

Kenton County  
Agricultural Development Council

2020 Update  
County Comprehensive Plan

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## **Overview of Kenton County**

Kenton County is located in the northernmost region of Kentucky and is bordered on the east by the Licking River and on the north by the Ohio Rivers. Kenton County consists of approximately 103,688 acres of which 36,731 is classified as farmland. There are 506 farms averaging 73 acres per farm. The soils within the county are basically one half Eden clay loam and one half Faywood clay loam, with Eden clay loam being the predominant soil in the agricultural area of the county. Due to the steepness of the land, flat areas of cultivated row crops are limited to a small number of acres, thus most open farm land is best suited for grazing or hay production. Kenton County ranks third in the state in population with 167,900 residents and 95% of residents live in urban and suburban communities.

## **Traditional Agriculture Production**

Traditional agriculture production in the county includes beef cattle, forages (includes some cash hay), alfalfa, corn silage, meat goats, tobacco, and commercial horticulture production.

Based on 2017 Kentucky Agriculture Statistics, Kenton County's agriculture production included:

Crops as follows:

- Corn 10%
- Soybeans 3%

- All other grass and legume grass hay 52%

Livestock as follows:

- Cattle and calves 79%
- All other horse & equine 21%

2017 Kentucky Agriculture Statistics indicated the agriculture receipts for Kenton County as:

- Total Value of all products and receipts      \$5,390,000

## **Non-traditional Agricultural Production**

While Kenton County has always had a history of commercial horticulture and small livestock production. The increase in farmer's markets, increased demand for freezer beef, and the sale of fresh poultry and eggs we now have approximately 30 producers in these ventures.

Horticultural producers continue to take steps and adjust to the marketplace of direct to consumer sales.

## **New & Emerging Agricultural Production**

As the tobacco program has changed, there has been strong interest increasing beef herds, which means that hay production increases. Nontraditional produce and wine, as well as exploring new alternative agricultural enterprises such as floriculture, agri-tourism, vineyards,

hemp and lambs and hogs for local market are visible in Kenton County. Taking advantage of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area, traditional as well as alternative operations have an opportunity to provide sustained economic growth. Kenton County now has five farmer's markets located in urban and suburban areas. The recent addition of CSA (community supported agriculture) appears to be growing each season.

## **Tobacco Dependency**

There are fewer tobacco producers in Kenton County than at the last update in 2015. Rising input costs, the current prices on the market, and the management of contracts with potential buyers have contributed to less interest in tobacco.

## **County Demographic Data**

### Social Data

- 66,000 total households in the County
- 95% of residents are live in urban or suburban areas
- 3300 households in the unincorporated (farming) rural area of the county.
- 1/3 of the total land mass of Kenton County lies in this rural area

### Agriculture Economic Data

- 729 people receive income from farm operations in Kenton County
- 509 Males receive income from farm operations in Kenton County
- 220 Female receive income from farm operations in Kenton County

- 4.6% of farm operators are non-white
- 50% have only 1 operator
- 48% have 2 or more operators

## **Assessments of the County**

### Strengths

Kenton County is part of the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan area, which has in place and extensive highway, rail and water transportation system along with an international airport. These resources coupled with a high per capita income and conservative consumer base, provide Kenton County farm producers an opportunity to market agriculture products locally.

Kenton County has underutilized the forage base that, if managed correctly, could provide increase income to our farmers. We also have diverse agriculture and horticultural enterprises that can produce non-traditional products like farm fresh produce on what was once traditional tobacco and livestock farms. Many of the farmers have off-farm jobs and most have a sincere interest in maintaining a viable family farm. Subsistence agriculture, which includes home preservation of food, small scale livestock production of hogs, sheep, goat, poultry and beef are becoming visible in Kenton County.

Agriculture agencies such that support the agriculture community in Kenton County are; Cooperative Extension Service, NRCS District, Farm Service Agency, Kenton County Farm Bureau, NKY Cattle Association, NKY Horse Network, Simon Kenton FFA Program, and Kenton County Conservation District.

## Weakness

One of Kenton County's greatest weaknesses is the lack of affordable farm land, and the lack of tillable land. Much of our land is too steep to cultivate and has limited productivity due to its high clay content and shallow depth of topsoil. While reliable water sources are decreasing, the logistics and costs of municipal water service can be cost prohibitive. Our ridgetops are our primary crop production areas and the loss of land to development continues to consume these valuable farm lands. Distance to lime quarries, and distance to traditional livestock stockyards, and distance from feed mills/farm suppliers, mean added input costs on farm budgets. Organic and non-GMO farm operators have greater costs associated with procurement of feed locally. Reliable farm labor limits many farm expansions.

## Opportunities

One of Kenton County's greatest opportunities lies in its underutilized forage base. Increase revenues are possible if farmers would implement best management practices such as pasture renovation, improved fertility, grazing management, and water development. By increasing our forage capacity, revenues from our beef and cash hay enterprises could be increased. Kenton County's large population and its proximity to Cincinnati, provide an excellent opportunity to market agriculture products, horticulture specialty crops, and agri-tourism to local consumers. Opportunities in agri-tourism, horse boarding, farm stays, vineyards/wineries, community supported agriculture (CSA) are now viable and trending upward in our county. The recent introduction of Hemp to Kentucky saw five operators in just the first year of production. We now have 5 farmers markets operating in Kenton County and

all of these markets are looking for additional produce farmers to participate. The Bluegrass stockyards new location along I75 and a new butcher processor in Henry County has benefited the local livestock producers.

## Challenges

Lack of public knowledge about the importance of agriculture continues to threaten existing farming operations. Kenton County has experienced rapid urban growth and will continue to see suburban expansion on agriculture lands. This has impacted traditional county agriculture in two ways. 1) Land values have escalated to the point where it is nearly cost prohibitive for potential new farmers, 2) Local, State and Federal agencies are examining the impact of traditional farming on the environment. Kenton County now has a large suburban and rural interface that will require this to be addressed in coming years.

## **County Council Objectives**

### Mission

The Kenton County Agriculture Development Board is committed to enhancing the economic viability of the family farm. We propose to accomplish this with short and long term project and programs that will expand our production and marketing potential. The Board's unified goal is to foster a creative atmosphere which will enable existing farmers as well as potential producers, to initiate agriculture enterprises that offer sustained economic growth. Further, the Kenton County Ag Development Board will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation,

gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

### Short Term Goals

During recent years the Kenton County Planning Commission along with the Northern Kentucky Planning and Development Services included preservation of rural and agriculture as part of Direction 2020 Land Use Plan. Leadership groups from NKY Cattle Association, NKY Horse Network, Kenton County Farm Bureau, and Kenton County Agriculture Advisory Council, have all stood in support of family farms in Kenton County. A goal of the Agriculture Development Board is to ensure we are aligned with this same type of support. Specific direction of the CAIP program will be livestock expansion, and increased forage production as a priority. Other priority will be fencing, hay/ grain storage, large animal handling equipment, locally grown produce, grapes/wines, poultry and agri-tourism. Value added products like fiber, heritage breeds, sausage, home based processing, and freezer meats are also supported by the Board. The Ag Development Board also supports educational programs that focus on production, marketing and increase public awareness for farming enterprises in Kenton County.

### Long Term Priorities

Continued support of the grass roots leadership, programs that are vital to our agriculture economy, educational programs, and above mentioned projects will be the focus of the County Ag Development Board. Direct marketing venues like farmers markets and encourage eating locally sourced foods will be supported by Ag Council. Supporting the efforts

of the Kenton County Ag Economics Committee and encouraging young people to choose agriculture careers are also long term priorities.

#### Tactics for Leveraging Funds

Based on the projections that have been identified by the local agriculture community, we anticipate that a majority of the applications will be asking for county funds. The council has a maximum of a 50% cost share by all applicants requesting either county or state funding. This percentage could increase based on the number of applicants and availability of funds. Applications must clearly show the individual or group's contribution to the project and the project's potential benefit to the individual farmer(s) or to the agriculture community. Funding sources other than county funds and individual contributions will be encouraged, especially projects requesting state funds.

#### Regional Partnerships

- Kentucky Farm Bureau, Farmer's Markets, producers, encourage farmers to diversity their operations
- Administration of CAIP in Kenton County
- Encourage all residents to apply for CAIP funds

#### State Agricultural Development Board resources

- Encourage farmers to seek low interest loans through the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy (GOAP)
- Seek funding non-model projects as State Ag Development Board

#### Other local/state/federal resources

- Encourage local farmers to work with KCARD for other funding sources
- Encourage local farmers to seek funds through Kentucky State University
- Encourage farmers to seek funding sources through the USDA

## Evaluation & Review

How are Proposals evaluated and does this process need modified?

The Agriculture Development Board meets and determine priority of project.

Application is made to GOAP for access to county funds, applications are distributed from Extension office. Kenton County Farm Bureau act as CAIP administrator. Applications are scored in accordance with the state scoring system. Notification is made to each approved applicant, as projects are finished the Kenton County Farm Bureau inspects each project to assure it is complete. Receipts are turned in, and payment is made to the applicant. At end of the year the Kenton county Farm Bureau sends the appropriate tax paper work to the applicant.

How is success and failure measured?

By the amount of funds distributed. In other words if all or nearly all the funds were distributed, that is more successful than large amounts of available money going unused.

How will the County Comprehensive Plan be revised?

The Kenton County Comprehensive Plan was revised by a committee from the Agriculture Development Council and approved at a meeting prior to the deadline of October 1, 2020.

Prepared by:

Kenton County Ag Development Board of Directors; July 29, 2020

\_\_\_ *Jennifer Myka* (per phone conversation)

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Jennifer Myka

Chair, 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update Committee