

Laurel County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
County Comprehensive Plan

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Laurel County
County Comprehensive Plan Update

1. Overview of County

a. Agricultural Statistics, Trends and Projections

Traditional Agriculture Production – Laurel County’s farm economy has for many decades been based principally on tobacco, beef production and to a lesser extent dairy production. The 2017 U. S. Census of Agriculture reported 955 farms in Laurel County, down 5% from the 2012 census. The average farm size in 2017 was 94 acres, down 2% from the 92 acre average reported in 2012.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture showed the total market value of products sold in Laurel County to be \$15,426,000, which is an increase of 1% from the 2012 census. Of the agricultural products sold, 43% were crop sales and 57% were livestock. The top producing crop sales reflected in the 2017 census were:

1. Other Crops and Hay – 39%
2. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod – 31%
3. Grains, Oil Seeds, Dry Beans – 15%
4. Tobacco – 8%
5. Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes – 7%

Of the livestock sales, top producing animals were:

1. Cattle and calves – 91%
2. Horses, ponies, mules and burros – 4%
3. Poultry and egg – 2%
4. Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk – 1%

The number of Laurel County farmers receiving government payments has increased by 21% from 1,818 in 2012 to 2,197 in 2017.

b. Demographic Data

In 2018, the U. S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Laurel County to be 60,669. Of this total, 97% were classified as white, 0.8% black, 0.4% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.6% Asian, and 1.6% Hispanic.

The median age for all Laurel County citizens is 38.1. In 2018 there were 22,735 households in Laurel County with an average household size of 2.61.

In 2012, 57% of Laurel County citizens are rural, down from 68% in 2000. The number of citizens living in urban areas has risen from 32% in 2000 to 43% in 2012.

81.1% of Laurel County citizens 25 and over are high school graduates. 13.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

In 2012, Laurel County showed a median household income of \$39,230. The per capita income was \$21,039. The number of Laurel County residents living below poverty level is 20.6%

2. Assessments of the County

Laurel County is located in the southeastern part of Kentucky. It has an area of 285,250 acres. Almost all the soils in Laurel County are acid, and crops respond to applications of lime and fertilizer. The Laurel County soils are steep and formed in material derived mostly from sandstone and shale.

The elevation in the survey area ranges from about 723 to 1,730 feet above sea level. The climate is moderate and the growing season, defined as the number of days between the last temperature of 32 degrees F in the spring and the first in the fall, averages about 181 days.

Farming is diversified in Laurel County. In 2017, Laurel County had 955 farms with an average size of 94 acres. The average value of land and buildings per acre was \$2,247. Of Laurel County's 1,462 producers, 358 are new and beginning farmers and 172 are military veterans.

One of the most important resources in Laurel County is the highway system. London is located two miles east of Interstate 75, a major north-south interstate highway. The Hal Rogers Parkway originates in London and extends to the east. Kentucky Highway 80, a "AAA"-rated trucking highway with an 80,000-pound gross load limit, serves London to the east and west. Kentucky Highway 229, a "AA"-rated trucking highway with a 62,000 pound gross load limit, extends from London to the south. London is within 600 miles of 53% of the United States population.

The Laurel County Agricultural Development Council has assisted with funding for two certified kitchen projects that are available for use by local producers. Both the Laurel County Farmers Market Kitchen and the Jackson County Regional Kitchen provide certified kitchen facilities for farmers to process their crops into value-added products to be sold commercially.

Another council funded project that has proven to be of great benefit to area producers is the Wilderness Trail Area Beef Marketing Alliance. The facility provides a local venue for producers from an eight-county area to market their animals. The shorter transportation decreases stress on the animals as well as fuel costs, resulting in better quality product and increased profits.

3. County Council Objectives

Mission/Vision Statement - The mission of the Laurel County Agriculture Development Board is to help sustain existing agriculture in the county, while aiding the farmer in developing new sources of agricultural income for years to come.

- a. Short term goals - The council believes that our immediate or short term goals are to add profitability to the already existing agricultural income in the county while helping the farmers develop and investigate new crop opportunities.
- b. Long term goals – Laurel County’s long term goals will include assisting farmers in identifying and developing new agricultural opportunities. The Council will evaluate projects for the increased profitability of the program while continuing to educate farmers on new and upcoming enterprises
- c. Tactics for leveraging funds - The council will be looking for evidence that there will be matching of funds by the applicant and the level of his/her contribution will be a major determining factor for approval. All proposals will include a budget with anticipated income and expenditures.

The council will be receptive to applications that involve other areas if the applicant can show not only their contribution of funds but that other counties will be willing to match funds for a combined area enterprise. While the council is open to these kinds of proposals, they must be able to show a significant benefit for the farmers of Laurel County. We will also be working with the other state organizations that provide assistance to farmers to add profitability to the new and existing programs.

4. Evaluation & Review

- a. How are proposals evaluated and does the process need modified? – Any applications for funding that are submitted are reviewed during the next scheduled council meeting. Regular meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month, provided there is business on the agenda to be discussed. The proposals are evaluated on merit of the plan, matching funds, profitability for producers, and feasibility for the area.
- b. How is success and failure measured? - The success or failure of a program is measured by the council based on growth or growth potential. The main determining factor for success of a program is whether local farmers have received benefit through increased profits or growth potential in the future.
- c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised? - The county comprehensive plan will be revised as needed. If it is determined that relevant areas have been omitted and need to be addressed, they can be added at a later time. If a guideline contained in the plan is determined to be inadequate, the council will make appropriate modifications that are satisfactory to the members of the council and beneficial to the community.