

Rowan County  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Fall 2020

**Submitted by:**

List County Council Members

Ronnie Goodman  
Joe Fraley  
Kyle Arnett  
Eddie Holbrook  
Angela Clatos  
Steve Kelsey  
Vicki Anderson  
Carmen Swim  
Doug Hopson

# Rowan 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

2017 Census of Agriculture data show that the number of farms and land in farms in the county has declined from 2012. Average size of farms and market value of products sold has decreased during the same period. Livestock sales account for 60% and Crops 40% of the market value of product sold. Approximately 8,188 acres are used to producer forages and over 1249 acres are used to grow corn or soybeans. Tobacco production has declined dramatically following the buyout. Most farm operations are part time in nature and are used to supplement off farm employment income. The majority age of farm operators are between 35-64 years of age. Several greenhouses still operate, producing transplants, bedding plants, and other horticultural products for local retail sales. Timber and wood products is probably a leading source of farm income although statistics documenting value are hard to find.

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

- Traditional agricultural production
  - \* Declining number of farms and land in farms for the period 2012-2017, down 8%
  - \* Declining market value of products sold for the period 2012-2017, down 21%
  - \* Grain production is at sales of \$1,661,000 2012-2017
  - \* Cattle production is at sales of \$1,838,000 2012-2017
- Non-traditional agricultural production
  - \* Active Farmers Market generating significant sales for members
  - \* Two active orchards selling road side and through Farmers Market
  - \* One established vineyard although future activity is unclear

- New & emerging agricultural production

- \*Increasing trend of older landowners renting ground to younger farmers

- \*Soybean production increasing

- \*Increasing numbers of greenhouses/hi tunnels/small, non-traditional farm operations (small animal production)

- Tobacco dependency

Burley production in 2006 was less than 500,000 pounds. As in most burley producing counties in eastern Kentucky, the number of tobacco growers has decreased significantly since 2004. Estimated payments from the tobacco buyout to quota owners and growers total \$8,719,535.

## b. Demographic Data

- Social data

Population estimate for 2019 was 24,460. Median household income in 2019 is reported as \$37,639, which is more than \$7000 less than the Kentucky state median household income.

- Economic data

Annual average unemployment in 2018 was well below 2%. The public school system, a regional university and medical center are significant and stable employers. Several factories, a retail distribution center, and several hardwood secondary manufacturers also contribute to relatively low unemployment rates compared to surrounding counties.

## 2. Assessments of the County

### a. Strengths

- \*MSU's Food Service/Kitchen facility

- \*Increased number of hi tunnels that extend growing season

- \*Pretty strong Farmers Market

- \*Chop Shop facility (USDA inspected processing facility in Morgan Co)

- \*NRCS programs (specifically Triplett Creek Watershed program)

- \*Dead Animal pick up service for fallen livestock

- \*Proximity to Interstate 64

b. Weaknesses

- \*Lack of funds
- \*Environmental regulations (specifically EPA regulations)
- \*Lack of diversity in products offered at Farmers Markets
- \*Farmer/landowner relationships

c. Opportunities

- \*Demand for Local foods (specifically Community Supported Agriculture)
- \*Community Gardens
- \*Shared use equipment (lime spreader, seed drill, cattle chute)
- \*Increase promotion of Ag (Ag day at Farmers Market)

d. Challenges

- \*Money for projects
- \*Soil productivity differences
- \*Not much public awareness of agriculture
- \*Farm safety issues

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

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Council is to evaluate the needs of the local ag economy, devise a plan for the county that identifies projects best suited for ag development, and assist prospective applicants with obtaining ag development funds.

b. Short term goals

- \*Help smaller operations

c. Long term goals

- \*More publicity of Ag programs
- \*Increase awareness of Ag projects
- \*Feedlots
- \*Grain elevators

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships
  - Use KADF as a source of match to encourage partnerships with local private and public entities
- State Agricultural Development Board resources

- Other local/state/federal resources
  - \* EQIP
  - \*Triplett Creek Program

### 3. Evaluation & Review

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

Applicants are invited to give a presentation to the Ag Development Council explaining what they have in mind with their project. Council members evaluate proposals by asking questions and consider requests in the context of how they could benefit the local Ag economy. There have been several applications over the years including Heifer Development, Chop Shop, MSU Kitchen, and Rowan Farmers Market to name a few that have received county funds

- b. How is success and failure measured?

No formal evaluations are done for projects that receive county funds, although most if not all project applications that have received a high priority and county funds are still active. There are generally more applications for CAIP funds than can be funded.

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

As requested by GOAP

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