

Franklin County  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
County Comprehensive Plan

7/29/2015

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# Franklin County Comprehensive Plan Update

## 1. Overview of County

Franklin County is a semi-rural county rich with a diversity of resources. As the home of Kentucky's state capital, we are blessed with a prosperous mixture of commerce and agriculture creating a landscape ripe with opportunities. Our community faces many challenges as we struggle to expand socially and economically. Among the greatest of these challenges is the need to not only support and sustain a strong agricultural base but to thrive in today's environment of accelerated change.

With these issues in mind the Franklin County Comprehensive Agricultural Plan is designed to assess the needs of the local agricultural economy and identify those programs that have the greatest potential to strengthen existing operations and offer opportunities for emerging enterprises and diversification to our local and regional community.

### **a. Agricultural statistics, trends, & Projections**

#### **•Traditional Agriculture Production**

•Agriculture in Franklin County has shifted in recent years to focus less on traditional agriculture like tobacco, and more to other crops and livestock. According to the 2012 census, cattle are still the front runner in livestock production, with the number of cow and calves at 16,907. Layers are the second most popular livestock Franklin County with 1,379. Followed by those are sheep and lambs with 535, and swine at 24. Corn, soybeans and wheat have been on the rise throughout the county as well. With a total of 2,112 acres of corn for grain, and 319 acres of wheat, Franklin County has suitable resources for grain production.

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#### **•Non-Traditional Agriculture Production**

•Crops and livestock that are considered non-traditional have been seen throughout the county. The county has an increasing number of young families starting small diversified farms with the intent of selling wholesale and retail. Many of these include vegetables as well as beef, pork and poultry. A family in the county has also started a successful alpaca farm, and has been popular in the public eye. Others are exploring non-traditional enterprises such as agri-tourism or entertainment and alternative land uses such as horse riding trails and hunting.

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#### **•New and Emerging Agriculture Production**

•Examples include hemp, kenaf, hops.

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#### **•Tobacco Dependency**

•Some farmers in the county took the tobacco buyout plan when it was offered. Many farmers continued growing tobacco and were successful at it. Recently with the economy, these farmers that include tobacco in their diverse operations have begun quitting the industry and filling in the gaps with other agriculture production. Franklin County is shifting away from tobacco dependency. Burley Tobacco growers have been reduced to mainly large scale production (by county standards) by fewer producers. Primarily to those that have the equipment, knowledge and land available, regardless of age. Labor availability appears to be the limiting factor.

## **b. Demographic data**

### **•Social Data**

State Government is the primary employment component of Franklin County's economy. Franklin County's population is estimated at 49,285 people of which 83.2% White Non-Hispanic, 10.3% Black Non-Hispanic, 2.8% Hispanic. Of these 31.3% are 0-24 Years Old, 54.7% are 25-64 Years Old and 47% are 65+ Years Old.

14.3% have less than a high school education. 31.6 are high school graduates, 24.7% have some college and 23.8 have a Bachelors or higher.

### **•Economic Data**

13.5% live in poverty while 9% are unemployed. The Median Household Income is \$45,619 and the Average Wage & Salary Income is \$38,979. 14.8% are self-employed. 9.8% of those employed are considered Goods Producing. There are 625 Total Farms of which 96.8 have sales less than \$100,000.

## **2. Assessment of the County**

### **a. Strengths**

#### **Strong Agricultural Base**

- Fertile farmland for row crop production
- Strong grass and forage base for cattle
- Existing buildings, fencing, and facilities for livestock
- Farmers Market Pavilion

#### **Strong Agricultural Organizations**

- Franklin County Farm Bureau
- Franklin County Beef Cattle Association
- Franklin County Conservation District and others.

#### **Farmland protection programs**

- Agricultural Districts
- PACE program utilized to protect prime farmland.
- KY Woods and Waters Land Trust

#### **Abundant Natural Resources**

- Unlimited recreational & agri-tourism possibilities
- Kentucky river and 124 miles of streams
- Fish and Wildlife/ Wildlife habitat

#### **Employment Opportunities for part-time farmers**

- Government
- Factories

- Service sector
- Internet

#### Educational Opportunities

- Kentucky State University's Land Grant Program including its' research farm and aquaculture facility
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Vo-ag and FFA classes and programs

#### Access to Interstates and highways

- I -64, I-75, I-71, Bluegrass Parkway, etc.
- Good marketing and transportation opportunities

#### Institutional Support

- Established/ Traditional lending institutes
- Banks that understand the farming tradition in Franklin County
- Support from local government

#### Strong cooperation and access to state and federal government agencies

- KY Division of Conservation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- KY Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- KY Division of Waste Management
- KY Department of Agriculture
- KY Division of Forestry
- KY Division of Water

### **b. Weaknesses**

Vulnerability due to heavy historic dependence on tobacco

Lack of developed agricultural diversity

Lack of local and innovative agricultural markets

- Marketing mindset
- Vegetable
- Tobacco
- Livestock
- Hay & forages
- Cash grains

Lack of agriculture businesses

- Farm Equipment dealers
- Agriculture on-farm services (tire repair, welding, etc.)
- Adding-value to our products
- Lack of regional or area cooperatives
- Lack of processing facilities

#### Declining percent of population

- Loss of fulltime farmers (average age = 57)
- Political base or voice
- Small segment of community / limited representation

#### Topography

- Hills or steep sloping terrain
- Small acreage/limited options

#### c. Opportunities

Franklin County has much opportunity for growth. Recognizing the increasing population, as well as the approximately 11,000 daily commuters, many agencies are working together to create marketing opportunities, expand into local markets, and develop cooperatives. Franklin County is blessed with an abundance of natural resources consisting of thousands of acres of fertile soils and many miles of valuable water that could be converted to agricultural products and services.

Educational opportunities will continue to be identified and made available to existing farmers and our youth. Our educational entities and agricultural agencies offer an appropriate format to address agriculture production and marketing opportunities as well as off-farm income opportunities.

#### d. Challenges

Franklin County Farmers have faced an array of challenges over the years. The struggles have ultimately drained much of the rural population. Many of those remaining have maintained a reliable existence on the production of tobacco. In light of the public's changing views on such products, our farming community faces a new set of challenges.

Urban sprawl, increasing demand for building sites and the rising price of land negatively impacts the amount of profitable farmland. In addition, there has been a dramatic decrease in the percent of the population developing a career in farming.

And finally, there are many environmental concerns pertaining to water quality, animal waste, air/odor issues, and nutrient management. The public should no longer perceive the farmer as a threat to our environment. Therefore, agricultural must pro-actively address issues concerning conservation of natural resources as it pertains to both the sustainability of farming operations and the potential impact on future generations.

### 3. County Council Objectives

#### a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Franklin County Agricultural Development Council, working on behalf of family farms and the citizens of Franklin County, seeks to preserve and perpetuate the agricultural industry by promoting and encouraging projects that will expand and diversify the agricultural base of this county and region. This base shall be economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsible so that we may preserve our rural economy for generations to come.

b. Short term goals

To stimulate the local farming community by offering CAIP cost-share, shared use equipment and continued Deceased Livestock Removal.

c. Long term goals

To invest in projects and opportunities that will provide new and or profitable opportunities for Franklin County farmers.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships
- State Agricultural Development Board resources
- Other local/state/federal resources

3.Evaluation & Review

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

The council reviews applications in advance, listens to accompanied proposal if any and then discusses. Criteria include: Will the proposal interest county farmers? Would county farmers participate? Will the proposal benefit the county in general? Does the proposal have the potential to succeed?

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Currently not

- c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

As per GOAP direction.