

Rockcastle
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Rockcastle

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

Rockcastle County is located on the Southern edge of Kentucky's Bluegrass region. Farmland is generally considered 70% hilly and 30% gently rolling. Traditionally, Agriculture production, prior to 2010, has mainly been based on tobacco, beef cattle, and dairy cattle along with forage and grains to supply the livestock industry. A move toward row crops has increased harvested row crops to almost 3,000 acres. Commercial vegetable production has been added along with Agriculture tourism activities.

The 2017 Kentucky Agriculture Statistics reported 688 farms. More farmers have turned to farming on a part-time basis or left farming to work at industries in order to support their families. Forty five percent of farms in Rockcastle County reports sales of \$2.500 or less.

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

▪ Traditional agricultural production

Rockcastle's 202,589 acres has 80,706 in farm land made up of 17,806 acres crop land with 950 acres corn, 1400 acres soybean, and 19,458 acres in hay production plus 28, 959 acres pasture. In 2017 farmers produced \$7.3 million farm income.

▪ Non-traditional agricultural production

Agriculture Tourism has developed through Horse Camps and On Farm Field Days which reach out to the non farm community.

- **New & emerging agricultural production**
There seems to be a shift of smaller acreage farmers growing vegetables for farmers markets and roadside stands. Buying locally sourced foods is an important culture shift to ag producers that allows them outlets to market produces as well as finished meat products directly to consumers. Four percent of farms sold directly to consumers in 2017.

- **Tobacco dependency**
Following the Tobacco Buyout acreage has dropped from 1800 to none produced in 2021. From 502 farms to 0.

b. Demographic Data

- **Social data**
The 2017 Kentucky Agriculture Statistics reported 681 farms, which is a 1% increase. This reflects small farms being added for most likely vegetable production on small scale as part time business. More farmers have turned to farming on a part-time basis or left farming to work at industries in order to support their families.

- **Economic data**
The 4.4 million dollars from livestock production is now our leading farm income source. In 2017 Agriculture Statistics reported 13,688 head of cattle and calves plus 723 horses.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Rockcastle County has a diverse Agriculture Community, which includes crops, livestock, and horticulture. Farmers have shown that they will adjust to changing times. Beef production utilizes over 28,959 acres of pastureland and fits well with part-time farming. Rockcastle has livestock marketing facilities in four of the six adjoining counties. One facility is offering CPH 45 sales. Rockcastle County hillsides are well suited for livestock production making the most suitable alternative for land use.

b. Weaknesses

Small part-time farmers with an average of 25 cows have limited resources to invest in upgrading their farm. Farmers are faced with escalating fuel and fertilizer prices. The value of hay has increased dramatically and makes the need for protection from weather damage more important. Farmers continue to need help in building hay storage facilities, improving fencing, handling facility, feeding areas, weaning areas, and improving genetics.

Marketing through CPH 45 requires vaccinations and herd health producers. Farmers continue to show needs for improved handling, weaning, and feeding areas. Forage crops have a three to five year life and farmers are faced with higher replacement costs during a critical financial period.

c. Opportunities

Improve handling and weaning facilities
Increase income per feeder calf produced
Improve purchasing opportunities of Feed Concentrate
Increase the acres of alfalfa hay
Sell more hay
Develop Agri-Tourism opportunities
Expand Farmers' Market
Utilize more CPH 45 Group Sales

d. Challenges

Subdivision development with in prime farm land
Aging farmers with few young farmers coming on
Escalating fuel and fertilizer prices
Lower income causing older farmers to leave the industry
Qualified Labor Force

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

To help sustain existing agriculture in Rockcastle County while aiding farmers in developing new sources and improving agriculture income for years to come.

b. Short term goals

The Council believes that our immediate or short-term goals are to add profitability to the already existing agriculture enterprises in the county while helping farmers develop and investigate new sources for added income in areas in which we do not presently take advantage.

c. Long term goals

Rockcastle County's long-term goal is to place emphasis on efficient utilization of the forage base through improved livestock management. To replace lost tobacco income through improving and expanding well proven existing farm enterprises as well as investigating new projects for increasing farm profitability. There is also plans to invest in county wide projects such as new farmers market facilities to help the overall agriculture community in rockcastle county

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

▪ Regional partnerships

The Council will be looking for evidence that there will be matching of funds by the applicant at 50/50 level. Council members will support regional projects which benefit local producers, but consist of scope beyond Council's ability.

▪ State Agricultural Development Board resources

Staff to assist in Applications and Financial Management.

- Other local/state/federal resources
Local support from Conservation District, Cattlemen's Association, Extension Service, Fam Bureau and famers market.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Applications out side the current CAIP Program will be accepted and evaluated as the emphasis in comparison with identified county and state needs. The proposals will be evaluated on merit of the plan, matching funds, profitability, ability to measure profit and feasibility for this area.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Council will measure the success or failure of the program based on size and scale of adoption. Surveys will be used to determine money saved or income increased.

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

The County Comprehensive Plan will be revised as the need arises, such as when programs are identified and support exists to implement such programs.

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