

Lee County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Lee 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.

1. Overview of County

Lee County is located in the mid-eastern section of Kentucky. It is bordered by Wolfe, Owsley, Breathitt, and Estill Counties. The junction of the three forks of the Kentucky River occurs at Beattyville, the county seat of Lee County. The topography is hilly to mountainous, characterized by escarpment areas, mountains and creek bottoms. The total land acreage of the county is 208.86 square miles.

There are two major highways coming into Lee County: Kentucky Route 11 and Kentucky Route 52. The CSX Transportation Railroad passes through the county. The nearest commercial airport is the Bluegrass Airport in Lexington, Kentucky. The nearest hospital is the Kentucky River Medical Center in Jackson, Kentucky, approximately 27 miles from Beattyville. Lee County has two local newspapers: the Three Forks Tradition, and the Beattyville Enterprise.

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

▪ Traditional agricultural production

There are a total of 142 farms averaging 156.4 acres each for a total of 22,221 acres of land in farms. There are 43 full time farmers in Lee County. The average age of farm operators is 51.8 years. There are about 4,050 acres of Class I and Class II land in Lee County. The cropped acreage consists of 1,200 acres of commercial vegetables, and 150 of Christmas trees.

The total number of beef cattle in Lee County is 2,336 head. The total agricultural income for the county in 1998 was 2.3 million dollars. This income was derived mainly from tobacco, commercial vegetables, cattle and swine, grain, sorghum, Christmas trees and miscellaneous crops. There has also been an increase in goat production over last couple of years.

▪ Non-traditional agricultural production

▪ New & emerging agricultural production

- **Tobacco dependency**

b. Demographic Data

- **Social data**

The 2013 total population estimate was 7,260, down approximately 761 individuals from the 2010 U. S. Census. Approximately 96.8% of the population is Caucasian, with minorities distributed between African Americans, American Indian, and Hispanic individuals. Lee County has approximately 27.8% of its population comprised of individuals 65 and over, which is 7.20% greater than the Kentucky average. Approximately 53.5% of the population is composed of those 18 and younger, which is only 25.40% greater than the Kentucky average, according to 1998 estimates as reported ***Kentucky by the Numbers***, a publication of Social and Economic Education for Development of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

- **Economic data**

The average household income in 2012, was \$12,104 (it was \$12,336 in 2000), in Kentucky \$41,724. The total number of people in poverty in Lee County was listed in 2012 being 54.7%. The number of children in poverty ages 0-17 was 48.9% in (2012). This almost doubled the Kentucky average of 26.5%. Seventy-six percent of the children receive free or reduced lunches. There is one school system in the county consisting of 2 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school and 1 vocational school. There is a 1-1.99% dropout rate. There are 4 colleges and universities within 60 miles: Hazard Community College, Lees Junior College, Berea College, and Eastern Kentucky University. Only about 70% of the county's high school graduates attend college.

There are 2,451 workers reported for the total full and part time employment, according to 2007-1012 statistics. The major types of employment in the county are: 478 Public Administrations, 339 Health Care, 244 Retail Trade, 130 Accommodation and Food Services, 10 Manufacturing, and 520 all other industries. Approximately 197 individuals receive income from farm employment. Total farm production expenses were \$11,815 (2012). Market value of products sold was \$973,000 (2012). The market value of agricultural products sold as an average per farm was \$6,853 (2012). Total farm production expenses as an average per farm was \$6,270 (1997) and net cash return from agricultural sales from farm unit (average per farm) was \$4,098 (1997). However, non-farm income sources were approximately \$44,357,000.

Total tobacco value as a percent of farm receipts was 62.5% (1990-98). Tobacco value as a percent of total personal income was 1.3% (1990-97). Estimated value of lost burley basic quota was \$880,000 (2000 vs. 1997). The average burley value in Lee County was \$1,120,000 (1990-1999).

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

People experienced in production of commercial vegetables. Good water source. Use of highways, railroads and possibly waterways for exportation of commodities.

b. Weaknesses

- Level of knowledge among individuals concerning alternative crops and livestock.
- No existing cooperation among producers of same crop or livestock at this time.
- Proper farm management and record keeping of receipts.

c. Opportunities

- The ability to diversify from the decrease in tobacco quota.
- The use of timber acreage in Lee County by means of harvesting and proper timber management.
- Expansion of sorghum, beef, grain, pasture, commercial horticulture, floriculture, goats, and various other alternative crops and livestock/poultry.
- Opportunity to launch educational programs throughout the county in attempts to promote alternative production and marketing.
- The possibility to increase net profitability for Lee County producers.
- The chance to expand on the view or scope of “traditional” farming. Opportunity to expand the number of farmers in the county by use of the available funds (first-time farmers that would never had tried agricultural production if not for availability of current funds).
- Sustain the number of current producers and farm owners in the county.

d. Challenges

- Poverty.
- The human fear of change itself, (individuals not willing to adopt new practices because it is not the way “it has always been done”).
- The current reduction in agriculture income due to the present tobacco decrease and concern that the alternative crops will not produce ample income recovery quick enough.

- The availability of low-interest farm loans to be used to supplement the available funds for transition of land, equipment, etc. to alternative agriculture.
- Concerns for the complexity of the application for the county and state for an individual or group to receive the available Phase 1 money.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Lee County Agriculture Development Council will provide assistance for farm families relying on agricultural commodities to develop a more profitable farm income through improved production methods, alternate sources and/or diversified methods of agriculture production and marketing.

b. Short term goals

1. Educate Lee Countians, especially tobacco dependent families, to the viable economic opportunities available.
2. Provide educational assistance and training opportunities to Lee Countians in the development of their Phase I applications.
3. Provide assistance for farmers in areas such as improved production techniques and commodity marketing.
4. Identify productive agricultural endeavors on a local, regional and national level.

c. Long term goals

1. Increase in the production of livestock enterprises and domestic animals.
2. Develop a plan to address and identify agricultural needs.
3. Cultivate proposals that may increase farm productivity/income.
4. Assist in the development of tourism and recreational facilities.
5. Identify and promote specialty agricultural enterprises.
6. Promote the development of industry within the county.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

▪ Regional partnerships

1. Phase I applicants are encouraged to look for further funding for potential projects to state and private programs.
2. Funds issued from the Phase I program may be used for matching funds when applying for additional funds from other sources.
3. Applicants are encouraged to actively seek other group production and

marketing programs to enhance their situations.

4. Phase I monies may be used for multi-county or regional projects when partnerships are beneficial to county programs.

- **State Agricultural Development Board Resources**

- **Other local/state/federal resources**

3. Evaluation & Review

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

b. How is success and failure measured?

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

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