

Shelby County  
Agricultural Development Council

Update of  
**COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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# Shelby 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

**Shelby Countians are faced with maintaining a balance between industrial development, community growth and preserving the rural landscape. In order to increase profitability and sustainability, producers must take advantage of local markets as well as our close proximity to the large population centers of Lexington and Louisville. Diversification of agricultural operations is key to long term viability. Shelby County continues to experience a large influx of growth from Louisville Metro and surrounding counties. The influx of growth has led to a large non-rural population that has a limited knowledge base of rural environments, natural resources, and sustaining those for future generations. Local leadership identified a need for educational programming in this area to help protect and beautify our county's natural resources. Producers must engage in practices that insure the preservation and availability of natural resources for future generations.**

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

- Traditional agricultural production

**According to the 2022 Ag Census, there were 1350 farms in Shelby County totaling 160,081 acres. This represents a decline of 13% in the number of farms and 20% in land in farms from the 2017 census. The average farm size of 119 acres represents a 9% decline. The downward trend of number of farms and land in farms has accelerated since 2022. Crop sales accounted for 77% of market value of products sold, more than \$70 million, while livestock sales totaled over \$21 million. Avg. value of products sold/farm totaled nearly \$68,000, an increase of 46%. Total market value of agricultural products sold for the county totaled nearly \$92 million. Market volatility continues to have a large influence on gross farm sales/profitability.**

- Non-traditional agricultural production

**Vegetables and Orchards account for \$2.6 million in sales. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod sales valued nearly \$6.8 million. Census data indicated the presence of 586 bee colonies (40% increase) and \$6.5 million in equine sales in 2022. Non-traditional agriculture will continue to increase due to the continuing urbanization of the county.**

- New & emerging agricultural production

**The number of sheep and goat producers continues to increase, along with those raising bees and chickens. There is a trend toward homesteading, with more landowners raising their own fruits, vegetables and meat and milk products. Direct marketing of farm products is increasing.**

- Tobacco dependency

**The number of farms producing tobacco continues to decline, along with the average acres grown/farm. Increased labor costs, lower profit margins and general uncertainty surrounding the tobacco industry contribute to the questionable future of this crop in Shelby County.**

#### b. Demographic Data

- Social data

**Shelby County population 50,124 with 12% non-white. 17.5% age 65 and older. Poverty rate of 11.6%. 40% of farm operators are female. 3.5% of farm operators are non-white. 7.5% of farm operators are under age 35. 64% of land is in farms (down 22% 2017-2022). 82% of farms have internet access. (Kentucky by the Numbers 2022 county profile and 2022 Census of Agriculture)**

- Economic data

**February 2025 unemployment rate 4.8%. 48% of livestock sales are in cattle and calves. 75% of crop sales are in grains. 6% of farms sell directly to consumers. 96% are family farms. 37% of crop acres are in forages, 60% in corn and soybeans. 893 farms report less than \$10,000 in sales while only 154 report sales greater than \$50,000. (2022 ag census)**

## 2. Assessments of the County

### a. Strengths

**Proximity to large populations centers of Louisville, Lexington, Cincinnati. Interstate access. Rural heritage and strong agriculture economy and presence. Land conducive to multiple agricultural uses. Diversity of agricultural enterprises. Large number of farmers under age 40. Proximity to job markets for supplemental and/or second income. Community support of local agriculture and equine industries. Willingness of local farmers to host public on their farms to educate and promote agriculture to consumers. General population is receptive to and embraces agriculture and this seems to be trending toward consumers seeking more information about and providing more support for local agriculture.**

b. Weaknesses

**Continuing development (industrial and housing) negatively impacts cost and availability of land. Expensive to diversify. Hard for young farmers to get started - financial challenges. Cost and availability of labor. Regulations associated with labor numerous and difficult to understand. Lack of internet access in rural areas of the county and limited cellular access in some areas. Lack of financial education/understanding among many farm owners/operators.**

c. Opportunities

**Continued increasing demand in the areas of hay/straw, fruits, vegetables, and poultry. New demand for locally raised meats. Adding value to on-farm products. Meat and hair sheep. Grass-fed meat, poultry and eggs. Agritourism and event venues. Beekeeping, honey production and aquaponics. Opportunity for young farmers to use new financial models as older farmers retire. Local distilleries provide opportunity for marketing locally grown grain. Proximity to processing facilities, distributors and farmers markets. Rapidly increasing awareness and demand for local foods. Partner with schools to educate youth about the role and significance of agriculture in the county and beyond. Build and maintain strong relationships with county government officials to keep agriculture at the forefront of decision-making relative to growth and development.**

d. Challenges

**Need to continue to diversify. Securing financing to expand/diversify. Information and training needed to expand to new enterprises and markets. Increasing age of farmers and financially challenging for young farmers to get started. Population growth and number of people moving to the country who are unprepared for the sights, smells and activities of country living. Competition for land use versus residential and industrial/business development.**

**3. County Council Objectives**

a. Mission/Vision Statement

**Mission: Ensuring the viability of agriculture in Shelby County.**

**Vision: To increase the value of farm products through better management practices and utilization of a broadened marketing base. To increase the awareness of the importance of agriculture to the community. To value educating and assisting producers regardless of size, scale or enterprise.**

b. Short term goals

**\*Support continuation of CAIP programs to aid in diversification and enhancements to agriculture in Shelby Co.**

**\*Development of programs that can assist young and/or new farmers**

**\*Support on-going cooperative efforts in the expansion of market development**

**\*Support non-production efforts demonstrating an economic impact on the community & agriculture**

**\*Encourage cooperation among individuals to come together to develop proposals that are broad in scope and show benefit to multiple parties.**

**\*Individual project proposals that show evidence of expanding new opportunities for agriculture and future growth.**

**\*Support enterprises with greatest potential for growth and income**

**\*Take advantage of opportunities to partner with schools to educate youth about agriculture.**

c. Long term goals

**Assist producers in expansion and diversification, whether large scale or small, by providing funds and/or education in order to keep agriculture a strong, viable enterprise in a county that continues to grow in population and industrialization. Support programs and projects that help sustain a strong presence of agriculture awareness within the community and foster growth in agriculture that is profitable. Assist/support producers in maintaining quality of life and mental health through challenging times. Establish facilities that add value to farm products.**

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

- Regional partnerships

**Continue to support multi-county and regional projects that add value for local producers.**

- State Agricultural Development Board resources

**Increase marketing and promotional efforts relative to ag development funds to increase awareness of projects and programs that are funded by the Ag Development Board. Continue to fund long-standing statewide programs that are beneficial to all producers (ie: Kentucky Beef Network).**

- Other local/state/federal resources

**Explore partnerships and increase coordination and communication with other agriculture entities.**

### **3. Evaluation & Review**

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

**CAIP applications are scored according to state guidelines. Funds are awarded based on the level of funding available to the level determined annually by the Ag Development Council. If additional funds become available, producers placed on the "waiting list" are notified and given the opportunity to complete their projects and submit receipts for cost-share reimbursement. Project proposals are submitted in advance when possible and distributed to council members prior to face-to-face meeting. Project authors are invited to present the proposal to the council during a regular meeting and question/answer session follows. Project participants are dismissed and discussion and voting ensues.**

- b. How is success and failure measured?

**Success is measured by: % of applicants who complete projects; % of applicants approved for funding; anecdotal reports of the value of funds to aid individual farmers in completing projects.**

**\*\*Our county council would like to know if there is an opportunity to be provided with more detailed updates on local and statewide projects - successes and failures, etc. Can they be provided a listing of results?**

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

**The council will utilize the comprehensive plan to guide them when placing high/low priorities on future project proposals. As new and emerging needs are identified, the comprehensive plan will be amended to reflect the true nature of agriculture in Shelby County.**

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