

Powell County  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Insert Date

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# Powell 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

Powell County is a small rural county located at the outer edge of the Bluegrass and the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Best known for its natural resources, Powell County is home to the Natural Bridge State Resort Park and the Red River Gorge. Approximately 60% of the county lies within the Boundaries of the Daniel Boone National Forest. With the county's vast displays of majestic cliffs, rivers, streams and forestland, it has become a haven for tourists from across the country.

Powell County is a small County in agricultural numbers. Most of the farmers in Powell County are part-time farm operators, either working at other jobs during the day or farming in retirement. The average farm is composed of around 131 acres with a median size of 65 acres. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture there are 194. As with the state average, farm numbers are decreasing each year.

Tobacco, which was the main crop for farmers, is now nonexistent in the county.

According to the 2017 Kentucky Agricultural Statistics, Powell County had 1350 acres of corn, 3000 acres of soybeans and approximately 2400 head of cattle. Horses and goats are produced on an even smaller scale. Farmers are also producing small amounts of commercial vegetables and fruits to sell at Farmers Market. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Powell County's total crop sales were 1,984,000 in corn, soybean and mixed hay.

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

- Traditional agricultural production
  - Cattle
  - Forage
  - Grain
  - Timber Production
- Non-traditional agricultural production
  - Vegetables
  - Bee Production

- New & emerging agricultural production

Vegetables

Bee Production

- Tobacco dependency

According to the Clark County FSA office, Powell County had 711,617 pounds of effective quota for tobacco (approximately 360 acres). Tobacco receipts in 2000, compared to the year 1997, were down 46%, with tobacco income down to \$1.3 million dollars for the county. In 2006 there were only 110 acres of tobacco grown in Powell County. In 2020, there are no tobacco producers in the county.

#### b. Demographic Data

- Social data

Powell County has a total population of 12,374 people. 96.3% of the population is white, .9% African American and 1.5% Hispanic. The county seat is Stanton. Other smaller communities include Clay City, West Bend, Slade and Bowen. Stanton and Clay City have immediate access to the Mountain Parkway which provides four-lane access to Winchester, Lexington and Hazard. The county is also served by Kentucky Highways 11,15,82 and 213 giving access to such towns as Mt. Sterling, Richmond, Beattyville and Irvine.

- Economic data

With a civilian workforce of 4,198,

Powell County's unemployment rate was 5% in 2019. The poverty rate in Powell County was 24%, higher than the national average according to the most recent census data. There are approximately 5,678 households with 2.17 persons per household. The median household income in 2019 was \$34,647.

## 2. Assessments of the County

### a. Strengths

**Location:** Powell County's location, with the Mountain Parkway as its primary roadway, make travel into the larger cities easy.

**People:** Powell County's farmers and farm families have extensive knowledge of tobacco, beef cattle, forages and grain crops. The horse industry, especially the pleasure horse industry, is growing in our area.

**Natural Resources:** Powell County's soil is varied from the drier hill and ridge areas to

the rich and fertile Red River bottom area, making it excellent ground to produce crops such as vegetables, soybeans and corn. The county also has numerous sources of water. Education: Powell County has an excellent educational infrastructure for formal instruction as well as continuing education. The county's proximity to the University of Kentucky in Lexington and several state colleges at Morehead, Richmond and Georgetown offers many of our residents the opportunity for expanding their education.

#### b. Weaknesses

**Markets:** The primary problem farmers have faced has been in marketing. For products other than livestock, direct marketing by the farmers has been the only option.

**Small Land Holdings:** Most farmers do not own enough land to expand forage and livestock production. Many acres of good farm land are owned by out-of-county operators.

**Prior Negative Experience with Vegetables:** Many Powell County farmers have grown vegetables in the past but have had unfavorable experiences with these crops. Powell County's high humidity levels in mid-summer make it a haven for disease pressure, especially on vegetable plants. Marketing of produce has also been a problem.

**Natural Resources:** While agricultural resources such as soil and water are conducive to productive agriculture, the county has several limitations. One of the greatest limitations is that many soils are wet in nature with a high clay content. Powell County's soils are also typically in need of lime and potash for most crop growth.

#### c. Opportunities

**New Markets:** Powell County's roadway system, central location, and natural beauty have the potential to expand its agricultural base, especially if geared toward the millions of tourists who visit our county each year. The ever growing tourism industry in the county may lend itself to new markets for fresh produce, value added agriculture products and other agricultural products.

**Forage and Livestock:** The livestock industry has great potential to expand in Powell County with little additional investment necessary. With thousands of acres of rolling hillsides not suited for cropland, beef cattle, horse and goat numbers could be increased to improve farm profits.

**Timber Production:** Over 60% of Powell County is in woodland, but landowners are often uncertain about the value of their timber resources. BMP's of woodland ownership should be followed to protect this resource. Landowners need to be more aware of what real value their woodlands have.

#### d. Challenges

**Aging Farmer Population:** The average age of a Powell County farmer is around 64 years. As they age, they must rely on labor assistance which is a huge challenge. Younger men and

women must find off-farm work to simply pay the bills. Most young farmers do not have the capital needed to purchase land and equipment for farming. Each year more "hobby" farmers are purchasing land and becoming somewhat involved in agriculture.

Health Care/Health Insurance: Most Powell County families have one or more members of their family employed off the farm simply to obtain family health insurance. High costs of health insurance make it almost impossible for farmers to afford health insurance on their own.

Urban Sprawl: What once was productive farmland is becoming sought after property for homes and businesses. Farmers who need extra cash are being caught in the web of selling off the farm in small lots to retire on or add needed cash to the family cash flow.

### **3. County Council Objectives**

#### **a. Mission/Vision Statement**

The mission for the Powell County Agricultural Development Council will be to promote and encourage projects and programs that will expand the agricultural industry in our county and assist farm owners in sustaining the family farm. We further hope to serve as a resource for learning new technology and exploring new possibilities that will enhance and expand our county's economy. The Council believes that farming must continue to be a vital part of our economy and our family heritage.

#### **b. Short term goals**

The Council will devote the majority of its funds allotted to Powell County to cost share programs which will maximize production in the following areas: beef cattle/forages and horticultural crops. Cost sharing will be determined by the Council based on the type and scope of the investment. Farmers who have been approved for funding will submit receipts for reimbursement. Priority will be given to projects which will have benefits which will extend into several years, rather than just one season.

According to a county survey of farmers, the following areas will be anticipated for funded projects: livestock water supply development in conjunction with water quality plan BMP's; fence improvement and intensive grazing programs; weed control in pastures and hay fields; vegetable production equipment; cost sharing for pasture renovation; fertilization and liming; improved feeder cattle marketing systems; improved marketing of value-added agricultural products and enhanced educational programs for youth and adults.

#### **c. Long term goals**

The long-term goal of the Council will be to allocate the county's appropriated funds to stimulate the economic wellbeing of Powell County and to assist small farmers in improving production and sustaining those small farms. The Council will work with local cooperators, businesses and county decision makers in expanding agricultural production and improving agricultural markets. These funds will allow local farmers to expand their knowledge base and economic opportunities into other crops and livestock enterprises.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

- Kentucky Beef Network
  - University of Kentucky
  - Soil Conservation
  - Area Stockyards
  - Agricultural businesses

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

- State Ag Development

- Energy Program

- Other local/state/federal resources

- Soil and Water Conservation

- Cooperative Extension Service

- Farm Bureau

- Livestock Producers Association

- Farm Service Agency

- Kentucky Department of Agriculture

- Local lending institutions

### **3. Evaluation & Review**

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

The County council accepts and reviews applications following the procedures provided by the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board. Applications will be evaluated and assigned a priority score. Proposals will be evaluated by the County Agriculture Phase I Development Council to ensure consistency with the Powell County Comprehensive Plan. The State Board will determine final approval of applications and any modifications to this process shall be made within state guidelines.

b. How is success and failure measured?

All applicants will be required to give a report of their project to report completion of the project and impact. The council will review these reports. The county council may use agriculture census data to measure impact of certain proposals.

c. How will the county comprehensive plan be revised?

The County Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed periodically and revised based upon input from the Agriculture Development Council, agriculture leadership groups (ex. Extension Advisory Board, Livestock Producers Board, Farm Bureau Board, etc.), Agriculture producers, etc. as required by the Agriculture Development Council guidelines.

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