

From 2013 to 2017 Sarbanand Farms brought up to 610 workers to Whatcom County. 506 of these workers were transferred from another employer to Sarbanand.

In 2017, amidst poor air quality from wildfires and high temperatures one of the workers, Honesto Silva Ibarra, passed away while working one of these contracts. Workers at Sarbanand Farms decided to go on strike and walk out protesting poor conditions and L&I violations. After this, Sarbanand and their parent company Munger Bro's got debarred and were not allowed to contract H2A workers.



In 2025, there were two H-2A employers in Whatcom county, Enfield Farms, Inc and Crystal View Raspberry Farms. Enfield Farms, Inc had 2 contracts for 96 and 65 positions. For the first contract, 96 new H2A workers came to Whatcom County. 37 of these workers were kept to fill the second contract, plus twenty five new H2A workers, leaving three vacancies total. Crystal View Raspberry Farms had 2 contracts of 3 and 58 positions. This was filled by 62 workers (meaning that Crystal View received one additional H2A worker over what they requested.) This means that there were 222 positions that were given to H2A workers in the county.

As of today in 2026, there are 7 H-2A employers with one contract each.

Maberry Farms	100
Enfield Farm, Inc.	94
Crystal View Raspberry Farm	72
Smith Gardens	25
Rader Farms	24

Brar Brothers Farms	10
Mariposa Farms	4

These contracts add up to 329 positions that will be offered to H2A workers. This means that half way through this year H-2A numbers have already increased to more than all of 2026. While state law says that an employer must seek and hire local workers before receiving an H2A worker contract, we can clearly see that is not happening.

As of 5/19 three of the contracts have already begun:
Smith Gardens, Enfield, and Crystal View.

Since this amount has increased, Community to Community Development has received reports of local workers being told that their previous jobs are no longer there and of workers with families being kicked out of the very housing listed on the contracts that farms have applied to use as housing for H2A Workers. Additionally, Community to Community Development has had reports that food banks are now feeling the strain from the needs of both H-2A workers and the local workers they have displaced.