

Simpson County
Agricultural Development Council

Update of
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Submitted by:

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Simpson 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

Simpson County is located on the Kentucky-Tennessee border immediately south of Bowling Green. The western portion of the county has relatively little topographical change while the eastern portion is more rolling. Simpson County features karst topography with well-drained soils predominately featuring mountview, baxter and some pembroke. Simpson County's agricultural landscape is focused around grain crop production. Common grains produced include: corn, soybeans, wheat and barley. Similar to the entire state of Kentucky, the total number of tobacco producers in Simpson County has decreased, and tobacco acreage has decreased as well. Burley tobacco production has seen the largest decrease. More producers are reliant upon dark-air cured tobacco and most recently Connecticut Broadleaf tobacco. Cattle numbers continue to hold steady in Simpson County. There are still a considerable number of cow-calf operations and a few producers raising stocker cattle. Aside from grains, tobacco and cattle, Simpson County features a diverse agricultural landscape with many "non-traditional" agricultural producers.

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

- Traditional agricultural production

Corn for grain - 36,034 acres; soybeans for beans - 42,628; wheat for grain - 26,767; Forage (hay/haylage), all - 7,204; Corn and soybean acreage has increased from 2017 to 2022 about 11% and 16%, respectively. Cattle and calves inventory has seen essentially no change since 2017 with the most recent number reported at 9,122.

- Non-traditional agricultural production

2 farms with hogs and pigs; 11 farms with sheep and lambs, 52 poultry farms with layers and 3 farms with broilers and other meat -type chickens sold, 16 farms with vegetables for sale and 7 farms with land in orchards. There is also a considerable number of horse farms in Simpson County.

- New & emerging agricultural production

High tunnel vegetable and flower production, commercial production of small fruits and vegetables, direct-to-consumer beef production, mum production, chia, hemp, agritourism

- Tobacco dependency

Based on the 2017 census numbers, tobacco acreage has decreased by approximately 70% since the 2012 census. The 2017 Census of Agriculture reports that Simpson County produced 614 acres. There is not a number reported in the 2022 Census for tobacco, however, it remains an important part of our local agricultural economy.

b. Demographic Data

- Social data

According to the United States Census Bureau, Simpson County had a population of 20,350 in 2024. The 2022 Census of Agriculture indicates that there are 682 total producers in Simpson County. 462 producers are male and 220 are female. 72 are less than 35 years old, 385 ages 35-64, and 223 are 65 and older.

- Economic data

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the market value of agricultural products sold in Simpson County totaled \$111,041,000. Total income from crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops was \$83,703,000 and from livestock, poultry and their products was \$27,338,000.

2. Assessments of the County

a. Strengths

Highly productive farmland is one of Simpson County's greatest assets. Over 56% is Class I or Class II land. Almost half the county's acreage are highly productive Pembroke or Mountview soils.

-Strong Transportation Infrastructure - Rail, I-65, Barge access is available to the Cumberland River at Clarksville, TN (1 hour away) and at the Ohio River at Owensboro (2 hours away)

-Double-Cropping - Gross farm income is high because the climate is favorable for wheat and mild enough to allow double-cropping. Simpson County has the highest percentage of soybeans double-cropped in the state.

b. Weaknesses

Intense competition for row crop rentals or leases

- Lack of young farmers
- Lack of processing and value added industries for crops
- Lack of processing and value added industries for livestock
- Shortage of skilled and unskilled farm labor
- No farm equipment dealers
- Lack of large scale irrigation water

c. Opportunities

Industries needing transportation infrastructure (I-65, 31W and rail)

- Industries benefiting from population centers. Simpson County is only 35 miles from Nashville and 10 miles from Bowling Green. Franklin is within 600 miles of 3/4 of the U.S. population.
- Industries needing adequate county water, natural gas or inexpensive electricity
- Productive soils provide an increased opportunity for new crops
- Laws that are more conducive to agritourism sites and rural ag businesses than larger cities

d. Challenges

Labor shortage

- High agricultural land values
- Urbanization
- Weather
- High land rents
- Loss of ag lenders

3. County Council Objectives

a. Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of the Simpson County Agricultural Development Council is to invest moneys from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Funds in projects that have potential to (1) help farmers' offset the loss of tobacco allotments, (2) help increase net income of Simpson County farmers (3) improve the well-being of all Simpson County residents directly or indirectly and (4) improve the future outlook for Simpson County agriculture.

b. Short term goals

1. Support the development of alternatives to tobacco to improve profitability for tobacco dependent families.
2. Invest major portion of funds to improve income potential in existing enterprises. Support the development of ways to add value to traditional Simpson County farm enterprises or reduce production costs.
3. Invest in projects that have potential to benefit the most farmers.
4. Invest in projects that are sound and can be self-supporting in the short-term.

c. Long term goals

1. Develop or enhance traditional and niche markets for crops and livestock
2. Develop ways to add value to locally produced products
3. Make farmers more efficient producers by lowering their per unit production costs.
4. Make every farmer more skilled in the enterprises he/she chooses
5. Make Simpson County a better place to live and work

d. Tactics for leveraging funds

▪ Regional partnerships

Simpson County is eager to invest in multi-county or regional partnerships by combining some or all of Simpson county tobacco money with tobacco money from other counties to fund regional projects that would impact Simpson County residents and contribute to the goals outlined above more than could be done with single county funding or where multi-county funding would make such projects realistic and feasible. Possible examples to be considered might be regional marketing facilities, processing facilities, etc.

▪ State Agricultural Development Board resources

Simpson County hopes that money developed by the State Ag Development Board will benefit Simpson County farmers. If cost-sharing is necessary or funding is needed for additional complimentary projects Simpson County would be willing to do this. State funds were utilized to build the F-S Farmers' Market in 2015.

- Other local/state/federal resources
Simpson County will attempt to use these Phase I funds to match moneys that might be available from other local, state and federal agencies, organizations or foundations that can be identified.

3. Evaluation & Review

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

Proposals will be evaluated by the Simpson County Agricultural Development Council. The council will consider proposals to enhance traditional farm product production, the production of new farm products and expansion of existing markets. The philosophy of the council will be to invest in innovative proposals that increase Simpson County's net farm income and help tobacco farms and agriculture through stimulating markets for local agricultural products, finding new ways to add value to agricultural products produced in Simpson County and exploring new opportunities for Simpson County farms and farm products.

- b. How is success and failure measured?

Some projects are more difficult to evaluate than others. Some will be a financial success or failure the first year. Others may require several years to be successful. However, even these can be evaluated against a proposed budget and cash flow projection. Some projects such as training and education are even more difficult to evaluate success and failure. Each applicant will be asked to state the objective of the proposal for which funds are requested.

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

The Simpson County Agricultural Development Council will revise this plan as new trends and agricultural changes occur and new funds become available for the county. The plan will be revised similar to the way it was put together and hopefully extensively reviewed by similar groups. The Simpson County Agricultural Development Council will update and/or revise its plan (1) as the county needs change (2) as projects approved earlier become a success or failure and (3) as the Council becomes aware of new projects or agricultural enterprises that should be analyzed or developed.

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