

Grayson
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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Grayson 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

Grayson County has a diversified agricultural industry producing corn, wheat, soybeans, tobacco, hay, livestock, dairy, and poultry. The number of farms has decreased slightly from 1,650 in 2002 to 1,407 in 2012. Farm land in the county has gone from 233,136 acres in 2006 to 200,895 in 2012 a loss of about 32,241 acres.

Acres devoted to grain production have increased partially due to recent high grain prices and as acreage under CRP contracts expire. The trend in hay production is positive for the county for the same period as livestock requirements increase.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

Cattle are very important to the county, contributing over 30 million dollars in cash receipts for 2014. Dairy production was over 25 million pounds for 2014 with 9 herds. There are no swine farms currently. Harvested acres have decreased to 34,743.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

Poultry production has nearly double from 2007 to 2012.

- New & emerging agricultural production

Small ruminant and bee production is increasing.

- Tobacco dependency

There are still over 50 farms dependent on tobacco.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

The 2014 estimated population of Grayson County is 26,194, an increase of 10% since 1999. The population of Leitchfield, the county seat, is 6,827, Clarkson is 892, and Caneyville is 615, which leaves the bulk of the population, 17,860, in the county.

▪Economic data

The median household income for 2012 is estimated at \$35,126 which is 84% of the state median of \$41,717.

There are 462 full time farms and 904 part time farms in Grayson County.

Average farm sales were \$32,454 in 2012 for an increase of 19% since 2007.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Grayson County's greatest strength lies in its diversification. We have a large forage base, good water supply, and interstate access. This provides ample opportunity for livestock, dairy, poultry and horticulture production.

The county has over 150,000 acres of timberland, which gives us the opportunity to increase value-added activities.

Our county is scenic with a proximity to numerous tourist attractions.

We have a lessening dependence on farm income due to the off farm job opportunities that supplement small scale farming operations.

b. Weaknesses

Weaknesses for our farming community are caused in part by the success of non-farming businesses. Leitchfield, the county seat, has attracted a number of small factories, which has provided jobs and income for the county's workforce. This has led to the loss of thousands of acres of farm land for larger and more numerous home sites. Retirees moving in have increased the cost of farm land and hampered agricultural output through restrictions concerning waste disposal, use of herbicides, and the proximity of livestock to non-farm families. We are not blessed with large amounts of Class A farm land with nearly half of the county in woodlands. Lack of adequate markets within the county require agriculture production to be transported outside the county for value-added processing. The county also has very limited access to farm and livestock supplies.

The county's soil has a low fertility basis with a fragipan that is close to rock and highly erodible. In addition, we have a large number of watersheds, which create water-quality problems.

c. Opportunities

We have the opportunity to increase our tourism. The county has tremendous potential to improve and increase our beef marketing. Small animal and horticulture enterprises could be greatly expanded in the near future. Because of the large woodland base, we also have tremendous potential to increase our income from timber and wood products. Large forage acreage provides opportunities to generate additional marketing of livestock and cash sales of forages.

d. Challenges

The agricultural economy is in a very serious transition going from high grain prices and high input costs to low grain prices but with input costs remaining high. Profitability for 2015 is challenged at best. Current farm operations are more likely to see profits in the slim to none category. Nearby acreage necessary for expansion, which would improve profitability is unavailable. Most land sales are being broken into mini-farms or being used as residential sites and small hobby farms. The capital requirement for expansion to a profitable full-time operation is very discouraging for those who want to remain in full-time farm operations. It is difficult to foresee many seeking expansion to a profitable full-time operation. Young farmers are finding it difficult to become established due to the enormous initial capital investment.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Grayson County Agricultural Development Council is to promote and support activities that will generate income to replace tobacco profits. It is our goal to increase the value of Grayson County agricultural production by supporting innovative ideas in existing farming activities and development of new enterprises. By encouraging better utilization of our resources in current farm activities and assisting entrepreneurial ventures, we hope to provide profitable examples for the county's farming community.

b. Short term goals

Our top priority for increasing income in the near future is in improving the practices in those areas that currently dominate our farming enterprises. Nearly two thirds of our county's farm income is from livestock. Because we are substantial producers of meat and milk, we hope to enhance the value and volume of these commodities.

One way of increasing the value of our beef and milk animals is through the use of improved genetics. This would be accomplished by cost sharing in the purchase of superior bulls and semen. A second step in providing additional income would be to improve the quality and quantity of our forages. This would be accomplished by the cost sharing of production expenses such as seed, and lime. Better utilization of forages would be accomplished by cost sharing in practices involving water systems, rotational grazing, hay storage facilities, and production equipment.

c. Long term goals

Adaptation of successful practices will be encouraged and expanded while unsuccessful activities will be abandoned.

Funds from the State Agricultural Development Board earmarked for Grayson County will be extended through the use of CAIP and regional or cross-county partnerships that are attractive to the county's farmers.

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to request funds from the State Agricultural Development Board and look for additional monies from the local, state, and federal agencies whenever possible. Participants will also be encouraged to utilize information provided by state research groups as to the feasibility of various projects.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

Funds from the State Agricultural Development Board earmarked for Grayson County will be extended through the use of cost share practices and regional or cross-county partnerships that are attractive to the county's farmers.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to request funds from the State Agricultural Development Board and/or Kentucky Ag Finance program. Participants will also be encouraged to utilize information provided by state research groups as to the feasibility of various projects.

- Other local/state/federal resources

Participants in large scale projects will be encouraged to look for additional monies from the local, state, and federal agencies whenever possible. USDA microloans are one option.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Requests for county funds are evaluated based on funds available and impact to county. No modifications seem necessary at this time.

b. How is success and failure measured?

The majority of county funds are used to fund the CAIP program. The success of this program can be measured by the improvement to county farms as well as the amount of funds producers are inputting over and above their amount of cost share.

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

The county comprehensive plan will be reviewed as necessary with a minimum of every five years.