

Agricultural Development Council

Update of

Christian
County

COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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Submitted by:

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Comprehensive Plan Update

County Agricultural Development Councils have the responsibility to evaluate the needs of the local agricultural economy. The updated County Comprehensive Plan should identify programs and projects best suited for agricultural development fund investments in the County.

The Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy staff may provide guidance to county councils throughout this evaluation.

1. Overview of County

Christian County is located in the southwest portion of Kentucky. It is a geographically diverse county, ranging from highly productive cropland in the south, with the north end of the county consisting of steep, timbered hillsides and rolling ridge-top fields. Generating nearly \$85,000,000 million dollars in 2014, Christian County ranks 4th in the state for overall farm receipts. While most crop producing operations have felt the need to expand their operations to compete in a global economy, the majority of farms in our area are still heavily dependent on tobacco as a main source of revenue.

Hopkinsville is the county seat of Christian County, and has a population of nearly 38,000 people. When combined with the rural residents, the total county population exceeds 78,000. This places a very demanding need for the county to attract industrial manufacturing facilities in order to support a population of this size. Consequently, agricultural producers have to compete with these facilities for high quality, skilled labor to fill jobs both on the farm and in ag-related retail outlets.

a. Agricultural statistics, trends, & projections (i.e. Census Data)

▣ Traditional agricultural production

Agricultural production in Christian county consists of many traditional Ag crops, with Corn, Soybeans, Wheat and Tobacco supporting the bulk of the Ag income. Crops generating less income include Alfalfa and grass hay, canola and as of late, industrial hemp. Livestock production in the county includes Beef and Dairy production, as well as a small amount of swine still raised in the county.

Non-traditional agricultural production

Crops, which have been introduced in the last 20 years of which production has grown significantly, would include melons, tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn and other horticultural crops.

New & emerging agricultural production-

The newest crops to be introduced into the county in the past five years have been the addition of Canola and Industrial hemp. Canola production has increased by 40% in the last two years, and three different producers have grown industrial hemp as an experimental crop.

Tobacco dependency

Tobacco has long been a crop which producers in Christian County have been highly dependent on. In 2014, growers went to market with over 4 million pounds of Burley tobacco, 6.2 million pounds of dark-fired tobacco, and almost 800,000 pounds of dark-air cured tobacco. Christian county has over 100 growers producing tobacco, and is home to Swisher International, U.S. Tobacco and has a buying station for Altria, which serves as a collection point for several counties as well as other states.

b. Demographic Data

▣ Social data

Christian County is the second largest county in the state of Kentucky, with two major populated cities of Hopkinsville and Oak Grove. Hopkinsville is the 6th largest metropolitan area in the state of Kentucky, and Oak Grove is home to Ft. Campbell US Army military Installation, 101st Air Assault div (Airborne). With a total population of 78,000, Christian county has more rural residents living outside the city limits than it does in the incorporated areas.

▣ Economic data

Christian County has a very diverse economy supported by Agriculture, Ft. Campbell, and an advanced manufacturing base, which draws employees from several surrounding counties. A large school system plus two private schools provide many jobs in the field of education. We are also home to two regional health care facilities.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Strengths for our community would include a highly developed rail system, the intersection of several state and federal highways, interstate access, abundant natural resources, a diverse work force, and highly productive farmland.

b. Weaknesses

Most of our workforce is considered non-skilled labor, is subject to a high poverty rate, and have limited access to transportation. Another area for improvement would be a clear understanding and cooperation between urban and rural business owners for a growth plan for our community.

c. Opportunities

Opportunities for our community would be recognition by the city and county of the significant role that Agriculture plays in the overall economy and strength of Christian County. The Ag economy has had positive growth in both production and adding value to their products, so pursuing the recruitment of more Ag related production companies that could add even more value to our crops, plus add jobs to our economy.

d. Challenges

The advancement of urban sprawl will continue to be a challenge faced by our community. High quality farmland south of Hopkinsville will continue to be a target for developers. However, the challenge faced by all of our producers will be to remain competitive in a global market.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

Christian County Agricultural Development Council will work in cooperation with both individuals and groups in an effort to stimulate economic growth and increase educational opportunities. While this will have a primary influence on rural families, the end result will be positive for the community as a whole.

b. Short term goals

Maintain adequate county level funding for CAIP and continue to encourage individuals or groups to look for innovative ways to further develop our ag economy.

c. Long term goals

Look for innovative investment areas that promote long-term increases in the value of our products, continued education for producers, and growth of our overall Ag economy.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

☐ Regional partnerships

We would welcome the chance to work with other counties or groups towards the development of projects which support the short and long term goals of the County Ag Development Council.

☐ State Agricultural Development Board resources

We would welcome the opportunity to partner with the State Ag Development Board or the Kentucky Ag Finance Corporation on any projects which support both the short and long term goals of the County Ag Development Council.

Other local/state/federal resources

3. Evaluation & Review

a. How are proposals evaluated and does this process need modified?

Proposals are reviewed on an individual basis. No need to change this process.

b. How is success and failure measured?
On an individual, merit-based basis.

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?
It will be updated every five years by the County Ag development council.

b. Weaknesses

b. Short term goals

