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Laborers Plentiful for Wheat Harvest

Custom cutters are having no problem this season finding enough people to fill out their crews as wheat harvest gets under way.

Pam Shmidl, operations manager for the industry group U.S. Custom Harvesters in Hutchinson, said Wednesday many cutters found all the labor they needed long before harvest started because of the nation's unemployment situation.

But she said the custom harvesters who usually hire foreign workers to run their combines and trucks during harvest have hired foreign labor again.

Among them is Kent Braathen of Grand Forks, N.D. He hired most of the nine workers on his crew from South Africa, as usual.

Braathen says going outside the country has been the easiest way to find people who will stay and work throughout the seven months of harvest. Braathen was in Kiowa, Kan., cutting wheat on Wednesday.

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