

**Carroll County
Agricultural Development Council**

**Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

October 8, 2020

Submitted by:

List County Council Members

Terry Cauley, Chairman	(Extension)
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I. Overview of Carroll County

Carroll County is the third smallest county in the state with an area of 128.57 square miles. It is located about forty-five miles northeast of Louisville, forty-five miles southwest of Cincinnati, and seventy miles northwest of Lexington. The county is bordered by the Ohio River to the north and bisected by the Kentucky River.

a. Agricultural Statistics, Trends, and Projections

i. Traditional Agricultural Production

The county's farming enterprises are dominated by corn, soybeans, beef cattle, and tobacco.

The land resources of the county consist of rolling hills with the predominant soil series being a Fairmount-Rock outcrop complex (43%), a soil with a slope of 30 to 60 percent. The soils best suited for row cropping lie along the Ohio River but most of this farmland is owned by industry.

Carroll County Agricultural Statistical Data

Farms:	308
Land in Farms (acres):	50,908
Acres cropland harvested:	15,023
Average farm size:	165 acres

(2017 Agriculture Census Data)

Burley Tobacco (lbs.):	42,803 on 22 acres
Alfalfa Hay (tons):	3,418 on 861 acres
All Other Hay (tons):	17,643 on 8,596 acres
Corn for Grain (bu.):	5 farms
Corn for silage/greenchop (tons):	690 on 38 acres
Soybeans (bu.):	131,545 on 3,321 acres
Wheat (bu.):	1 farm
Winter Wheat (bu.):	1 farm
Farms used for vegetable production:	12 farms

(2017 Agriculture Census Data)

All Cattle & Calves:	6,539
Beef Cows:	3,671
Horses & Ponies:	290
Poultry (Layers):	551
Goats:	220
Sheep:	142
All Hogs & Pigs:	219
Llamas:	1 farm
Rabbits:	95
Colonies of Honey Bees:	36

(2017 Agriculture Census Data)

2017 Kentucky Agricultural Statistics Receipts

Total value of all products:	\$5,811,000
Value of all crops:	\$3,349,000
Value of livestock:	\$2,462,000

(2017 Agriculture Census Data)

ii. Non-Traditional Agricultural Production

Non-traditional agricultural production has increased in the county. Producers involved in enterprises consisting of bees/honey production, annuals/perennials, nursery stock, landscaping, lawn maintenance, sheep, horses (predominately boarding), goats, fruits and vegetables, Farmers' Market, grapes, and home micro-processing.

iii. New and Emerging Agricultural Production

The new production we have seen started in the county is primarily composed of horticultural crops. Truck gardens, annual/perennial flower production, wine grapes, and blueberries, most of which are marketed from the farm or a farmers market.

iv. Tobacco Dependency

Tobacco production has fallen over 98% since the buyout. This was a direct reflection to the age of many of our producers who were operating with tenants. Many producers were not able or willing to expand production to make it a viable enterprise.

Carrollton was once a strong burley market with as many as twelve warehouses serving producers from approximately fifteen counties.

b. Demographic Data

i. Social Data

The county population is 10,631 *(2019 Estimation)* with the largest city and county seat of Carrollton (3,780), located at the confluence of the Ohio and Kentucky Rivers.

Carroll County is primarily rural, and located on one of the legs of Kentucky's "Golden Triangle" (Lexington-Louisville-Cincinnati). The county is experiencing strong retail and commercial growth pressure but has yet to experience the population growth that was projected when I-71 was built.

The population is 94.3% Caucasian, 7.0% Hispanic, 2.1% African American, 0.6% Asian, and 0.4% American Indian & Alaska Native. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing sector in the county. Roughly, 25.8% of the population is 18 and under while 15.7% is 65 or older. Approximately 58.5% of the population is between the ages of nineteen and sixty-four—the estimated working population. There are 3,981 households with an average of 2.61 per household *(2018 Estimation)*.

ii. Economic Data

The civilian labor force in August 2020 was 5,229 with an unemployment rate of 7.4%. The state average is 7.6%. *(2020 US Bureau of Labor Statistics Labor Force Data)*. The poverty level for Carroll County is 15.6% *(2020 USDA County-Level Poverty Rates for Kentucky)*.

The median household income (in 2018 dollars) was \$43,258.

II. Assessments

a. Strengths

Carroll County farmers are able to produce. The ability to grow row crops, horticulture crops and livestock has been proven. The greatest majority of the producers in the county are classified as part-time farmers. Most have a “public” job that provides benefits, thus enabling producers to use their farm income to meet the needs of the farm.

While many farmers also hold off-farm jobs, they work swing or 12-hour shifts which allow them opportunity to have viable farming operations. An increased number of retirees have continued farming or began farming by moving into the county, if originally out-of-county. There has also been an increase in female farmers making primary farming decisions in the county.

Carroll County is close to several major metropolitan areas and has access to an extensive transportation system.

Carroll County has increased utilization of their forage base. A number of producers have incorporated some form of rotational grazing. We also have a timber base that has a marketable value according to the district forester.

Potable water is now available to every household in the county and sewer services continue to see improvements.

There is a good rapport among the agencies serving farmers in Carroll County. The Cooperative Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Carroll County Farm Bureau Federation, Carroll County Conservation District and the Eagle RC&D have all worked together on projects, demonstrations and other programs to enhance the agriculture in the county. Additional out-of-county support comes from United Producers in Owenton.

The change of the landscape of old farmers to new farmers can be seen as a strength, due to the younger farmer perhaps being more willing to have an open mind about farming.

b. Weaknesses

The greatest weakness is lack of tillable land. As reported earlier, over 71% of the land has a slope of 12% or greater which severely limits its use. Much of the better farmland has been or is now being used for industrial, commercial, or residential development.

Soil types make it difficult to put ponds/lakes where they need to be placed. Additionally, the land topography is such that it is not economically feasible to build ponds/lakes that meet desirable benefits that are livestock water, irrigation, etc. needs. Thus, farmers are encouraged to hook up pipelines and troughs to city waterlines—the cost of providing livestock water is less than that of building a pond.

Developed markets and farmers' own marketing skills are a weakness for producers in the county. Many have not had pleasant experiences with produce terminals and contract production in years past, so there is some resistance to looking at those options again. An example would be the unpleasant experience with hemp production (farmers unable to sell crop, farmers not getting paid, processors going out of business).

While our reported average farm age is slightly below the national average, participation by the farming community seems to be much older.

There is also a concern for a lack of market, and people, to purchase commodities due to the rural community and seasonality.

c. Opportunities

While much improved, there are still opportunities for better management of forage and livestock enterprises. With the topography of our county we have to look at what needs to be on these slopes for proper land management.

Tourism, hunting leases, recreational farming, entertainment farming, horticulture opportunities, adding value to products, and vineyards are all opportunities.

Working across traditional boundaries such as county lines is unexplored territory for many farmers.

Educational programs and on-farm demonstrations are needed to show alternative agriculture opportunities. In addition, education should be provided for the consumer (non-farm person) as well as offering a variety of research-based information on farming opportunities, programs, and practices. Virtual learning through Zoom, for example, is a way to watch educational programs from all across the state.

d. Challenges

Even in a rural community, the lack of knowledge about the importance of agriculture continues to threaten farming operations. There will be continual pressure of urbanization of the area. Carroll County does not have any land use planning outside the city limits of Carrollton or a long-term plan, so the development pressures could affect current farming operations.

As the farming population ages the ability of farmers to pass the operation on to future generations is important. Land values are continuing to escalate to the point that agriculture is unable to meet the debt load for new alternatives or expansion. There is also a challenge of the next generation actually wanting to continue managing the farm.

Environmental protection constraints are going to affect farming operations. The costs associated with meeting the environmental standards can be limiting to the scope of any current or future enterprise. Government constraints, on traceability, look to pose a challenge, as well as outside public opinion and activist groups.

III. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Carroll County Agriculture Development Council is to provide opportunity for as many producers as possible to increase net farm income and to provide for the continued operation of the small farm enterprises enjoyed by most of the producers in the county.

b. Short-term Goals

The council, through the forums, surveys and discussions, determined that the most reasonable opportunity for increasing net farm income was through improved forage and livestock systems, as well as horticulture production. Forage improvement/development, fencing, livestock watering systems, and land preparation are necessary to lay the proper ground work to develop more viable livestock production systems. The council is willing to evaluate all enterprise opportunities that have the potential to increase net farm income.

Reviewing the initial comprehensive plan we found that are short term priorities were the same as a number of the model programs developed.

A more in-depth discussion of the short-term priorities of the Carroll County Agriculture Development Council include:

1. The creation of a forage improvement program. The program provides for the addition and maintenance of pasture and hay ground. The program will cost share on the creation, improvement and maintenance of forage ground. This includes the addition of grasses, legumes, fertilizer and lime to pastures and hay ground. The development of grazing systems with the necessary line, cross fencing and water systems. **Cost share will not exceed 75% of the expenses** with the annual cost share cap will vary with the amount of money available each year.
2. The development of livestock working facilities, bull lots, and lots for the conditioning of feeder calves for improved marketing opportunities including projects involving geo-textile products. **Cost share not to exceed 75% of the expenses.**
3. To provide support to producers wishing to diversify their farm operations. The addition of enterprises other than forages, beef, tobacco, corn and soybeans are eligible for cost-share through programs developed for ag-diversification. This will also include agri-tourism projects. **Cost-share not to exceed 75% of the expenses.**
4. The environmental controls for production agriculture may be cost prohibitive for many producers. The leveraging of the county funds with other dollars from NRCS, FSA and the Division of Forestry may allow producers to complete designed projects. **Cost share funds not to exceed 75% of actual producer cash expenditures.**

c. Long-term Goals

The council wants to continue supporting the grassroots leadership groups, educational programs and the above mentioned projects that are vital to the agricultural economy.

d. Tactics for Leveraging Funds

i. Regional Partnerships

The council will be open to listening to potential regional partnerships as they arise, and will take them into consideration.

ii. State Agricultural Development Board resources

The council will be open to listening to potential opportunities for State Agricultural Development Board resources as they arise, and will take them into consideration.

iii. Other local/state/federal resources

The council will be open to listening to potential opportunities for other local/state/federal resources as they arise, and will take them into consideration.

IV. Evaluation and Review

a. How are Proposals Evaluated and does this Process Need Modified?

Proposals will be evaluated using the scoring system established by the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board.

Applicants must have enough equity to assure a reasonable chance of success. Smaller farmers will have the same opportunities as larger farmers. Funds will be distributed without regard to age, race, sex, color, religion, disability, or national origin.

In addition, priority will also be given to those applications that are a cooperative effort, and that affect a number of farmers, or at least have the long-term potential to affect several farmers. Priority will also be given to those applications that fit the county comprehensive plan, and can take advantage of regional or statewide County Agricultural Investment Program (CAIP) initiatives. It must show a reasonable opportunity to increase farm profitability and to become self-sustaining. The applicant should be willing to share knowledge that is gained.

A minimum contribution of 25% of the total project costs will be required from each applicant.

b. How is Success and Failure Measured?

The council reserves the right to make farm visits to those receiving funds.

c. How will the County Comprehensive Plan be Revised?

The Carroll County Agriculture Development Council will review the County Comprehensive Plan every five years and make any necessary adjustments to the plan so that it meets the needs of the local farming community.