

**McLean County Agricultural Development Council**  
**Comprehensive Plan Update**  
**Updated: 05/07/2025**

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**Submitted by McLean County Agricultural Development Council Members**

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**McLean County Comprehensive Plan Update**

County Agricultural Development Councils are responsible for evaluating 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 (GOAP) staff may provide guidance to county councils during this evaluation.

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**1. Overview of County**

As of 2017, McLean County had 439 farm operations covering 129,310 acres—an increase of 6% since 2012. While the number of acres in farms increased by 4%, average farm size decreased by 2%, to 295 acres. Crop sales totaled \$56,751,000, and livestock sales reached \$134,087,000—poultry being the largest contributor. There are 738 farmers in the county; the majority (465) are aged 35–64, and 177 are new or beginning farmers.

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## **a. Agricultural Statistics, Trends & Projections**

### **Traditional Agricultural Production**

- Farm acreage in cropland nearly doubles state and national averages
- Below average in value-added commodities and CSA product sales
- Poultry remains a key economic driver

### **Non-Traditional Agricultural Production**

- Growth in roadside produce stands
- Increased home gardening in response to 2020 pandemic-related food security concerns

### **New & Emerging Agricultural Production**

- Continued expansion of poultry operations to meet demand
- Hemp gaining interest, though long-term viability remains uncertain

### **Tobacco Dependency**

- Value of tobacco crop sales has declined due to contract reductions
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## **b. Demographic Data**

### **Social Data**

- 2017 population: 9,361 (down 1.38% from 2016)
- Median age: 41.5
- Median household income: \$44,242

### **Economic Data**

- Median income rose 2.88% from \$43,005 in 2016
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## **2. Assessment of the County**

### **a. Strengths**

- Poultry industry

- River terminal access (grain barges)
- Fertile, productive soils
- Diverse agricultural economy
- Access to animal harvest facility

#### **b. Weaknesses**

- Decline in local industries (e.g., coal mining)
- Limited industrial job opportunities
- Reduced tobacco production
- High cost and low availability of skilled labor
- Decreased youth engagement in agriculture

#### **c. Opportunities**

- Agritourism development
- Poultry sector growth
- Addition of Simplot increasing local competition

#### **d. Challenges**

- Population decline
- Workforce shortages
- Negative public perception of agriculture and tobacco
- Fewer career options for local youth
- Closure of Ward Implement
- Low returns from commodity sales

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

#### **a. Mission Statement**

The mission of the McLean County Ag Development Council is to assess local agricultural needs, create a strategic plan to support development, and assist eligible applicants in securing Agricultural Development Funds.

## **b. Short-Term Goals**

- Continue funding cost-share projects
- Support youth agricultural education programs
- Fund youth ag projects supporting young/beginning farmers
- Increase awareness of youth opportunities
- Offer specialized trainings (e.g., University of Kentucky extension, specialists)
- Host high school “Real World” financial literacy seminars

## **c. Long-Term Goals**

- Acquire a grain elevator on the Green River
- Establish a feeder calf market
- Expand opportunities for beginning farmers
- Strengthen partnerships with poultry companies
- Host annual seminars on education and mental health in agriculture

## **d. Tactics for Leveraging Funds**

### **Regional Partnerships**

- Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF)
- Green River Area Beef Improvement Group, Inc.

### **State Resources**

- KCARD (Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development)

### **Other Local/State/Federal Resources**

- EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program)
- Farm Bureau
- Soybean Board
- Kentucky Corn Growers
- Small Grain Growers
- Cooperative Extension

- Kentucky Beef Network
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## **4. Evaluation & Review**

### **a. Proposal Evaluation Process**

Applicants submit a formal application and present their proposal to the council. Council members evaluate each project by reviewing materials, asking questions, and considering the potential impact on the local ag economy. Cost-share projects are processed through the GRABIG Council.

### **b. Success/Failure Measurement**

There is no formal evaluation after project funding, as most projects are already complete. However, council discussions often reflect on the perceived success or failure of previously funded efforts.

### **c. Plan Revision**

The Comprehensive Plan is revised upon request by GOAP, or when existing goals are met or need to be adjusted based on industry changes.

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