

Fulton County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Fulton County

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

Fulton County is located in far west Kentucky, with Lake and Obion Counties of Tennessee border the southern portion of the county, Hickman County to our north and east, and the Mississippi river bordering our western portion of the county.

Hickman is the county seat. Fulton County is located within a day's drive of major markets of Louisville, St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville, Cincinnati, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Atlanta. The county has access to waterways, major highways, and railway.

The county consists of 209 square miles (133,760 acres) broken into 178 farms, averaging 468 acres, with 83,382 acres in farms. Fulton County agriculture is known for its large row crop farms. The county produces 27,500 acres of corn, 53,000 acres of soybeans, and 13,100 acres of wheat, as well as limited acreage of rice and hay. The county also has approximately 21 farms with poultry and 5 farms with hogs. The county produces limited amounts of equine, bovine, sheep, goats. The average age of the farmers in Fulton County is 56.

- a. Agricultural statistics, trends, & projections (i.e. Census Data)
 - Traditional agricultural production

Traditional agriculture in Fulton County consists of corn, soybean, and wheat respectively ranking 23rd, 10th, and 14th in the state in total production. From 2007 to 2012 the total market value of products sold rose from \$37,455,000 to \$46,558,000 in 2012. In the same time period the poultry production in the county has decreased in the county by 16%. Beef cattle production has held constant to about 1,200 animals, despite tough environmental conditions and markets. Pork production has increased in the county due to market demands and interest from a local company to expand its hog production. Tobacco is not currently produced in the county and has never been a large portion of the agriculture economy.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

Non-traditional agriculture is limited to bees, a few orchards, and nuts at this time. Based off 2012 data, the county has 8 colonies of bees on three farms; 5 orchards consisting of apples, grapes, pears, and peaches; and 5 farms in nut production.

- New & emerging agricultural production

New and emerging agriculture production are limited in far western Kentucky due to the lack of markets. Fruit and vegetable crop opportunities are numerous for local producers, but there is a lack of available markets for these crops.

- Tobacco dependency

Fulton County is not dependent on tobacco production, unlike several of the other counties in the Purchase area.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

The population of Fulton County based of 2013 data is 6,385 this is a decrease of 6.3% from 2010. Of the minority groups living in the county, the African American population of 1,673 makes up the largest minority group. Females make up 50% of the population. The three largest population groups based on age are: 45 to 54 years, making up 14% of the population, the 35 to 44 years made up 12.8%, and 25 to 34 years of age made up 11.3% of the population.

- Economic data

The median household income in the county is \$33,582, this is \$9,454 below the state average. 22% of the county's population falls below the poverty level compared to the state's average of 18.8%.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Our county is well suited for grain crop production, especially corn followed by wheat and soybeans. Off farm employment continues to increase, but the county is still maintaining just over 50% of the farm operators receiving the majority of their income from farming. Our producers are educated and willing to make changes to enhance farm profitability. We have two graineries, barge, rail, and truck transportation option. The county has an adequate road system for the transportation of grain to markets, both locally and overseas.

b. Weaknesses

Fulton County has a lack of a growing economic development. Currently, Fulton County has an unemployment rate of 8.4% as compared to the state average of 8.2%. With the limited interstate access that puts Fulton County at a disadvantage for increasing the county economic development.

The population of Fulton County as a whole has a lack of understanding of what goes in to agriculture or farming in general. Many of the families in the county are several generations removed from the family farm.

c. Opportunities

There are opportunities through the Extension Service and Agriculture organizations to educate the public about what goes into agriculture, especially the youth of Fulton County.

There is some positive outlook for economic development in Fulton County with the opening of the Riverine Fisheries plant in Hickman and the opening of Cades Landing in nearby Lake Co. TN.

d. Challenges

Fulton County has a lack of a growing economic development. Currently, Fulton County has an unemployment rate of 8.4% as compared to the state average of 8.2%. With the limited interstate access, Fulton County is at a disadvantage for increasing the county economic development.

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3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Fulton County Agriculture Development Council is to educate the public about agriculture in Fulton County and to provide the farmers in the county with assistance in implanting new agricultural practices.

b. Short term goals

- Research ways to effectively educate the public about agriculture in Fulton County.
- Research ways to effectively develop opportunities in agriculture in Fulton County.

c. Long term goals

- Implement ways to effectively educate the public about agriculture in Fulton County.
- Implement ways to effectively develop opportunities in agriculture in Fulton County.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

The Fulton County Agriculture Development Council will partner with any regional organizations to maximize the effectiveness of the views and goals set by the council.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

The Fulton County Agriculture Development Council will partner with the State Agriculture Development Boards to maximize the effectiveness of the views and goals set by the council.

- Other local/state/federal resources

The Fulton County Agriculture Development Council will partner with any local, state, and/or federal resources to maximize the effectiveness of the views and goals set by the council.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

The Council reserves the right to make any changes as needed to facilitate the expenditures of funds set aside to this council.

b. How is success and failure measured?

The board will take feedback from the individuals or groups that have received benefit from any of the programs offered through this program.

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

The county comprehensive plan will be revised as needed based upon the feedback of those that have received benefit, community response, or input from those that govern the Fulton County Agriculture Development Council.

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