

Christmas Tree Industry of Oregon

Seasonal Greens: The Role of Oregon's Christmas Tree Industry on Jobs and Employment

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Oregon's Christmas tree industry is a cornerstone of the state's agricultural sector, producing 3.4 million trees annually and generating approximately \$117.6 million in gross sales in 2023. As the leading producer in the nation, Oregon supplies over 33% of the U.S. Christmas tree market. Beyond its monetary value, the industry plays a critical role in supporting thousands of seasonal jobs, particularly in rural areas. Workers are employed for a variety of tasks, including harvesting, packing, and transportation, providing economic stability to local communities during the holiday season.

Key Findings:

- In 2023, Oregon growers sold 3.2 million Christmas trees, generating \$117.6 million in gross sales, with the average price per tree increasing to \$37.10, reflecting strong demand for high-quality varieties.
- Oregon remains the leading Christmas tree producer in the U.S., accounting for 33% of national production in 2022.
- About 92% of Oregon's Christmas trees were exported in 2023, primarily to California (45%) and Mexico (16%), with the remainder distributed across other U.S. regions.
- The industry supports significant seasonal employment, with payroll employment averaging 599 workers annually and peaking at over 1,000 during the November harvest.
- Payroll employees in the industry earned an annual average pay of \$44,833 in 2023, contributing \$26.8 million to Oregon's total payroll.
- Noble firs (51%) and Douglas firs (38%) dominate production, valued for their premium quality and broad consumer appeal.
- In 2023, Oregon's Christmas tree farms covered 33,916 acres, supported by 318 licensed growers, with Clackamas and Marion counties leading production.

Jobs and Employment in Oregon's Christmas Tree Industry

The Christmas tree industry is a vital source of employment in Oregon, requiring significant labor and coordination to deliver fresh and high-quality trees to markets each year. From planting and growing trees, which take at least six years to reach marketable height, to harvesting and transporting them, the industry supports a range of jobs across multiple sectors. These include nursery and tree production, wholesale distribution, and retail sales. The labor-intensive harvest process involves chain saws, shaking and baling equipment, and even helicopters to haul trees from the fields. Finally, transportation and retail workers complete the journey from farm to living room.

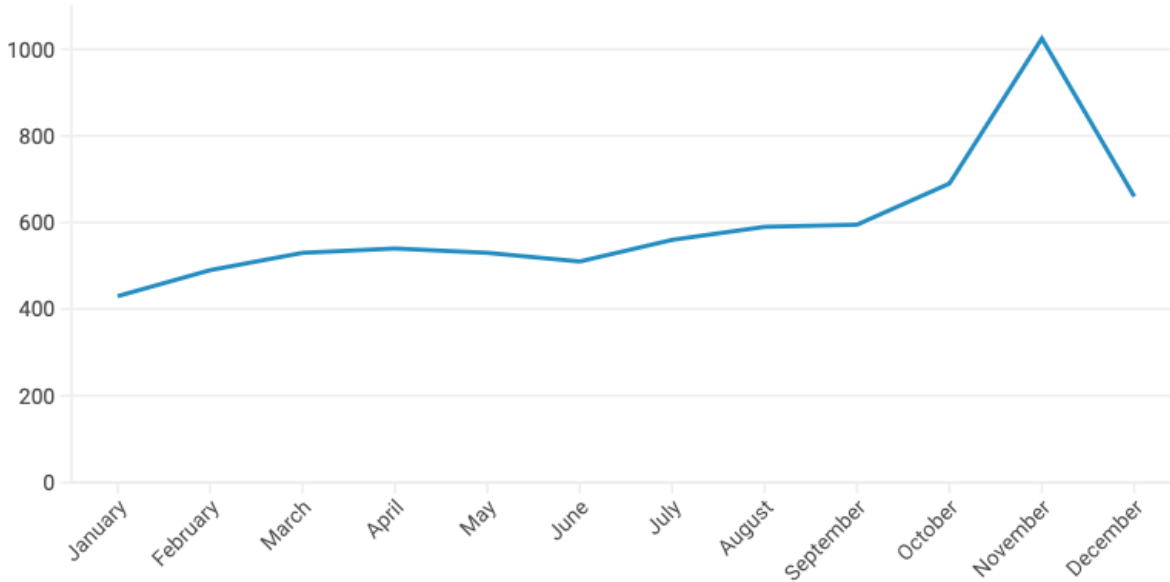
Oregon's Christmas tree industry leads the nation, producing 3.2 million trees in 2023 and generating an estimated \$167.3 million in revenue in 2022.

Counting employment within the Christmas tree industry is challenging since its activities span multiple broad industries. Despite this, data from the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Employment Department provide a rough picture. In 2023, there were 318 licensed Christmas tree growers cultivating about 34,000 acres of land. By matching ODA license records with unemployment insurance data Oregon Employment Department reported that 70 companies in the industry reported payroll employment.

Employment patterns in the industry reflect its highly seasonal nature. In 2023, payroll employment averaged 599 workers annually, with total payroll reaching \$26.8 million. During the harvest season in November, employment spiked to just over 1,000 workers, highlighting the intensive labor required during this peak period. Despite the seasonal nature of work, the annual average pay for payroll employees was \$44,833, demonstrating the significant economic contribution of these jobs to rural and agricultural communities in Oregon.

2023 Covered Employment in Christmas Tree Growing

In 2023, payroll employment at these companies stayed steady through much of the year, rose modestly in the fall, and reached its highest levels during the November harvest, exceeding 1,000 workers.



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Christmas Trees Create Jobs During the Holiday Season

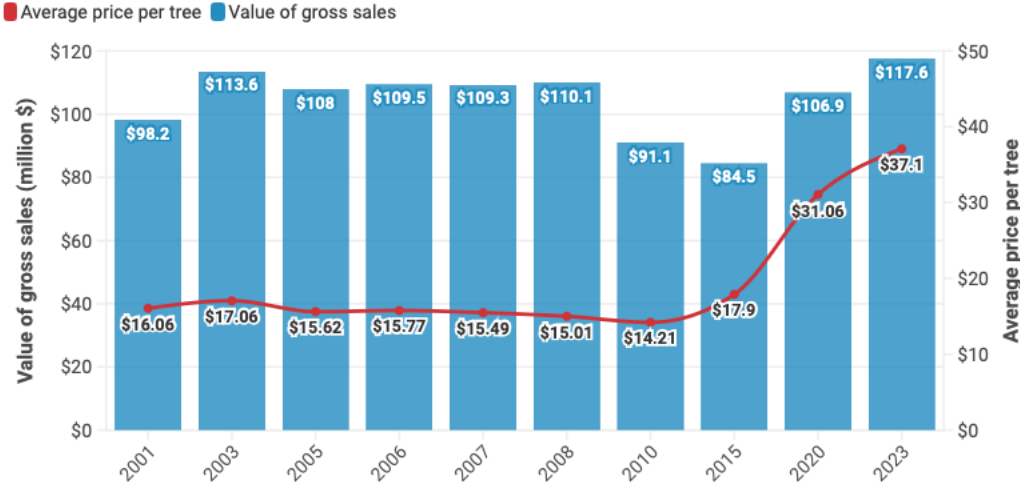
Production, Sales, and Dominant Varieties in Oregon’s Christmas Tree Industry

Oregon’s Christmas tree industry is a cornerstone of the state’s agricultural economy, with growers adapting to market changes while maintaining their position as the leading producer in the United States. In 2023, growers harvested and sold 3.17 million trees, an 8% decrease from 2020. Despite this decline, the gross sales value rose by 10% during the same period, reaching \$118 million, reflecting higher average prices driven by strong demand for high-quality trees. The average price per tree increased from \$31.06 in 2020 to \$37.10 in 2023, nearly doubling from \$17.90 in 2015.

Oregon Christmas Tree Sales

(Sale; in millions)

Last year, Oregon farmers achieved record-high sales of \$118 million from Christmas trees, despite selling 4 million fewer trees than in 2008, reflecting higher prices.



Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Northwest Region Office

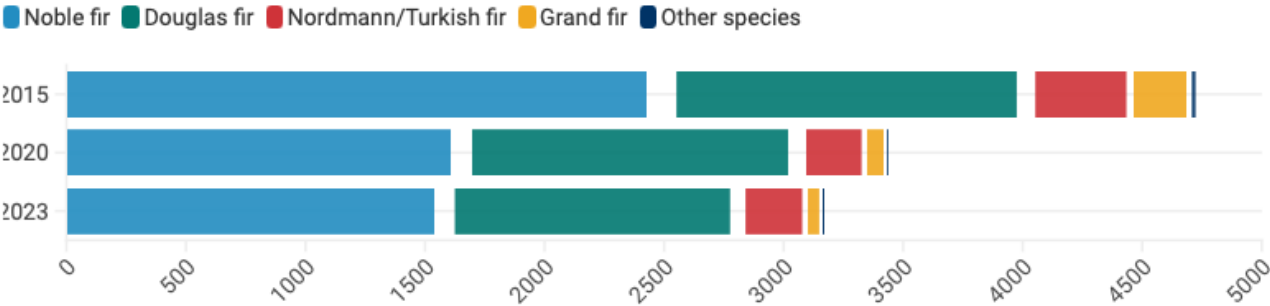
Growers across Oregon cultivated 33,916 acres of Christmas trees in 2023, up 9% from 2020. Clackamas County led production with 9,442 acres, followed by Marion County with 7,711 acres, accounting for nearly half of the state’s Christmas tree-growing area. These counties play a critical role in supplying trees for both domestic and international markets.

Noble fir and Douglas fir continue to dominate the market, collectively representing 89% of trees sold in 2023. Noble firs remained the industry leader, accounting for 51% of all trees sold, valued for their symmetrical shape, long-lasting needles, and premium quality. Douglas firs followed, contributing 38%, favored for their traditional appearance and affordability. Nordmann/Turkish fir, while representing a smaller share of sales, fetched the highest average price at \$49.69 per tree, indicating a niche but lucrative market for this variety. Other species, including Grand fir and mixed types, made up the remaining 11% of sales, adding diversity to Oregon’s offerings.

Noble firs and Douglas firs dominate the market, collectively accounting for nearly 90% of trees sold in 2023. Noble firs lead with 51% of sales, prized for their premium quality, long-lasting needles, and symmetrical shape. Douglas firs follow at 38%, favored for their traditional look and affordability. Other species, including Grand firs and Nordmann/Turkish firs, represent a smaller share of production but appeal to niche markets, adding diversity to the state’s offerings.

Christmas Trees Sold by Variety – Oregon: 2015, 2020, 2023 (in thousands)

Noble firs have consistently been the most popular Christmas tree variety sold in Oregon, followed by Douglas firs, with other species like Grand firs and Nordmann firs making up a smaller share of sales.



Source: United States Department of Agriculture • Other species include Pine, Fraser Fir, and Balsam Fir.

Exports: Spreading Holiday Cheer Beyond the Pacific Northwest

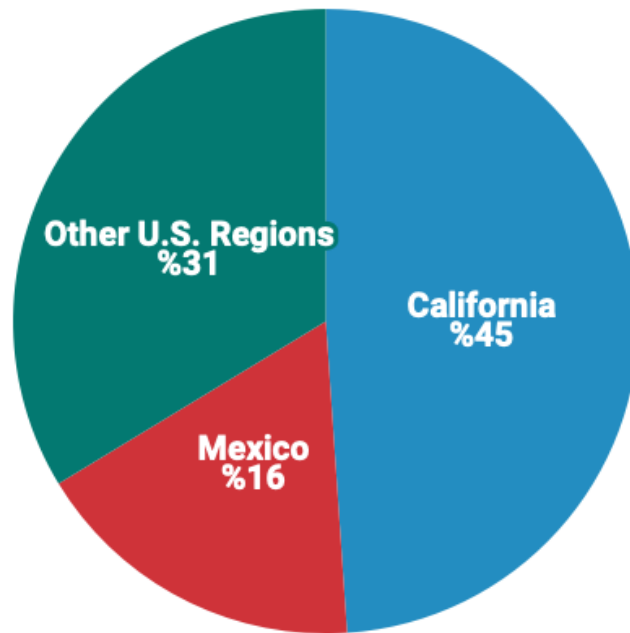
Oregon remains the top Christmas tree-producing state in the United States, accounting for 33% of the nation’s total production, according to the *Oregon Department of Agriculture*. In 2022, the industry generated an estimated \$167.3 million in sales, highlighting its vital role in both the state’s agricultural economy and the national market. By 2023, Oregon growers harvested and sold approximately 3.2 million trees, further cementing the state’s dominance in the industry.

Oregon’s Christmas tree industry plays a vital role in holiday celebrations across the U.S. and beyond, with the majority of its production exported out of the Pacific Northwest. In 2023, about 92% of harvested trees left the region. California emerged as the largest destination, receiving 45% of these trees,

followed by Mexico, which imported 16%. The remaining trees were shipped to other U.S. regions, particularly the Southwest. This robust export activity underscores the widespread demand for Oregon-grown trees, renowned for their quality and freshness, and highlights the industry’s significant economic reach beyond local markets.

Where Pacific Northwest Christmas Trees Travel: Export Destinations

Approximately **92%** of Pacific Northwest Christmas tree production is exported, with **California** receiving the largest share at 45%, followed by **Mexico** at 16%, and the remaining portion sent to other U.S. regions, primarily the **Southwest**.



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Christmas Trees Create Jobs During the Holiday Season