

Menifee
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Menifee

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

Menifee County has a steady population 6,288, according to the 2017 Census. The trend in Menifee County shows a decrease in farm income caused by an increase of residential use of farmlands, farms being used for cabins and residential homes. Living on a farm or retiring to a farm has become a way of life, more so than a means of family support. Without significant opportunity for increased farm profit this will remain true for many Menifee Countians who check farming as a principle occupation for census records. However, we know that some residences of Menifee County are looking for serious means of improving farm profit to supplement family income.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

However, farms are declining at a steady rate of 14% for the last ten years. Farmland has remained steady since 1997. The average farm acreage is 125. 31% of Menifee County farms raise cattle with the average herd being 30 head. 21% of Menifee County farms raise grain crops. The average age of the Menifee County Farmer is 57.1. The total farm related income according to the 2017 Ag Census fell 1,455,000 from the 2012 report.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

New crops and new enterprises are showing promise. from Sweet potato to Yaks are some areas that are showing interests. Farmers market and vegetable production stays steady each year.

- Tobacco dependency

Menifee County is like most of Eastern Kentucky depended very highly on tobacco. Acreage has declined since the buyout like most areas. Currently production in the county is down to one grower and those numbers are not reported in the census report.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

Menifee County population had a 2.9% increase at 6,489 according the census. 95.4% of the county in Caucasian and 2.8% is African American. 76% of resident are high school graduates or higher. Only 11% of the county has their Bachelors degree.

- Economic data

The average commute to work is 35 minutes one way. 26.4% of the county is below the federal poverty level. The median household income for the county is \$39,905..

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

The strengths of Menifee County are found in its people who care about and make farming a way of life. Menifee County is home to 283 farms containing about 35362 acres in farmland. We are located in the beautiful Daniel Boone National Forest, which takes up 46,857 acres in Menifee County with many more acres of privately owned woodlands. We are located between Cave Run Lake and the Red River Gorge and feel that tourism can become a major part of our economy. In addition to the forests, our rolling hills are well suited for livestock and forage production.

b. Weaknesses

The weakness or needs of Menifee County farmers include the lack of new enterprises and the need for the expansion of existing agricultural production. Very few young people are staying on the farm to make their living. Most of our farmers are part-time producers, and make their living off the farm or have retired to a farm. The median household income is \$39,905 dollars. Only 76.3% of the people over 25 years of age are high school graduates and 11% have college degrees.

c. Opportunities

- Beef and forages
- Agricultural Diversification
- Agri-Tourism including recreational and sporting uses of farmland
- Value added timber products
- Research, Development, Experimentation and Education

d. Challenges

- Lack of markets
- Loss of farmland by sale for construction of weekend cabins.
- Loss of farmland for home construction.
- Increase in farmland prices above level for equitable return to farming.
- Young people not staying on the farm.
- Loss of the family farm.
- Few secondary wood industries
- Inefficient utilization of forage crops
- Continual loss of tobacco income

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Menifee County Ag Development Council wants farming to remain a vital part of their rural economy. We are proud farmers who wish to make a stand together to live in a community where agriculture is a valued part of community life. It is our goal to promote agriculture and related industries for current farmers and for future generations.

b. Short term goals

To prompt proposals in the major areas for improving farm income

To prioritize major areas most likely to improve farm income

The percentages allotted to major areas are:

- Beef and forage – 75%
- Agricultural Diversification – 10%
- Tourism including recreational and sporting uses of farmland – 8%
- Value added timber products – 5%
- Research, Development, Experimentation and Education – 2%

c. Long term goals

Utilize Phase I Tobacco Dollars to help fund projects that are successful in improving farm income.

Create new markets for all agricultural products:

- Increase cattle numbers
- Increase forage utilization
- Create opportunities in agri-tourism
- Improving income from our timber resources
- Improve research development, experimentation and education opportunities

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships
 - Low or no interest loans
 - Matching grants – 50-50 grants
 - Join with UK, MSU, Mountain Rural, Clark Energy, Farm Bureau, NRCS, and local banks to add dollars for proposals and college scholarships for adults and students making the transition from farm to public work.
 - Multi-county proposals are encouraged
- State Agricultural Development Board resources

- Other local/state/federal resources
 - Local banks,
 - Farmers Service Agency
 - Farm Credit Service
 - Kentucky Department of Agriculture
 - Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
 - USDA

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Proposals go in front of the Council for discussion and then labeled as high priority or low priority.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

- Ag stats indication of increase in sales of farm products.
- Increase farm income from increase in cattle numbers
- Number of individuals assisted to make the transition from farm to non-farm jobs.
- Increase sales at Farmers Market
- Improvement in farmer cooperatives to assist in marketing farm products.

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

For revision to take place the Agricultural Development Council must assess the needs of the county and ensure that they are taking all measures in reaching those.