

Jessamine  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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**Submitted by:**

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# Jessamine

## 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

Jessamine County is in the Bluegrass Region of Central Kentucky. The county is south of and adjacent to Lexington, Fayette County. Jessamine County covers 177 square miles or 113,280 acres and is one of Kentucky's smallest counties. Only seven other counties are smaller in area than Jessamine.

Most of Jessamine County is in the gently rolling to undulating inner Bluegrass physiographic region. Most of Jessamine County is currently in residential development, beef cattle and equine pastures, other farming enterprises, retail and light industrial development.

According to the 2024 Kentucky By The Numbers County Profile, Jessamine County has 619 farms with an average farms size of 116 acres. 65.1% of the total land is in farms. There are 1,123 total producers with an average age of 58.2 years.

- a. Agricultural statistics, trends, & projections (i.e. Census Data)
  - Traditional agricultural production

According to the 2017 USDA Agriculture census data, the total income from farms in Jessamine County is \$51,106,000. Jessamine County has a total of 16,663 beef animals, which ranks the county 39th in the state in beef production. It is estimated that horses generate an additional \$61,661,000 + to the income in Jessamine County.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

Jessamine County has a number of producers who are operating non-traditional operations. Horticultural crops, CSA's, fruits, bees and poultry have all become popular with residents who reside on smaller acreage. These individuals are numerous but finding economic data on the total impact of their activities is difficult. As planning and zoning continues to promote small 5-acre tracts and cluster type developments, it is expected that these types of small unit agricultural initiatives will remain popular and will continue to grow.

- New & emerging agricultural production

Honeybees, Horticulture, and poultry are on a growing trend and it is expected that these areas will continue to grow. Hay production is not a new crop for Jessamine County, but it is one that continues to see growth and expansion, especially in specialty hay products for the equine industry such as Timothy, Teff and Alfalfa.

- Tobacco dependency

Tobacco, in 2001, accounted for \$8,685,000.00 in farm income to Jessamine County. Because of the tobacco buyout and other factors such as the age of our farmers, declining demand for tobacco products, increased tobacco imports and the unavailability of tobacco contracts offered by the major tobacco companies, Jessamine County now has no commercial tobacco production.

#### b. Demographic Data

- Social data

In 2023, Jessamine County, KY had a population of 53.8k people with a median age of 38.7 and a median household income of \$74,886. Between 2022 and 2023 the population of Jessamine County, KY grew from 53,381 to 53,792, a 0.77% increase and its median household income grew from \$69,905 to \$74,886, a 7.13% increase. The 5 largest ethnic groups in Jessamine County, KY are White (Non-Hispanic) (86.3%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (3.88%), Three or More Races (Non-Hispanic) (2.86%), White (Hispanic) (1.91%), and Two Races Including Other (Hispanic) (1.64%).. 89.6% of the population over the age of 25 has a high school diploma and more and 30.3% has at least a bachelor's degree. 19.9% of adults in Jessamine County smoke regularly, 30.6% of the population is considered obese.

- Economic data

In 2012, Jessamine County was reported to have 15,173 total jobs, an increase from the 13,214 in 2002. The largest job sector is in the top 10 industries in the community with 8,392 jobs, then in local government with 2,030 jobs, followed by food service with 1,515 jobs. Agriculture generates 117 jobs according to the census, with manufacturing providing 2,627, retail trade with 2,745, construction with 1,138 jobs and food service with 1,515 total jobs. The current unemployment rate for Jessamine County is 7.1% and the median household income is \$47,280/year.

## 2. Assessments of the County

### a. Strengths

1. Jessamine County is located adjacent to Lexington, which offers producers access to a large market for sales of fresh produce, honey and other bee products, and poultry products.
2. Jessamine County and the areas around the county have many horse farms, both large and small. These farms are potential markets for good quality grass and grass/legume hays.
3. Jessamine County has a strong Beef Cattle Association which supports many other local organizations through donations of funds generated through fund-raising activities. There is also a strong Young Farmers Group and a recently formed FFA Alumni organization.
4. The Jessamine County Cooperative Extension Office, the Conservation District Boards and the Farm Service Agency all work to support agriculture in Jessamine County.
5. Most of the county has a strong potential for high-quality forage production,

#### b. Weaknesses

1. Jessamine County is not adjacent to any interstates, which limits its access to markets outside the immediate area.
2. There is no livestock auction market in Jessamine County. Most of the cattle sold through a market are sold in Lexington, Lancaster, Richmond or Paris.
3. Much of the best farmland in Jessamine County is being converted to residential development and the farmland that remains undeveloped is priced based on its development potential, rather than its ag. land value.
4. The average age of farmers in Jessamine County is 59 years. It is exceptionally hard for young people to enter farming in this county due to the high price of farmland, particularly farmland.

#### c. Opportunities

1. Jessamine County is blessed with strong youth programs related to agriculture. Jessamine County's proximity to Lexington offers farmers a unique opportunity to market fresh products directly to consumers
2. Jessamine County may be one of the 8 smallest counties in Kentucky in size, but in agricultural output, we rank very high. Jessamine County presently has over 83,000 acres dedicated to agriculture. The forage base located on these acres offers our producers a tremendous opportunity, with improved grazing practices, to expand their grazing opportunities and increase net farm income.
3. The county is a strong beef cattle county. Beef cattle income has now passed tobacco income as the leading commodity revenue to farmers in Jessamine County

#### d. Challenges

1. The continued development of Jessamine county's prime farmland continues to be the biggest threat to agriculture in the county. From 1997 to 2002, Jessamine County lost 9.7% of its farmland to development. Not only is the loss of farmland a threat, but the inflated land prices created by the demand for this land has made it almost impossible for young farmers to purchase land for use in agricultural production.
2. More restrictive environmental regulations are also hampering the expansion of farming operations in Jessamine County.
3. The average age of our farmers is also a concern. According to the last census, the average age of the Jessamine County Farmer is 59 years of age and increasing. High land costs and the uncertainty of tobacco are preventing many young people from entering the field of agriculture, leaving those established farmers to continue this honorable profession

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

#### a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Jessamine County Ag Development Council will strive to identify and enhance those project areas which can ensure a positive potential effect on the profitability, sustainability, and quality of life for farm families and our community as a whole.

Funds will be administered in a fair and equitable manner, giving all an opportunity to be involved.

b. Short term goals

Provide assistance to Jessamine County producers looking to explore new methods of production or marketing, start a new enterprise or expand an existing enterprise.

c. Long term goals

The long-term goal of the council is to support local leadership groups, educational programs and projects which are vital to our Agricultural economy.

The improvement of existing farming enterprises, expanding new opportunities, developing markets and providing educational opportunities to allow producers to continue to farm will remain the top priority.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

The Jessamine County Ag Development Council will look for opportunities to support regional projects that will provide an economic benefit to our local farmers. Through these projects, we will consider pooling funds with other surrounding counties to make these regional opportunities more viable.

- State Agricultural Development Board Resources

The county council will expect proposals to show evidence of in-kind, matching money or other support equal to at least 50% of the total cost of the project for which any application is submitted.

- Other local/state/federal resources

The council will always look for opportunities to leverage our dollars with other funds to support projects that benefit our producers and provide incentives for the expansion of agriculture in our community.

### 3. Evaluation & Review

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

Proposals are considered based on their potential benefit to our local producers, and our local agricultural economy. Projects showing a strong potential benefit are considered a high priority.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Success is measured by first looking at local participation in the project, then by the overall economic benefit it has provided in our community.

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

The plan will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

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