

# Bracken County Comprehensive Plan

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Revision Date: May 2025

## OVERVIEW

Located in the Licking River Area, Bracken County is approximately 50 miles southeast of Cincinnati and 15 miles west of Maysville. Bordering the Ohio River, the county is accessible via the AA Highway and served by the CSX rail line. With a current population of 8,148 citizens (2023 estimate), Bracken County maintains its identity as a rural community with a strong agricultural heritage.

Historically dependent on tobacco production, Bracken County is transitioning toward a more diversified agricultural economy. While tobacco once dominated the landscape, producers are now embracing forage, beef, and horticulture as emerging income sources. This shift presents opportunities for sustainable farm income and broader community development.

## BRACKEN COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PROFILE

### TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION

Burley Tobacco: ~420 Acres (~30 Active Farms)

Beef Cattle: 10,950 Head (6,550 Cows on ~300 Farms)

Dairy: 1 Herd Remaining, <40 Head, ~350,000 lbs/year

Hay and Forages: 18,540 Total Acres

- Alfalfa: 3,250 Acres (2.9 Tons/Acre Avg.)

- Other Hay: 13,765 Acres (2.1 Tons/Acre Avg.)

Grain: Corn (865 Acres Grain, 510 Acres Silage), Soybeans (815 Acres)

AG INCOME (2022 Estimate): Livestock - \$4.75M, Crops - \$6.95M, Total - \$11.7M

### NON-TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

Timber & Managed Forestry, Honey Production, Hemp, Orchard Crops, Small Fruits, Greenhouse Production, Agritourism, Equine Boarding, Direct-to-Consumer Meat, Cash Hay Sales

## **SOCIOECONOMIC SNAPSHOT (2023)**

Population: 8,148 | Households: 3,790 | Median Income: \$48,120

Education: High School Diploma - 85.9%, College Degree - 15.6%

## **FARM STATISTICS (2022)**

Number of Farms: 512 | Avg. Farm Size: 161 Acres | Principal Farming Operators: 308

Farms <\$10,000 sales: 338 | Farms >\$10,000 sales: 174

Avg. Operator Age: 57.3 | Female Operators: 28%

## **STRENGTHS**

Strong work ethic, prime location, available infrastructure, educational support, scenic beauty, youth programs, growing greenhouse sector

## **WEAKNESSES**

Market limitations, aging population, land prices, calf health, environmental issues, broadband gaps

## **THREATS**

Farmland loss, limited off-farm jobs, regulatory burdens, invasive species, declining support businesses

## **MISSION/VISION STATEMENT**

To stabilize and diversify farm operations, support new and existing farmers, enhance market access, and sustain the county's rural character.

## **PRIORITY INITIATIVES**

### **LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION**

- Improve pastures, promote CPH-45, enhance marketing strategies

### **HORTICULTURE AND DIVERSIFICATION**

- Expand vegetable/fruit markets, greenhouse training, agritourism, meat processing

## **NEW ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES**

Agroforestry, regenerative grazing, composting, on-farm education

## **LONG-TERM GOALS**

Diversify income, improve infrastructure, support youth, preserve farmland, support next-gen farmers, climate-smart practices

## **TACTICS FOR LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES**

Access funding programs, collaborate with institutions, build alliances, launch branding, support ag-based workforce education