

Bell County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Bell 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

Mountainous county in southeastern Kentucky. Historically, coal based economy. County seat is Pineville and the largest town is Middlesboro. Cumberland Gap National Park attracts many visitors each year. County is transected by US Highway 25E which has a volume of approximately 30,000 people per day. Approximately 81 farms averaging 100 acres each.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

Livestock (beef cattle, horses, poultry, goats, sheep, and swine), hay, and vegetables.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

Wood products

Agritourism

- New & emerging agricultural production

Fruit and vegetable production in seasonal high tunnels.

- Tobacco dependency

Very low. Quota in 2007 was 7,175 lbs.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data.

Population - 28,691. 94.4% White, 2.4% Black/African American, 0.4% Asian, 1.9% Other/2 or more races, 1.0% Hispanic

- Economic data

Poverty rate - 38.7%.

Unemployment rate - 7.8%. Median household income - 26,014

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Tourism opportunities, 2 hospitals, 3 public school systems and several private and home schools, national park, state park, coal, forest, other natural resources.

b. Weaknesses

Poor work ethic due to socialist welfare programs, drug/alcohol problems, sense of hopelessness, lack of job opportunities, illegal dumping/littering, lack of training in agriculture, transportation.

c. Opportunities

Coal, timber, tourism, agricultural production particularly local grown foods.

d. Challenges

Viable markets for products, logistics, skilled work force, lack of training in agriculture, transportation.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

Create opportunities for agricultural producers to start new enterprises or expand existing operations.

b. Short term goals

Promote better management practices and greater marketing opportunities for livestock, vegetables, and wood products. More training on agriculture production.

c. Long term goals

Increase supply of locally grown foods and develop markets for such.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships.

County level funds are extremely low. Council will support any and all feasible regional or multi-county proposals.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

Council watches for opportunities that state resources might fund that can improve the agriculture economy. Particularly, renewable energy developments are of great interest as it relates to forest resources. Utilizing more of our woody biomass in an economically feasible manner is a tremendous opportunity.

- Other local/state/federal resources

County council has worked closely with farm bureau, fiscal court, and other agencies and will continue to do so as opportunities arise.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Representatives from each county will serve on an oversight board for all regional projects.

All funded projects will be audited annually.

County comprehensive plan will be revised on an ongoing basis.

Oversight board will evaluate and revamp regional projects as needed for the region.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Success comes when a project becomes sustainable without outside financial input. Anything short of that is failure.

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

Annually or more often if needed.

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