

Martin County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

List County Council Members

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Martin 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 Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy staff may provide guidance to county councils throughout this evaluation.

1. Overview of County

Martin County was formed on Sept 1, 1870 from parts of Pike, Floyd, Johnson, and Lawrence counties. The county was named in honor of Col. John P. Martin. In 1986, Martin Co had about 100 coal mines in operation, however today coal mining is at an all time minimum.

Martin County's demographic and economic profile is comprised of a population of 10,592, which is predominately White/Caucasian (90%), with 10% representing all other ethnicities.

Economically, the county's population has an average household income of \$42,000 per year, with 48% of families falling below the poverty line. This is an increase in poverty rates from 39% in 2020.

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

▪ Traditional agricultural production

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Martin County hosts 21 farms totaling 9,488 total acres. The median size of farms in Martin County is 81 acres. The average market value in agricultural products sold per farm is \$7,979 per year.

▪ Non-traditional agricultural production

There is virtually no production agriculture in Martin County.

- No grain crop data submitted

- Only beef cattle data is available with 233 cattle surveyed across 8 farms

- Martin Co farms average a net cash loss of -\$5,253 annually

- New & emerging agricultural production
Opportunities exist in the development of direct marketing. Such opportunities might include sustained Farmers Markets and/or the sale of alternative crops such as fruits, vegetables, and mushrooms. County producers would benefit from combining products with other area producers to increase opportunities.

- Tobacco dependency

No tobacco production in Martin County.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

From 2022 to 2023, employment in Martin County, KY declined at a rate of -5.47%, from 3.03k employees to 2.87k employees.

The most common job groups, by number of people living in Martin County, KY, are Office & Administrative Support Occupations (440 people), Health Diagnosing & Treating Practitioners & Other Technical Occupations (286 people), and Education Instruction, & Library Occupations (259 people).

- Economic data

There is virtually no production agriculture in Martin County.

- No grain crop data submitted
- Only beef cattle data is available with 233 cattle surveyed across 8 farms
- Martin Co farms average a net cash loss of -\$5,253 annually

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Martin County has a well developed road system with access to Route 23 via Route 645 (Martin to Lawrence) and Route 3 (Martin to Johnson-Floyd). These roads open a direct path to surrounding areas such as Ashland, Paintsville, and Prestonsburg, as well as to major highways Interstate 64 and Mountain Parkway. The county has a strong presence of woodland areas and reforested mine sites as well as other natural resources such as natural gas and coal. The county has acreages suitable for specialty crops and alternative agriculture.

b. Weaknesses

A primary weakness in Martin County Ag production is the lack of suitable land for traditional grain crop production. The county overall consists of steep, forested hillsides. Significant portions of land that is suitable for crop production is oftentimes remote in nature, making crop management and marketing difficult. Most producers are self-marketing with little price control due to limited market share. The lack of suitable land, infrastructure, and marketing initiatives do not provide large scale farming support.

c. Opportunities

Several opportunities lie in the development of direct to consumer marketing. These include larger Farmers Markets and direct to consumer sales of alternative production crops. The opportunities for renewable product production from woodland areas such as maple syrup would also provide a pathway into development of alternative agriculture.

d. Challenges

New producers, or those taking on new initiatives, often lack the proper resources to market these products accordingly. Therefore, highest priorities should be given to addressing marketing concerns:

- Reaching New Customers
- Product Packaging and Labeling
- Direct to Consumer Marketing
- Exploring New Markets

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The Martin County Agriculture Development Council will dedicate whatever means of support and resources available for the development of profitable, sustainable farm enterprises and direct to consumer initiatives.

b. Short term goals

Support shall be given to both existing and emerging efforts in the production and marketing of established and alternative agriculture. Emphasis will be placed on those projects that show cooperation between different groups or individuals and those that develop high return direct to consumer returns. The goal is to create projects that are easily replicated and repeatable. All projects will be considered as long as the project demonstrates a probability of having broad impact on the local production and marketing structure.

c. Long term goals

A primary long term goal will be to support the development of group production and marketing efforts. Supporting the development of infrastructure that will add value to local production will be at the forefront.

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

The Martin County Agriculture Development Council will expect proposals to show evidence of in-kind, matching money or other support equal to 50% of the total cost of the project. Projects must follow the guidelines outlined in the Kentucky Agriculture Development Fund Investment Program Grant Application.

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

Projects funded by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board (since 2001) – Dec 2024

- Kentucky Department of Agriculture/Kentucky Proud
- Kentucky Cattlemen Association/Kentucky Beef Network
- Kentucky Horticulture Council
- Kentucky Dairy Development Council
- Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development
- Kentucky State University
- Kentucky Poultry Federation
- Community Farm Alliance

- Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office
- Kentucky Association of Food Banks
- Kentucky Agriculture Council
- Kentucky Horse Council
- Kentucky Agriculture & Environment in the Classroom
- Kentucky State Beekeepers Association
- Kentucky Pork Producers Association
- Kentucky Association of Meat Processors
- Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association
- Kentucky Young Farmers Association
- Organic Association of Kentucky
- UK – Viticulture and Enology Extension Program
- UK Farm Business Analysis
- UK – Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program
- Bluegrass Ag Tech
- Bluegrass Land Conservancy
- Sun Flowers Fuels
- UK – Kentucky Value Chain Collaborative
- Creation Gardens
- Cornett Farm Fresh
- Grow Farms (pending)

- Other local/state/federal resources

- USDA Rural Development
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- USDA Natural Resource and Conservation Services
- Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet
- Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet
- Kentucky Division of Water
- Kentucky Division of Conservation
- Kentucky Small Business Development Center

3. Evaluation & Review

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

The Council will meet on an ongoing basis to review any proposals that have been submitted. Each proposal will be judged individually and then sent to the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board for final approval and review. Those submitting projects should pay particular attention to the Guiding Principles for Board Investment contained on pages four and five of the grant application. These guidelines will assist in writing a more effective proposal.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

The Council will expect progress reports (either quarterly or semi annually as designated by the Council) on the status of each project.

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

The Council will meet to revise the plan as needed.

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