

Lyon County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Lyon 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

Lyon County is located in western Kentucky. There are 136,858 land acres and 30,399 acres of water. One-third of the county is managed by the National Forest Service as a part of Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

The county population is 9,187 as of 2023. Eddyville is the county seat and houses the county-wide schools. Kuttawa is three miles away. Kuttawa has two nursing homes, two large marinas, and is home to a busy interstate exchange. The county is home to three state correctional facilities (Kentucky State Penitentiary, Ross-Cash Correctional Complex, & Western Kentucky Correctional Complex). There are over 1,500 inmates in the prison system in the county. Thirty percent of the land is in agricultural use. Agriculture consists largely of grain crop, tobacco, and livestock (cattle, haired sheep and goats) production. There are a few part-time commercial horticulture operations which includes pumpkins, vegetables and a vineyard with a winery under construction. The Eddyville Riverport is located on Lake Barkley. The three port businesses provide 30 jobs within the port complex, and 300 more within the area's agricultural-related businesses. Firms within the complex include Viterra (grain), Agri-Chem (fertilizer), Hu-B's Offshore Marine, Zip's Equipment, and Paducah Barge Company.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

Grain crop prices have fluctuated significantly in the last five years. Tobacco contracts have decreased. Row crops include corn, soybean, and wheat. Grain crops (corn, soybeans, and wheat) and forages (hay and pasture) make up most of the production agriculture in the county. Three large cattle operations are headquartered in the county.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

There are two confinement cattle operations located in the county, with several small cow-calf operations. Lyon County also has some commercial vegetable and fruit production. This production fluctuates from year to year with one farmer's market to support sales.

- New & emerging agricultural production

Canola and hemp operations are limited due to the limited processing in the area for those crops. There is potential for more cannabis production with the passing of the medical marijuana legislation at the state level.

- Tobacco dependency

Dark fire and air cured tobacco production held relatively steady for several years, but companies continue to lower growing contracts to reflect their decreased buying intentions. The number of tobacco growers in the county has declined from 10 to 4 farms.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

There are 158 farms (down from 219) with 35,222 acres (down from 41,639) in Lyon County. Of this acreage, 56.7% was used for cropland in 2012. The average size of the farms is 222 (down from 260) and the median is 95 acres. The Eddyville has a population of 2,444 as of 2023, and the Kuttawa has a population of 667. During the summer, it is estimated that the number of people in the county can rise to 70,000.

- Economic data

The market value of products sold from farms in Lyon County was \$11,316,000 while total farm-related production expenses were \$9,325,000. Median household income from non-farm activities was \$64,081, while median property value in the county was \$164,100. Many individuals commute outside the county to work. The county employs a total of 3,100 people, with the leading forms of employment including Public Administration, Manufacturing, Health Care and Social Assistance.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area and tourism has strengthened the economic situation in the county. A popular waterpark serves the region. There is a strong interstate and highway infrastructure plus the Eddyville Port and river system.

Portions of Lyon County have Crider soils which support high grain crop yields. Other portions are in the traditional 'black patch' area that produces quality dark fired and air-cured dark tobacco. There are many natural resources opportunities including hydropower generated by Lake Barkley Dam, timber production and both bass and bow-fishing tournaments. Other businesses/industries include two nursing homes and DHL Supply Chain Management. Schools and the prison system are major employers within the county.

b. Weaknesses

While access to high-speed internet has improved, many residents still lack enough good access to be able to work from home, attend college classes, or attempt other opportunities which would provide increased income or enrich their quality of life. The lack of higher-paying jobs provides a decreased opportunity for the youth of the county, which makes retention for certain age demographics a challenge. The small size of the county, combined with high tourism, makes the county unique compared to non-lake counties in the region.

c. Opportunities

Opportunities exist for agritourism operations and diversified agriculture in the county. Expansion of the port is a consideration. Transportation by truck to the Port Authority will be cost effective. Fresh produce production targeting summer tourism demographics has some potential, but size and scope could be limited by on-farm equipment resources. Further education creates opportunities and expands options. Facilitating local meat processing is under consideration, with opportunities for direct-to-consumer marketing having the highest potential.

d. Challenges

The biggest challenges have been, and still are, a lack of reliable, county-wide internet access, jobs to retain young adults, and a limited labor force. The local focus on tourism can lack appreciation for the role of agriculture in the community and landscape. Internet service is very spotty and weak in most rural areas of the county, although attempts continue to be made to improve service with small areas of improvement.

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Lyon County Agriculture Development Council is to assure the wise development of Lyon County with sustainability to those who wish to pursue a life associated with agriculture. We aspire to give stability, hope and encouragement to family farms in Lyon County.

b. Short term goals

Improve use of precision agriculture, cattle genetics, and improved forages.
Assist those wishing to diversify their agriculture operations to non-traditional crops and livestock.

Facilitate the development of agri-tourism operations in the county.

Support farmers' markets and local food production through the promotion of direct-to-consumer marketing opportunities.

Support agriculture education in youth programs such as FFA and 4-H.

Development of current and future Shared Use Equipment opportunities for producers through the purchase of equipment for rent to clientele.

Improve on-farm infrastructure through CAIP.

c. Long term goals

Improve the competitiveness of agriculture in the county.

Improve market opportunities for ag producers.

Protect rural environment.

Prepare to support future growth of the Cannabis industry.

Support the development of local meat processing facilities.

Support growth and development of our local riverport to support jobs in the Ag industry.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

Partnership with surrounding counties.

Leverage local funds with funding from both the Private and Public sectors.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

- Other local/state/federal resources

Extension Service educational programs.

Conservation District and NRCS funding, educational and technical support.

Pennyrile Area Development District support for business development.

Farm Service Agency funding of agricultural operations.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

The Lyon County Council meets and discusses proposals presented to the Council. The Conservation District has been administering the CAIP program. The process has worked well for Lyon County with few issues.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Success is the completion of projects by approved applicants. Failure includes incomplete projects and, at times, funding of projects which meet criteria but may be of lesser value agriculturally. Changes in numbers of agriculture operations, use of improved technologies and profitability.

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

With input from local stakeholders, the County Ag Development Council will update the County Comprehensive plan during the Spring of 2030.