

Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**Submitted by:**

List County Council Members

## 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

Encompassing 180,480 acres of land, with 111,314 acres (2017, Ag Census), an increase of approximately 10,000 acres from the 2012 census displays a trend in increased agricultural interests. Of those being designated for farming operations, Pendleton County's topographical features are divided between river bottoms, well suited for crop land; while the Eden Shale Hills, are better suited for livestock production. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the county ranks 81st (2012 - 80) in the total value of agricultural products sold, though agriculture is a staple for many local residents, who also commute to full time jobs outside of the county.

Falmouth, Kentucky serves as the county seat of Pendleton County and is also its economic center, with many small, locally owned businesses. Small businesses with less than 20 employees constitute 96% of all businesses and employ 41% of all employees in Pendleton County. (CEDIK business profile)

Located in Northern Kentucky's Licking River Valley at the southern edge of the greater Cincinnati urbanized area, Pendleton County is conveniently situated on the outer boundary of the golden triangle (Cincinnati, Lexington, and Louisville). Steeped in an abundance of natural resources and an agricultural based heritage, it is the perfect weekend destination to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, though the county lacks an abundance of accommodations for visitors.

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

- Traditional agricultural production in Pendleton County include enterprises, such as tobacco (a major decline in 2018, due to market), forage based cattle production, hay, corn and soy bean production are still leading the forefront in Pendleton County Agriculture. Though many commodity groups have decreased since the 2007 Agricultural Census, this can partially be attributed to the decrease/consolidation of farming operations from 910 (2007) to 810 (2012) to 919 (2017).
- Non-traditional agricultural production over the last 10 years with the development of CAIP and new farmers entering the area, there has been a dramatic increase in diversified operations, with conventional farms, non-profits, homesteads, and farmsteads. These include but are not limited to the following:
  - Greenhouses
  - Nurseries
  - Equine
  - Aquaculture
  - Fruits
  - vegetables
  - goats/sheep
  - sod production
  - bee keeping
  - forestry

However, many of these operations are not captured by USDA surveys, though are actively engaged in agricultural production and agricultural organizations. These unique operations call for unique marketing techniques, as very few local markets exist.

The Pendleton County Farmers' Market, has increased membership by more than 700% and increased sales by more than 800%. It has provided an outlet for farmers to take their horticultural products beyond the ordinary and create added value products to reach out to new consumers and gain higher premiums for their handcrafted goods. 2020 saw record sell out days, sales, customers, and vendors.

- New & emerging agricultural production includes a variety of diverse enterprises, many of which are mentioned above in non-traditional agriculture. According to the local county agriculture agent who surveys individuals who call or visit the extension office, there are a multitude of individuals who have just purchased land in the county and are looking to start an enterprise. There has been increased interest and establishment of bee hives, with approximately 25 new beekeepers in the county, who have been in production for 3 years or less.

In addition to beekeeping, there are a few individuals looking into organic horticulture production, egg production, and also meat marketing for various species. Direct to Consumer Meat Marketing became a large trend after the 2020 pandemic. Many producers are exploring opportunities, but limited state infrastructure exists.

- Tobacco dependency      Processors are booked years out.

The mass exodus in 2014 of tobacco market/tobacco companies leaving the market has left many producers who relied on tobacco production seeking alternative agricultural enterprises. Though Tobacco production had decreased from 4,738 (2007); 3,763 (2012); to 2,409 (2017) it represented 45% of all county crop sales in 2012 (Ag Census) and a mere 25% of sales in 2017 (ag census).

## b. Demographic Data

- Social data

The population of Pendleton County has decreased significantly since 2007, when the population was at 15,403 to 14,590(2019) as of 2012 (U.S. Census). Over a 50 year time span it is estimated that the population will rise approximately to 15,000 and then settle back in at 14,000 by 2050 (UKY, CEDIK), while at the same time the average age of citizens is increasing. As of 2010 (Census) 13.2% of the population was older than 64 years of age.

- Economic data

From 2002 to 2012 there was a 14% decrease in the number of jobs available in the county. Pendleton County is what most refer to as a bedroom community, meaning most individuals work and play in surrounding areas, and utilize the county primarily as residence. This is evident by the fact that 1,151 people live and work in the county (2010), while 44% of those employed in the county are in-commuters from surrounding areas.

## 2. Assessments of the County

### a. Strengths

As we look to assess the current strengths of Pendleton County's agriculture, the first enterprise that comes to mind is the forage-based production enterprises of beef cattle and cash forages, though the majority are not efficiently managed through nutrition and having designated calving seasons. The cattle industry has served Pendleton County farmers well, especially with the record high prices brought on in the 2014-2015 market season. These enterprises have commonly been coupled with tobacco production and in many cases still are. However, for those who have since left the tobacco market, this was in most cases the easiest transition.

Pendleton County also has a shared-use equipment operation which enables all farmers and citizens the opportunity to high value, efficient farm implements. The shared-use equipment program offers farmers the opportunity to utilize specialty equipment at seasonal times of the years, without making the high capital investment to purchase such equipment that would spend the largest portion of time in the barn.

Notably, the equine industry has taken a significant leap within Pendleton County moving from 58<sup>th</sup> in the state in 2007 to 38<sup>th</sup> in the state in 2012 (2012 Census of Agriculture). This can be attributed to a growing number of equine facilities and breeders within the county, taking extraordinary leadership efforts to market and present horse shows in Pendleton County, which has contributed greatly to the agritourism opportunities.

The Pendleton County Farmers' Market provides opportunities for not only farmers to sell their homegrown products, but also for cultural heritage artisans to share their goods. The Farmers' Market which currently operates at one location at the PC Fairgrounds, has seen dramatic growth in membership, sales, and attendance and is contributing greatly to the culture of Pendleton County. A permanent facility utilizing grant funds is expected to be constructed in 2021.

### c. Weaknesses

Most notably is the proximity to agricultural suppliers, markets, dealers, veterinarians, etc. This is a costly limitation and production management component that hinders many farmers within the county. It increases costs and decreases profits.

In addition, there are multiple agricultural organizations who share the same leadership. The STP or same ten people attend each and every meeting. Ideas are generated but the motivation and availability of volunteers and leaders are limited.

Many farmers and residents in the county still lack access to city water. This limits farmer's opportunities to effectively limit access to streams and ponds for livestock.

Willingness of farmers to effectively manage forage crops in a rotational system or to test forage base for nutritional quality. (2020- seeing improvements with forage focus).

### d. Opportunities

- a. Strengthening Farmers' Market
- b. CAIP and NRCS Cost Share Programs
- c. Increase in urbanites seeking day trips and short weekend getaways to the country; some seeking permanent/weekend residence and buying property.
- d. Growing consumer base in the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati area with increased ethnic populations and buy local/healthy lifestyle movement
- e. Increased number of farmers seeking/providing agritourism opportunities

- f. A number of producers willing to work at expanding agricultural diversification and explore new markets by taking risks
  - g. Rental contracts for hunting season, can lead to capital return on land
- e. Challenges
- a. Profitability of traditional agriculture
  - b. Cost of land for farming
  - c. Loss of road frontage, consolidation of farms
  - d. Limited tillable land
  - e. Access to processing facilities (abattoirs, commercial kitchens, etc.)
  - f. Increased governmental regulations
  - g. Lack of community awareness for importance of agriculture (2020 improving)
  - h. Lack of motivated groups (2020 improving)
  - i. Water quality and water access to “city” water
  - j. Access to startup capital for agricultural production
  - k. Lack of agriculturally based jobs to bring young people back into the county to be engaged within agriculture
  - l. Farm transitions to the next/new generations

### 3. County Council Objectives

#### a. Mission/Vision Statement

The goal of the Pendleton County Agricultural Development Council is to serve as a catalyst to further the development of projects that will enhance the economic well-being of tobacco dependent families and expand the agricultural base of this county and region. Our focus is to help Pendleton County Farmers:

#### b. Short term goals

- Explore new enterprises that will stand alone or add value to an existing operation
- Support on-going cooperative efforts in the expansion of their market development
- Support non-production efforts if they demonstrate an economic impact to the community and agriculture
- Encourage cooperation among individuals to develop proposals that are broad-based in scope and benefit multiple parties
- Encourage farmers to better manage and utilize forage based enterprises
- Provide support to local farmers’ market to further promote expansion and reach
- Educate consumers on true agricultural practices and science
- Increase number of young farmers returning the county to farm and be employed in the agriculture field

#### c. Long term goals

- Preserve family farming operations
- Foster relationships between consumers and farmers, to increase agricultural awareness
- Promote ethical farm management practices which ease concerns from government and consumers
- Establish a permanent home for the farmers market (in progress, ECD 2021)
- Create long lasting and reliable new markets for agricultural products
- Food supply and manufacturing, creating infrastructure for added-product development.

- Foster young agricultural leaders to carry on agricultural traditions

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships
  - Farm Bureau
  - Cooperative Extension Service
  - Pendleton County Cattleman's Association
  - Soil Conservation District
  - Fiscal Court
  - County/City Government
  - FFA
  - Farmers' Market
  - Fairboard
- State Agricultural Development Board resources
  - Encourage farmers to investigate resources with KAFC
- Other local/state/federal resources
  - Farmers' Market Promotion Program
  - USDA Grants
  - KCARD
  - CEDIK

### 3. Evaluation & Review

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

- CAIP applications are evaluated according to state guidelines.
- Projects are inspected to ensure compliance within state guidelines.

B .How is success and failure measured?

- By percentage of unfinished projects.

C .How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

- By committee of the Pendleton County Agricultural Development Board

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