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#### **Our Mission:**

The mission of the South Plains workforce system is to meet the needs of the region's employers for a highly skilled workforce by educating and preparing workers.

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## **December Newsletter**

### **Lubbock MSA and Regional Unemployment**



#### **Upcoming Events:**

South Plains Job Fair  
Lubbock Memorial Civic  
Center  
-April 25, 2018-

South Plains Career Expo  
Lubbock Memorial Civic  
Center  
~October 23, 2018~

South Plains Job Fair  
Lubbock Memorial Civic

Lubbock's MSA unemployment rate for November was 2.7% compared to October's 2.5% and 3.2% in November 2016. Amarillo and Midland MSA's recorded the lowest unemployment rate at 2.6% followed by Austin-Round Rock, College Station-Bryan and Lubbock MSA's at 2.7%.

\*Employment estimates released by TWC are produced in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. All estimates are subject to revision. To access this and more employment data, visit [tracer2.com](http://tracer2.com).

The TWC Lubbock MSA and South Plains WDA Economic Profiles provide a breakdown of employment by industry. Click on the images to the right to access the profiles.

(Image located on page 3)

Center

-October 2018-

Hiring Red, White & You  
Veterans Job Fair  
-November 2018-



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## CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Metro Areas (Seasonally Adjusted)

Metro Areas	Apr 2017	Monthly Change	Annual Change	Annual % Change
Abilene MSA	68,100	100	700	1.0
Amarillo MSA	121,300	-1,100	1,200	1.0
Austin-Round Rock MSA	1,021,900	-400	29,300	3.0
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	164,000	900	-800	-0.5
Brownsville-Harlingen MSA	143,000	100	2,700	1.9
College Station-Bryan MSA	115,900	-400	2,500	2.2
Corpus Christi MSA	192,400	-100	1,400	0.7
Dallas-FW-Arlington MSA	3,582,400	-18,000	99,600	2.9
Dallas-Plano-Irving MD	2,555,000	-15,600	76,600	3.1
Fort Worth-Arlington MD	1,027,800	-3,200	22,600	2.2
El Paso MSA	317,000	400	9,200	3.0
Houston MSA	3,044,300	13,700	44,000	1.5
Killeen-Temple MSA	146,600	500	3,600	2.5
Laredo MSA	104,000	100	2,300	2.3
Longview MSA	96,700	300	-600	-0.6
Lubbock MSA	146,300	-1,000	800	0.5
McAllen MSA	256,700	600	4,900	1.9
Midland MSA	87,800	-100	100	0.1
Odessa MSA	69,800	100	-200	-0.3
San Angelo MSA	48,600	400	-500	-1.0
San Antonio MSA	1,035,600	3,800	24,800	2.5
Sherman-Denison MSA	47,000	100	1,000	2.2
Texarkana MSA	60,200	-500	-800	-1.3
Tyler MSA	106,200	400	2,300	2.2
Victoria MSA	42,000	200	-300	-0.7
Waco MSA	120,400	600	2,200	1.9
Wichita Falls MSA	58,000	400	-100	-0.2

### Highlights

(MSA industry data are not seasonally adjusted)

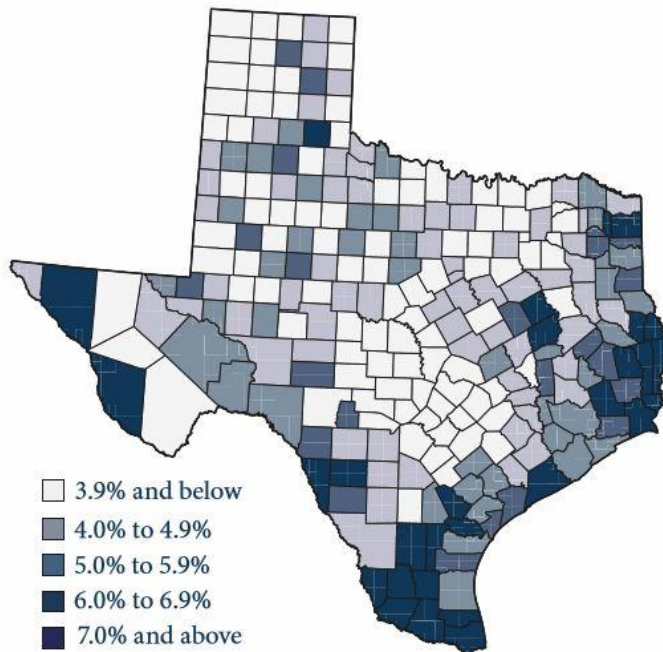
- Seventeen of 26 areas grew in April for a combined increase of 22,700 jobs. Nineteen areas grew over the year, while seven areas contracted.
- The Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA accounted for more than half of all area employment gains over the month. The MSA increased its annual growth rate to 1.5 percent.
- The San Angelo MSA grew fastest in percentage terms with a 0.8 percent April expansion. Per not seasonally adjusted industry data, Retail Trade and Other Services each added 200 jobs over the month, while Government was down 200 positions.
- The Dallas-Plano-Irving MD led in actual and percentage job growth annually. Professional and Business Services led all major industries with 21,000 positions gained, followed by Leisure and Hospitality with 10,900 jobs added.
- The Beaumont-PA and the Texarkana MSAs lost the most jobs annually. The loss of 2,100 jobs in Retail was primarily responsible for the contraction in the Beaumont-PA MSA, while employment losses in Texarkana were spread across industries.



Click image to  
view full report:

Lubbock Metropolitan  
Statistical Area (MSA)

## County Unemployment Rates



(Image located on page 6)



Click image to  
view full report:

South Plains Regional  
Workforce Development Area



Steve Newsom, Levelland, Texas, is a cotton farmer through and through. But wine grapes and other diversification methods help him ensure that future generations of his family will have resources available to grow high quality cotton. (Journal photo by Jennifer M. Latzke.)

Sustainability is a buzzword that gets thrown around in a lot of conversations in agriculture these days.

But for farmers like Steve Newsom of Levelland, Texas, using technology and ingenuity to run an efficient farm isn't just economically practical, it's also ensuring his children and future generations have the resources they need in the future.

Part of Newsom's success as a farmer is looking not just at what works today, but what sets him up for success in the years to come. Since his first cotton crop as a farmer in 1989, Newsom has adapted his farming practices to what is economically viable to his farm, and yet environmentally sustainable to his land. His 4,000 acres of crops is a diversified mix of mostly cotton, but also peanuts, corn, alfalfa and more recently non-traditional high value crops like wine grapes and apple orchards.

"Cotton is in my blood," Newsom said. In order to ensure his cotton has the best resources available to it, he needed to rethink how he allocates water on his farm. Diversifying his crop rotations is one way to help ease that water use as well as mitigating weed and pest resistance issues.

But out in West Texas, water is key.

"We are realistic about our water and I saw the writing on the wall long before our water started falling off," Newsom said. Water efficiency is what drew Newsom into growing wine grapes since they are very efficient users of water and he can save more for future cotton crops.

"I get scowled at, but we see ourselves converting irrigated cotton acres to dryland and convert some of that water saved to drip irrigation and still have the same

amount of acres in production,” Newsom explained. For example, a well that can pump 150 gallons of water per minute might be better utilized by applying a reduced amount of water to a high value crop like wine grapes, converting some of the cotton to dryland, and still bring returns to the farm.

Out of necessity he’s switched from flood and sideroll irrigation methods to drip irrigation with some pivot where feasible. He’s also got at least a quarter section or so in dryland production.

For Newsom, the issue is not just the quantity of water available to pump, but also the quality of water available. In his area, as the levels in the aquifer drop off, the manganese that has been present in the water is more noticeable, especially to drip irrigators. While manganese isn’t a pollutant—it’s actually a micronutrient that plants need in some form—it can plug up drip emitters in subsurface drip irrigation. By injecting concentrated amounts of hydrogen peroxide, an organic substance, farmers can clear those emitters of the concreted manganese.

But converting to more efficient ways of conserving resources isn’t just good for Newsom’s bottom line. It can be a marketable aspect to cotton buyers who want to be assured that they’re buying a sustainable crop and need the traceability to prove it to their own customers. That’s part of why Newsom signed up with Bayer CropScience’s e3 certified cotton program.

Farmers can voluntarily sign up for the e3 program and third-party independent auditors certify that the farmer has grown e3 cotton to three standards:

Environmental responsibility; Economic viability; and social Equitability. They use the online Fieldprint Calculator that was designed by Field to Market. They then work from a baseline of their current farming practices to improve how they use their resources. They can find “hotspot” situations where they can improve. The e3 plans can then be used for future training and information sharing among growers.

Newsom said he and his neighbors are already adapting to fewer acres of irrigation, going dryland where it makes more sense and putting in drip irrigation where needed.

“For myself, what we get out of the e3 program isn’t so much how we can make the most dollars, but how do we stretch this out for the next generation,” Newsom said. “Water may be good now, but how will it be for the next three generations? My kids are 23 and 25 years old and they’ve been in the operation, hand-in-hand since they were kids and they’ve seen these issues.”

Another aspect of the e3 program that appeals to Newsom is the emphasis on social equitability. West Texas farmers, like himself, have to compete with the oil fields for workers. That means that they need to provide a good and safe work environment for their employees, but also offer competitive wages that allow their employees to advance.

“We work with first and second generation immigrants and we’ve embraced creating a good work environment,” he said. “There’s no reason, between the advances in technology, equipment and economics that you can’t create a good working environment. I want my workers to be able to build nice homes and have nice pickups and help their kids go to school.” With the technology advancements on the farm, though, also comes the need for employees who can adapt to the changing technology. And that means encouraging young people to come back to their rural communities with their skills and their families, thus giving smaller towns like Levelland a stable future.

“The social equitability part? That’s by choice,” Newsom said. “Look, you can be greedy if you want. But what we’ve found is that if we pay an employee better and make them a part of the success of our operation, our economics will improve.” Happy employees stay on the farm and their families stay in the community—benefitting everyone.

Looking beyond his farm gate to how his farm economically impacts his community is another aspect of the e3 program that's opened Newsom's eyes. Not only does he grow wine grapes as a high value crop, but now he has also developed a few side businesses that add to the community. One of which is a partnership with two other wine grape growers called Trilogy Cellars, a tasting room and winery in Levelland. "The grapes that are grown here are shipped to Austin and Fredrickburg and turned into wine," Newsom said. Friends would ask where they could buy a bottle of wine made from Newsom's grapes and he would have to tell them that he didn't have that capability. He and his two colleagues, Rowdy Bolen and Chace Hill, who met serving on the board of directors for the High Plains Wine Growers, decided to make a three-family Malbec bottle for the holidays one year—just for friends and family. But then Hill's grandmother had a retail space open for rent in Levelland and the three decided to take the plunge.

The tasting room is now a renovated retail space in a growing community of about 14,000 that serves a population of about 80,000 in a 25-mile radius. It's also an anchor in a growing revitalized Main Street square.

Newsom said the diversity of his business operations comes back to sustaining what he loves to do the most—growing cotton.

"I'm a cotton farmer," he said. "I'm one of a million cotton farmers. There's nothing special there. And the grapes are unique, sure. But when I get up in the morning, until I lay my head on a pillow at night, my time is spent figuring out how I can grow cotton better. It's something I never want to quit." Doing it better, more economically, more environmentally efficiently and in a way that can sustain his family and his community is what the e3 program helps him do.

Sustainability is more than a buzzword for Newsom, it's an investment in his family's future in farming.



**Jennifer M. Latzke can be reached at 620-227-1807 or [jlatzke@hpi.com](mailto:jlatzke@hpi.com).**

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## **Texas Adds 54,500 Jobs in November**

*State unemployment rate is 3.7 percent in November*

AUSTIN – Texas has added an estimated 330,600 seasonally adjusted jobs over the year with the addition of 54,500 nonfarm jobs this November. The Texas economy has grown annually for 91 consecutive month.

Read the full [press release](#).

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Sources:

Texas Labor Market Review

[http://www.tracer2.com/admin/uploadedPublications/2138\\_TLMR-Current\\_Edition.pdf](http://www.tracer2.com/admin/uploadedPublications/2138_TLMR-Current_Edition.pdf)

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Workforce Solutions South Plains Community Stakeholder

Our mailing address is:

Workforce Solutions South Plains Board Administration

1301 Broadway, Ste. 201, Lubbock, TX 79401

(806) 744-1987

[www.spworkforce.org](http://www.spworkforce.org)

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