

**Christian County
Agricultural Development Council**

**Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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Submitted by:

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Christian 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

Christian County is located in the southwest portion of Kentucky. It is a geographically diverse county. Ranging from highly productive cropland in the south, with the north end of the county consisting of steep timberland hillsides and rolling ridge-top fields. Generating over \$263 million in Ag receipts in 2022 Christian County ranks 5th in the state for overall farm receipts. While most crop producing operations have felt the need to expand their operations to compete in a global economy, the majority of farms in our area are still heavily dependent on tobacco as a main source of revenue and are currently looking for other profitable enterprises.

Hopkinsville is the county seat of Christian County and has a population of nearly 38,000 people. When combined with the rural residents, the county population exceeds 75,000. This places a very demanding need for the county to attract industrial manufacturing facilities in order to support a population of this size. Consequently, agricultural producers must compete with these facilities for high quality, skilled labor to fill jobs both on the farm and in ag-related retail outlets.

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

■ Traditional agricultural production

Traditional Ag production in Christian County is heavily dependent on corn, wheat, and double crop soybeans. We still have many producers that set out many acres of tobacco (Burley, Dark Fired, and Dark Air Cured).

Livestock production is also a large part of production. We still have many beef producers as well as nearly 150 small Mennonite and Amish farms.

■ Non-traditional agricultural production

Non-traditional agriculture production comes largely in the way of our booming Mennonite and Amish communities. With the largest produce auction east of the Mississippi. Produce and flower production has become a large part of the Christian County Ag economy. As we have seen a decrease in tobacco contracts we see more producers reaching out to non-traditional agriculture such as melons, sweet corn, and other horticultural crops.

- New & emerging agricultural production

As demand for tobacco continues to decrease many farmers are looking for options to offset the decrease in tobacco acres. While some have picked up additional burley contract, many are looking to produce to offset the loss of income. With a new food manufacturing facility in Commerce Park produce seems to be a viable option.

- Tobacco dependency

Tobacco has long been a major cash crop in Christian County. According to 2022 NASS Christian County is the number one tobacco producing county in the state. In 2022 it Christian County had 77 producers and sold over 44 million dollars worth of tobacco. Christian county also serves as home to Swisher International and US Tobacco.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

Christian county is geographically the second largest county in the commonwealth. It has two major populated areas that include Hopkinsville, the county seat, and Oak Grove, home of Fort Campbell's US military installation. With nearly 40,000 people living in urban populations, a balance of nearly 35,000 live in rural Christian County.

- Economic data

Christian County has a diverse economy. As stated before, the county is not quite 50/50 urban to rural which leads to a diverse economic situation. Many jobs in manufacturing are held by both urban and rural residence while many people come from out of the county to work in Christian county. As with many small communities local government makes up a large portion of the employment sector through county schools and public works.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Some of the strengths of Christian county can be seen with a drive through the county. The first and one of the most obvious is the highly productive farm ground. This property has led many manufactures to locate in the area to be close to primary goods. Along with a strong Ag and manufacturing industry has come a strong infrastructure system with good roads and a strong rail system.

b. Weaknesses

One of the major weaknesses is the lack of skilled labor in Christian County. The county has made great strides to develop its workforce readiness program to provide employers the applicants they are looking for. Many manual labor jobs such as tobacco production is mostly done by H2A migrant labor.

c. Opportunities

A great new opportunity has come to Christian County with the development of the new Agriculture Exposition Center. Located at the local Extension office, the Ag Expo will have the ability to host agricultural events in all seasons and provide new opportunities not seen in the area before.

d. Challenges

One of the main challenges for Christian County is urban sprawl. As we have seen the rural population of the county decrease in the last ten years we have seen more and more people moving to metropolitan areas. While this is happening we are seeing the city limits being pushed further into the highly productive farm ground. As the cities expand we continue to see farmers have to do more with less acres.

3. County Council Objective•

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Christian County Ag Development Council works with groups and individuals to stimulate economic growth and increase educational opportunities. As part of the Christian County Chamber of Commerce they work in partnership with the West KY Economic Development Council to draw new opportunities to our region.

b. Short term goals

Maintain adequate county level funding for CAIP and continue to encourage individuals and groups to look for innovative ways to further develop our Ag economy.

c. Long term goals

The long term goal of Christian County agriculture is to find ways to add value to agricultural products produced in the county through the expansion of end product production facilities that have a focus on environmental quality and land sustainability.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

Currently the Ag Development council works with the Christian County Agribusiness Association that serves as the Ag representative for the Christian County Chamber of Commerce. Within the region Christian, Todd, and Trigg counties work with the West KY Economic Development council to draw new interest to the area.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

Christian County is always looking for new opportunities and welcome partnerships with the State Ad Development Board as well as KY Ag Finance Corporation. Projects of this caliber help promote KY agriculture on a larger scale.

- other local/state/federal resources

The council welcomes input from all local, state, and federal resources. We currently work with our Conservation office, FSA, and Fish and Wildlife to provide opportunities for a wide audience.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Proposals are evaluated on an individual basis. Once a proposal has been submitted the committee welcomes the applicant to come and explain the project and show how it will impact agriculture in our community.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Success will be measured on an individual, merit-based basis. With each completion of a project it is anticipated that the local Ag community will come away with a better understanding of production agriculture within Christian County.

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

The county comprehensive plan will be reviewed and revised by the county Ag Development Council. Reviews may be made periodically to determine that the plan fits the county's needs. It will continue to be updated every five years as outlined by the Governor's Office of Ag Policy.

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