

Lincoln County  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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# Lincoln 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

see attached

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

- Traditional agricultural production

see attached

- Non-traditional agricultural production

see attached

- New & emerging agricultural production

There are many Amish in the community that are raising different types of specialty crops to be sold at the local whole sale market.

- Tobacco dependency

With less about 5 producers and under 200 acres produced our farmers have very little dependence on tobacco.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

see attached

- Economic data

see attached

**2. Assessments of the County**

a. Strengths

see attached

b. Weaknesses  
see attached

c. Opportunities  
see attached

d. Challenges  
see attached

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

a. Mission/Vision Statement  
see attached

b. Short term goals

see attached

c. Long term goals

The long term goal of the board will be to support the expansion and efficiency of our livestock and forage base since it provides the best opportunities to improve farm income. We also support expansion and improvement of grain, horticulture, and new crop production. We are committed to agricultural education programming as we believe that only by education of farm families will prolonged economic growth occur.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

see attached

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

see attached

- Other local/state/federal resources  
see attached

### 3. Evaluation & Review

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

- b. How is success and failure measured?  
see attached

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

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## Overview of County

Lincoln County is located in the southeast part of central Kentucky and is a part of three major geographic areas of the state-the Outer Bluegrass, the Knobs and the Eastern Pennyroyal area. This creates a lot of diversity for land types in different parts of the county. The topography ranges from flat fields, to generally undulating to hilly. The topography, soil types, fertility levels and drainage makes the majority of the land very suitable for forage production and livestock operations. No-till farming has helped increase acreage suitable for row cropping. Farmers are able to have good forages, good livestock numbers, generally enough land suitable to grow their livestock's grain needs.

There are 984 farms in the county with the average size being 150 acres. There is a total of 147,519 acres of farm land. 67,092 acres is in crop production, 42,571 acres in pastureland, 22,764 acres in woodland and 15,092 acres is in other uses. 37 % of the farms are 50 - 179 acres in size. 33% of the farms are 10-49 acres in size. 16% of the farms are 180-499 acres. 4% of the farms are 500-999 acres big. 551 farms have ag product sales of \$10,000 or less. 121 farms have production sales of \$100,000 or more.

Livestock production is the biggest farm income producer. Lincoln county is primarily a beef producing county with around 30 million is sales from cattle and calves head of cattle, which ranks the county 8rd in the state of cattle production. The dairy herd has sustained the last 5 years and has moved up one rank based on milk sales. Lincoln County is now 4th largest milk production county in the commonwealth. Hogs, sheep and poultry numbers are very minimal compared to the other types of production agriculture sectors. With that stated, the sheep and goat population has increased within the county. With markets located within the county sets Lincoln in a great position to increase in sheep and goat numbers, which we have seen. There is a steady increase in the number of pleasure horses in the county. Lincoln is home to one of the best goat marketing outlets in the state. The current price per acre has increased greatly also, this drives small acreage farms to invest in small ruminants.

Lincoln County continues to raise highly alfalfa and many other forages. There is around 32,000 acres of hay crops grown ranking Lincoln 16<sup>h</sup> in the state for all hay production.

Horticulture crop acreage has been on the increase thanks to the Lincoln County Farmers Market and Produce Auction's successes. With a large Amish and Mennonite present in Lincoln county, the total acreage has increased over the last 5 year or updating this report. Lincoln County ranks first in the state for nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture and ranks 27 for vegetable production.

The agricultural leadership is active in local and state farm organizations and community affairs. In general, the public has a good awareness of the importance of agriculture to our county's economic well-being and to our enjoyable rural life.

Agribusiness is very important to the county. Farm supply stores, stockyards, equipment dealers, hardware stores, rock quarries and many other businesses are dependent on a strong agricultural economy. Based on 2022 USDA statistics Lincoln County ranked 28th in the state for total ag production sales with \$83,497,000.

There are several tobacco growers that raise anywhere from 13- 55 acres of tobacco currently. We are down to just a few growers and they have diversified into other types of farming operations in conjunction with the tobacco crop.

The county is easily accessible by three U.S. Highways: US 150, US 27 and US 127. The county is close to major metropolitan areas being 40 miles south of Lexington, 90 miles southeast of Louisville and 130 miles north of Knoxville, Tennessee. Urban sprawl keeps moving this way from Lexington, Somerset and Danville resulting in loss of farm land each year and a steady rise in the price of land. These factors are greatly affecting

farm expansion and farm profitability. However, folks wanting the rural way of life are doing farming as part time on a small scale.

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

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\*Traditional agricultural production

\*Cattle & calves-45,445 head, 8<sup>rd</sup> in state rank

\*Milk rom cows ranks 4th in the state with \$13,940,000 in sales-Herd sizes growing. Number of herds increasing as Mennonite and Amish dairy families are purchasing land. Several organic dairy f arms located within county line.

\*Goat production- over 500 head recored. production seems to keep increasing. Good local market center.

\*Tobacco-less than 5 farmers producing around 250 acres. 2200+ pounds per acre yield. Reduced contracts resulting in fewer growers and less acres.

\*Corn for grain-Lincoln ranks 39th in the state for grains. With over 67,000 acres in grain, many of the acres are grown for silage to feed beef cows. With several good production years, the grain acres have increased.

\*Corn for silage-3 Yields of 20 tons/acre+ very common. Fifty percent of farms have 25 acres or less with 48 at 25 to 100 acres. Average per operator is growing due to cattle feeding and number of operators increasing due to new dairy operations. With the price of cattle, many backgrounding operations rely on silage feed to push as many calves to market as they can.

\*Soybeans-Yields range from 40-70 bushels usually, but is increasing. Acreage had been growing, but is now stabilized.

\*Alfalfa- More alfalfa has been grown around the county. Yields average around 4 tons per acre, but good managers average around 6 tons per acre. Forty percent of the acreage is for hay sales with remainder going to livestock. Acreage steadily grew in past 10 years, now stabilized but may start growing again, due to less tobacco contracts and reduced grain profits.

\*Other Hay-32,000 acres grown on over 800 farms ranking Lincoln County 7<sup>th</sup> in Kentucky. Average yields are 2 tons/acre, but better managers with 20,000 improved acres have yields at 3-4 tons per acre.

\*Non-traditional agricultural production

Produce- About 90% of produce is sold through the Produce Auction. The Farmers Market demand has slighted of f. Produce Auction demand is very strong and growing creating need for more growers. Greenhouses and high tunnels have been increasing in popularity.

Tourism-Very minimal. Limited to trail rides, Amish stores, small hobby farms with eggs, butter, milk and value added products.

Horse-Very minimal. Mostly hobby operations. One small riding school/training facilities.

b. Demographic Data

Social Data

984 farm operations

98% fully owned

609 female producers

1058 males producers

14 farmoperated by African-American  
485 new and beginning farmers  
Most farmers are between 35-64 yrs old.  
County Population-24,776 (very slight increase)

Only 8.9% of farm products are marketed through: direct to retail, value added product, CSA, and on farm packing. This represents a very very small percentage of the county's total agricultural economy. Demand for this marketing is growing, but the small profit potential and related market risks will greatly limit any growth.

#### Economic:

Total cash receipts (2022 census) -\$83,497,000

Approximate receipts by commodity:

Beef-\$30 million; Dairy-\$13 million; Goats-\$159 thousand; Grain-\$21 million; Tobacco-\$790 thousand; Hay-\$5 million; Horticulture-\$2.1 million. Miscellaneous crops: Equine, Agritourism, etc.-\$.5 million.

#### Assessments of the County

##### A. Strengths

1. Lincoln County has much strength for the agricultural industry. It has been a strong agricultural community from the time it was settled as one of Kentucky's original three counties. The abundance of forage brought early settlers to this county with their livestock. From then to now the largest income producing enterprises have been beef and dairy production. Farmers have complimented their livestock with the growing of good feed crops. Lincoln County farmers have been recognized as innovators in improving their feed crops and livestock. They have sought assistance from the U.K. Extension Service and other agencies to help them learn how to make improvements and better profits. Farmers continue to have that desire to get the recommendations needed to make improvements.

2. Lincoln County farmers have a cooperative spirit and want to work together to help agriculture. Evidence is seen here in the very strong county farm organizations including Lincoln County Farm Bureau, Lincoln County Cattlemen's Association, Lincoln County FFA Alumni & Young Farmers, the Lincoln County Beekeepers

Association and a Conservation District. and the Dairy Farmers of America. The leadership is very strong in their thinking and work. All of the local leaders are active leaders in area, state and national farm organizations.

3. Lincoln County location is strength because it is close to urban areas and access to good transportation routes and outlets.

4. Lincoln County has great agricultural education and service facilities. The U.K. Extension Office is well located and equipped to teach, train and advice producers. Other USDA Government offices are located beside the Extension Office creating a one-stop agricultural complex. The Lincoln County High School has a vocational center that is available to help with educational programs. Bluegrass South, opened in 2007 and has become an outstanding beef marketing center for the area. The Central Kentucky Livestock Center in Lincoln County continues to be a great market for goat and sheep sales.

5. The farms here are diversified with feed crops, livestock and cash crops which help provide stability to farm income. The tremendous forage base will keep livestock a growing and thriving industry with beef production being the big enterprise.

6. Since the economics of farming on the scale of most operations in the county is limited, these part time farmers need public jobs. The county is fortunate to have a good supply of light industry and manufacturing jobs in the county and surrounding counties available. The stability of these jobs has helped our part time farmers greatly expand and improve their operations thus producing good farm income and profits to supplement their off farm income.

## B. Weaknesses

1. There is a shortage of good dependable labor available.
2. Some farmers are resistant to make changes for improvement. They have always done it one way and are hesitant to try something different. They are satisfied with what they are producing and have little desire to learn ways to do better. Good educational programs are available but too few take advantage of the opportunity.
3. Most farmers think production, but spend little time on marketing and business management.

## C. Opportunities

1. There is a good opportunity to expand and enhance livestock production thus increasing agricultural income significantly. The county has a strong forage base that is so complimentary to livestock production.
2. Improvements in forage production will help livestock numbers grow but will also create a larger volume of hay for increased cash sales income.
3. There is the opportunity to expand grain acreage. This is limited somewhat by the topography of the land, but no-till planting programs can help with this opportunity.
4. Since acreage has to be purchased or rented for expansion producers have to better utilize and manage what is available. This better management of cropping and livestock systems will create more income.

5. Farmers can take advantage of the close proximity of urban areas to market some of their produce and other added value products.
6. Timber is a crop that if managed properly could generate a good deal more dollars of agricultural income, so landowners need to work with agencies to learn good timber management practices.
7. Farmers can learn to increase farm income by increasing their participation in Extension education activities, Vo-Ag Adult Agriculture Education programs and farm organization activities and programs. The educational assistance is there, but too few farmers use it, so there is a tremendous opportunity for farmers to improve their management skills and farm income by utilizing the education and service opportunities available already to them.

#### D. Challenges

1. Urban sprawl is raising the price of farm land making it hard for farmers to buy land for expansion and show a profit.
2. Environmental regulations are needed but they must be practical and sensible for agriculture and environmental protection. Livestock facility improvements without more cost share per farm will threaten farmer's survival in the livestock business.
3. Fewer young folks are getting into farming because of the cost and the work load for limited profits. Without some way to improve transfer of property or use of the property from older landowners to younger farmers, this situation will even create less young farmer involvement in the agricultural industry.

#### County Board Objectives

##### A. Mission/Vision

The board has a vision of promoting and encouraging projects and programs that will enhance agricultural production and expand the agricultural economy of the county. The board's mission is to: invest KADF dollars as a catalyst to the ag community for ideas that add value and build upon the strong and unique agricultural base of Lincoln County, build upon the cooperative strength of our people to maximize the impact of these monies upon the greatest number of people, educate our farm families not only in ways to improve production practices but also improve their business skills by improving marketing skills, forming alliances, buying cooperatives and other methods of working together to improve the quality of life for all, leverage the funds by requiring all participants to invest proportionately from their own funds and administer the funds in a fair and equitable manner giving all an opportunity to be involved as outlined in the county comprehensive plan.

##### B. Short Term Goals

1. Inform individuals and groups about the opportunities and funds available through the County and State Ag Development Funds to create new enterprises and expand and improve efficiency in established production systems.
2. Encourage farm groups and organizations to develop proposals that will increase the agriculture base of the county and affect the greatest number of farm families. In order to get the best economic results from the KADF money, we encourage all requests to come through an organization or as a group of farmers to get better use of funds and to insure that producers receive educational assistance and technical help with design and implementation of projects and practices.

We feel the biggest short term benefit for Lincoln County farmers is with livestock and forage systems and encourage all farmers to look at ways to expand and improve livestock and forage production.

\*Specific projects for livestock improvement and expansion in the short term should include these projects and practices as well as other proven practices and projects:

- Genetic Improvement through bull and heifer purchasing cost share and A.I. cost share programs
- Group marketing of similar genetic cattle and cattle from various farm managed in very similar conditions
- Improve cattle handling facilities cost share to put recommended practices into place including: bull lots, working chutes, scales, corrals, feeding pads, water facilities, etc.
- Programs to help dairy farmers with production testing and herd evaluation through record keeping.
- A cost share program and funds to help dairy farmers improve facilities and equipment

\*Specific projects for forage systems improvement and expansion in the short term should include:

- Programs for water facilities and fencing to promote better pasture management through rotational grazing
- An establishment and renovation cost share program for improving grass pastures and hay fields by adding clover, alfalfa, or improved grasses.
- Programs to help producers get better feed storage and feeding systems to improve feed quality and thus profits.
- A program to help hay producers develop and promote a hay marketing group with assistance to help with advertisement programs, scales, marketing center, etc...
- A program to help farm organizations secure no-till seeders, cult packer seeders and drills for forage improvement as well as equipment for improving storage including silage balers, wrappers, etc...

We also see some short term potential for expansion and improvement for cash crop farming thought not nearly as great as for livestock and forage systems. Specific projects should include:

- Support of regional grain marketing and feed processing facilities.
- Programs for grain storage and handling equipment.

New and emerging enterprises have some potential but provide opportunities for a very small number of farmers. These are high risk enterprises with often high capital outlays therefore; we would suggest a limited cost share program to help with startup and trial projects.

- Cost share for small fruit, large fruit and vegetables trial projects
- Cost share for roadside market, farmers market and produce co-op development.

\*We see that there is so much technology already available and that if producers would adopt the technology and recommended practices their farm income could greatly improve.

We feel that all CAIP projects must have an educational portion included and we suggest that participants take part in pertinent supervised educational training programs.

3. Encourage and promote pilot and demo programs that have the ability to demonstrate to others new and profitable agriculture enterprises.

#### d. Tactics for leveraging funds

##### \*Regional partnerships

Participating in regional partnership projects will be given good consideration if the projects sufficiently address the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan and its initiatives. Proposals coming from Lincoln County individuals or groups that have the potential to enhance the agricultural industry across county lines will be encouraged to seek support from other counties as well as from KADB. The LCADC will expect proposals to show evidence of in-kind matching money or other support equal to at least 50% of the total project cost as they feel this creates better commitment to project success. Proposals should clearly outline to whom the funds will be directed to and whom will directly administer the project.

#### \*State Agricultural Development Board resources

Project applicants presenting projects that will affect the improvement of agriculture for more than Lincoln County will be encouraged to see state funding to compliment Lincoln County funding thus further enhancing the success of projects that can make a real difference for improving the agricultural revenue for Kentucky farmers and communities.

LCADB will support projects with good potential for agriculture enhancement as long as they sufficiently address the goals and initiatives of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

#### \*Other local/state/federal resources

The LCADB will encourage project applicants to try and secure funding from other sources to compliment any funding for the KADF. The LCADB will support and assist with these contact efforts.

#### Evaluation & Review

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

- Proposals will be evaluated on their perceived potential to increase the area's agricultural income through production improvements and efficiency, improved marketing, expansion of the scope current enterprises, development of new enterprises and a broadening of the educational base.

- The county board will determine how well each proposal fits into the County Comprehensive Plan and its goals and initiatives.

- Priority will be given to requests by groups, associations and agencies that will have greater impact on the agricultural economy of the county and on a greater number of producer's farm income. Investments that benefit more farmers will receive a higher priority over more narrowly targeted projects.

- Investments that will lead to higher incomes and net profits for farmers will receive a higher priority.

\*The County board members and support staff will accept completed grant applications. The County Council will meet on a timely basis to review and evaluate applications for proposals for county funds. They will prioritize and budget the county's funds based on the evaluation tools presented herein and by evaluation tools provided by the State Board.

CAIP applications will be evaluated using an annually state approved evaluation format.

Project applications considered for funding by the board will be evaluated based on:

1. Number of people impacted by the proposal
2. Applicants funding share to the project
3. Can it become self-sustaining?
4. Does it sound practical and provide the necessary supporting documentation?
5. Does the project provide a realistic opportunity to increase farm profitability?
6. Will the applicant share knowledge gained and can it be duplicated?
7. How well does it fit the county/state comprehensive plan?

#### b. How will success and failure be measured?

Applicants will be asked to provide reports to the board on the progress of their projects. Applicants will be encouraged to share their successes with other farmers through field days, meetings, tours, etc.

The success or failure of each project will be based on the goals of the project, its impact on farm profitability, impact on the agricultural economy, how many people were impacted, and how the project help the sustain ability of the family farm.

c. How will the County Comprehensive Plan be revised?

An annual review with public input and agricultural leadership input will be used to gather ideas on improving the plan. The Council will then make any necessary revisions and update the plan.