

Bourbon County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Bourbon 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.

- **Overview of County**

One of the earliest areas settled in what is now Kentucky, Bourbon County was originally part of Virginia. The Virginia legislature took land from Fayette County to establish this new county – named for the House of Bourbon, in honor of Virginia's fight for independence during 1788 and 1789. Portions of Bourbon County created Clark, Madison, Harrison and Nicholas counties.

Farm life has been prominent in the rich history of Bourbon County from generations of both landowners and farm employees. The rich and outstanding history gives us a sense of pride and belonging and continuity.

Bourbon County consists of a total 292 square miles and is nestled in the heart of Kentucky's famous Bluegrass region. Bourbon County is one of the leading producers of Thoroughbred horses in the world. More than 50 horse farms are located in the county.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

There were 915 farms in Bourbon County in 2017 totaling 170,872 acres which represents 92% of total county land. In comparison, Kentucky's farm operations made up 51% of the states total land area, and U.S. farm operations made up 40% of total land area in the country. Total crop sales are valued at \$45,862,000 and total animal sales valued at \$163,700,000.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

Bourbon County has 1 farmers market with 1% of the crops grown being fruits or vegetables. Less than 1% of producers market products through community supported agriculture and 5.3% of producers sell value added products. Total income from agritourism was \$69,000. Bourbon County ranks number 1 in the state in Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod production.

- New & emerging agricultural production

Bourbon County is home to several agritourism opportunities including orchards, farmers markets, roadside stands and pick-your-own opportunities. As the popularity of local foods has continued, farmers in this county have expanded to meet the wants and needs of the consumer.

- Tobacco dependency

In 2012, 79 farms still grew 3.14 million pounds of tobacco on 1,787 acres (more recent data not reported in current demographic numbers). The number of farms raising tobacco dropped from 760 to 587 from 1992 to 1997 and to 365 from 2002 to 2006. Effective tobacco quota fell from 17,440,776 pounds in 1992 to 8,500,000 pounds in 2000 to 4,705,600 in 2006. The dependency on tobacco was great and the drastic change is felt.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

In 2019, Bourbon County had 19,788 residents. Of this, 8.9% were non-white and 19.7% were older than 65 years. Total poverty is estimated at 16.5% and 24.2% of people under 18 years of age.

- Economic data

The unemployment rate for Bourbon County was 4.0% in 2018 with a median household income of \$48,614. Jobs grew very slightly from 6,685 in 2012 to 6,707 in 2019. The top 5 industries in the county (by number of jobs) are Retail trade, agriculture, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and educational services.

• Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Bourbon County is located in the Central part of the Bluegrass Region, twenty miles from Georgetown, Mt. Sterling, Winchester, Cynthiana, Carlisle and Lexington. Roadwork is taking place to Millersburg, Carlisle, and Maysville. In the last 5 years several small businesses have been created and new events have made Main Street Paris a place to be.

Bourbon County has fertile, well drained soils for production of tobacco, corn, hay, and produce crops. The land is flat to gently rolling and has water supplies from Stoner Creek, Hinkston Creek and Licking River water sheds. Bourbon County is probably best known for its fine pasture and grazing abilities. The reopening of Paris Stockyard has been an asset to the county.

b. Weaknesses

Bourbon County is currently limited to producing in a commodity driven ag economy. We sell grains, livestock and other ag products as commodities. There are no livestock processing facilities with capability of any volume in the county or nearby. Our reliance on Burley tobacco was a major setback and producers are currently transitioning based on rising and falling prices of other commodities including grain crops and beef cattle.

c. Opportunities

Bourbon County has great opportunities to increase and improve existing livestock production and marketing based on annual supply and demand. The potential for increased forage production as cash sales and as inputs to livestock are great. Adding value through on-going beef cattle marketing efforts, with expansion of individual electronic identification of animals will bring new information to cow-calf producers. This information can be used as management and marketing tools.

d. Challenges

Challenges for Bourbon County include high farmland value, limiting young farmers access to rent and purchase land. Transportation is still an issue for ag producers in the county as there is no direct access to large interstates or water ways.

• **County Council Objectives**

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The objective of the Bourbon County Ag Development Council is to expedite the development of projects and enterprises that will increase the net farm income of farmers impacted by the reduction in tobacco income. This will improve the entire economy of the community and area. Ideas and input will be solicited from the entire community. Participation in new businesses or enterprises will be highly encouraged, as well as participation in value-added segments of current enterprises.

b. Short term goals

On-going efforts in grazing management, forage production, livestock marketing, beef heifer replacement, bull selection and fruit/vegetable production/marketing will be supported. Projects concerning beef genetics improvement, livestock/forage improvement and livestock handling facilities are priorities of Bourbon County producers. Appropriate education must accompany these projects. Bourbon County soils and fertility make forage production a very high priority for future potential. The production and cash marketing of high-quality hays for the equine industry must be priority.

c. Long term goals

The Bourbon County Ag Development Council will encourage participation of farm and non-farm sectors to cooperate in projects that will increase and sustain income of the rural economy. Participation in regional projects with the Ag Development Council's will be a long-term goal specifically for fruit and vegetable production and new or emerging crops.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

The Bourbon County Ag Development Council hopes to fund more projects also supported by other counties in this region. Projects currently funded have been successful and have benefited the county.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

Efforts will be made to continue receiving state funding and education will continue to producers and businesses about funding that is available for their special projects.

- Other local/state/federal resources

Efforts will be made to work with local sources to match funds for future projects that will benefit both the ag and non-ag communities.

Projects funded by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board (since 2001)

Kentucky Department of Agriculture
Kentucky Cattlemen Association/Kentucky Beef Network
Kentucky Horticulture Association
Kentucky Dairy Development Council
Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development
Kentucky State University
Kentucky Poultry Federation
Community Farm Alliance
Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office
Kentucky Association of Food Banks
Kentucky Agriculture Council
Kentucky Horse Council
Kentucky Agriculture & Environment in the Classroom
Kentucky State Beekeepers Association
Kentucky Pork Producers Association
UK Farm Business Analysis

Other State Resources

USDA Rural Development
USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resource and Conservation Services
Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
Kentucky Division of Water
Kentucky Small Business Development Center

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Proposals are evaluated by the Ag Development Council. Direct contact is made through the agriculture agent and meetings are scheduled around those proposing. Individuals applying for county ag development funds should be encouraged to meet with the council, present information and be prepared to discuss any questions the council has.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Success is measured by the number of Bourbon County farmers impacted by any project, success of projects funded and increased profit and efficiency by the producer. Increased access to local foods for consumers, improved livestock genetics and forage production are ways to measure success of this program as a whole. If producers do not participate in a program that program receives low priority for Bourbon County.

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

The County Comprehensive Plan will be revised as needed by the County Extension Agent with guidance and approval by the Bourbon County Ag Development Council and other agriculture councils including Agriculture Advisory Council, Farm Bureau, Farm Service Agency and NRCS.

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