

JESSAMINE COUNTY AGRICULTURE  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Revised March 10, 2008

SUBMITTED BY:

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OVERVIEW OF JESSAMINE COUNTY

Jessamine County is located in the Bluegrass Region of Central Kentucky. The county is south of and adjacent to Lexington, Fayette County. Jessamine County covers 177 square miles or 113,280 acres and is one of Kentucky's smallest counties. Only seven other counties are smaller in area than Jessamine.

Most of Jessamine County is in the gently rolling to undulating inner Bluegrass physiographic region. Most of Jessamine County is currently farming pasture or residential development.

According to the most recent census, Jessamine County has 770 farms and 82,328 acres involved in Agriculture production. In the 1997 Ag Census, there were 829 farms with 91,202 acres being farmed. This is a decline of 8% in the number of farms and 10% decline in the acreage of farmland in Jessamine County. Farm size in Jessamine County averages 107 acres.

Tobacco, in 2001 accounted for \$8,685,000.00 in farm income to Jessamine County. Because of the tobacco buyout and other factors such as the age of our farmers, tobacco acreage in 2007 dropped to under 450 acres with a gross income of around \$1,653,000. The buyout is expected to bring \$38,000,000.00 to Jessamine County over the 10 year period beginning in 2005.

In 1997, Jessamine County's 829 farms generated \$22,218,288. In 2002 (the last ag census), farm income had increased to \$61,941,000.00. The increase is due to ag statistics now including horse revenues in the livestock portion. In general, crop income decreased by \$9.8 million from 1997 because of cuts in the tobacco quota. In 1997, tobacco accounted for 38.9% of total farm revenues. In 2002 tobacco only contributed 14% of total farm incomes.

Of the \$1.875 million in cost-share funds distributed in Jessamine County, approximately 30% went directly to programs supporting beef and dairy production, 7% focused on sheep and goat production, 30% supported forages which benefit all segments of the meat animal industry

and the hay industry, 30% supported fencing and hay storage programs and the remainder focused on youth program support and the ag diversification programs.

Jessamine County produces 21,000 beef animals, which ranks the county 40<sup>th</sup> in the state in beef production. Taking horses into consideration, Jessamine County ranks 6<sup>rd</sup> in the state in total livestock income. Jessamine County ranks 75<sup>th</sup> in the state in crops income and is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> currently in total agricultural income, when horses are included. It is estimated that horses generate an additional \$92,000,000 + to the income in Jessamine County.

Jessamine County also has the distinction of being the location of the very 1<sup>st</sup> vineyard established for the production of wine in the United States. The soils of Jessamine County are very suitable for grape production, and are similar to many of the soils in the wine producing regions of France. Grape production works very well for small acreage and offer revenue potential similar to that of tobacco per acre. Currently, there is one winery situated in Jessamine County who is recruiting growers to meet the current demand for their product.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

According to the latest numbers, the population of Jessamine County is 44,790 which is an increase of 22.3% over the past 8 years (as compared to Kentucky's 7.4%). 37% of the population is between the ages of 0 – 24, 63% of the population is 24 or older with the age group over 65 predicted to increase by nearly 28% over the next 10 years.

The population of Jessamine County is concentrated in two communities and in numerous rural subdivisions. Total urban population in the county is 30,905 (69%), total rural population 13,661 (30.5%), and total farm population is 1,389(3.1%). The city of Nicholasville, the county seat has a population of 19,680. The number of households in Jessamine County is approximately 7,370. The other town with significant populations is Wilmore. Wilmore, with a population of 5,905, is a small community located in southwestern Jessamine County. The total number of households in Wilmore is approximately 1,638. Wilmore is home to Asbury College, 1000 students, and Asbury Theological Seminary with 200 students.

The racial makeup of Jessamine County is white – 94.4%, black – 3.1%, American Indian - .2%, Asian - .6% and Hispanic – 1.3%.

The percent of Jessamine County's population with a High School Degree or GED is 79.0%. The percent with 4 years of college or more is 21.5%.

The Jessamine County economy, as measured by personal income has increased over the years. In 1999 the Median household money income was \$36,726 or 116% of the states median income. But, even with these numbers and an unemployment rate of only 1.7%, the percent of persons living below the poverty level in 1999 was estimated to be 12.4%. (Kentucky has 16% of the population living below the poverty level)

The total contribution of farming to the total earnings has decreased in Jessamine County. While farming was the number 1 employer in the 1970's, in 1990 it accounts for only 4.1% of

the total earnings. The change in farming as principal occupation has also decreased by .6% from 1987 to 1992.

There are at present 770 farms in Jessamine County. The average value of farms in Jessamine County is \$371,815.00. Tobacco, in 1987 made up 35.6% of the total agriculture market value. That number increase to 54.9% in 1992, dropped to 38.9% in 1997 and because of the buyout, has dropped to less than \$2 million in income. Beef production is now the leading agriculture commodity in Jessamine County.

Jessamine County is a fast growing community of young families. Rapid growth has stressed city and county services, in fact services still have not caught up with the overwhelming growth of the late 1970's and 1980's. 10% of the housing units are without public or private water services and 39% are without public sewer.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

The Jessamine County Agriculture Development Board was formed and first met in July following passage of House Bill 611 which set the criteria for the establishment of the board and directed membership of that body. The purpose of this council, as spelled out in H.B-611 is to facilitate the distribution of approximately \$666,300 which have been set aside for this county from the first two years payments from the Master Settlement Funds. These funds are to be provided for a period of 25 years.

The local council has established this plan through conscientious efforts to gather input from citizens throughout the county. An extensive survey was developed and distributed throughout the community and was also available on the web for electronic submission. Each farmer in the county was invited to attend one of two community meetings which were held at the public library and at the fairgrounds to voice their concerns and ideas. Members of this council also attended training sessions, which were held in Lexington, Richmond, and Harrodsburg.

The solicitation of ideas is an ongoing process and efforts will be made to keep members of our community informed and involved as this process continues to move forward. Input was obtained from various agriculture, community and economic development organizations to develop this update to the Jessamine County comprehensive plan.

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF JESSAMINE COUNTY

1. Jessamine County is located adjacent to Lexington, which offers producers access to a large market for sales of fresh produce, firewood, and Christmas trees.
2. Jessamine County and the areas around the county have a large number of horse farms, both large and small. These farms are potential markets for good quality grass and grass/legume hays.
3. Jessamine County is not adjacent to any interstates, which limits its access to markets outside the immediate area.
4. Jessamine County is the home of 2 Colleges: Asbury College with enrollment of 1000 students and Asbury Theological Seminary with enrollment of 200 students.
5. The county is blessed with a good drinking water supply and has a good number of large and small streams throughout the county. Public water lines are being run to much of the county at this time.
6. There are no tobacco warehouses located within Jessamine County. Producers must market tobacco in other cities located near the county.
7. There is no livestock auction market in Jessamine County. The majority of the cattle sold through a market are sold in Lexington, Lancaster, Richmond or Paris.
8. Producers who are involved in the production of fresh vegetable and fruits do not have an organized market to sell directly to the public. Established markets have closed because of circumstances beyond the control of the growers. When available, these markets consistently drew large numbers of both buyers and sellers.
9. Jessamine County has a strong Beef Cattle Association which supports many other local organizations through donations. There is also a strong Young Farmers Group and a recently formed FFA Alumni organization.
10. The Jessamine County Cooperative Extension Office, the Conservation District Boards and the Farm Service Agency all work to support agriculture in Jessamine County.
11. Jessamine County has no local hospital. (although, one is currently under development)
12. Jessamine County has seen above average growth in its population since the late 1960's. This continuation of this trend tends to threaten agriculture due to inflated values of agricultural lands. Farmland is too valuable, in some instances, to farm.
13. The community needs to continue to develop social and educational programs to meet the needs of the growing population of migrant workers with Hispanic origins.
14. This community continues to build schools to meet the ever-growing population, but have had trouble, in recent times, to maintain reasonable class sizes. But, population predictions are showing a leveling off of school age children with an increase in the older segment of the population.
15. Most of the county has a strong potential for forage production. With increased management and a higher degree of intensive grazing, there is a potential for improved livestock production with higher net profits.
16. The average age of the farmer in Jessamine County is 55.3 years. It is exceptionally hard for young people to enter farming in this county due to the high price of farmland, particularly good farm land.
17. Low unemployment has made it a necessity to acquire labor from outside our community.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Jessamine County is blessed with strong youth programs related to agriculture. The 4-H and FFA programs continually rank high on state and national levels in programs offered and knowledge gained by youth through participation in these projects and activities.

Jessamine County's close proximity to Lexington (Kentucky's largest city), offers farmers a unique opportunity to market fresh products directly to consumers. Farmers who are taking advantage of this opportunity are marketing through road-side stands and U-Pick operations on the North end of Jessamine County. Two main arteries, U.S. 27 and U.S. 68, connect Jessamine County with Fayette.

Jessamine County may be one of the 8 smallest counties in Kentucky in size, but in agricultural output, we rank very high. Jessamine County presently has over 82,000 acres dedicated to agriculture. The forage base located on these acres offer our producers a tremendous opportunity, with improved grazing practices, to expand their grazing opportunities and increase net farm income.

The county is a strong beef cattle county. Beef cattle income has now passed tobacco income as the leading commodity revenue to farmers in Jessamine County

Chrisman Mill Winery is located in the central part of Jessamine County, not far from the location of the first vineyard in the United States. This winery offers our producers an opportunity to diversify their farming operation without significant trucking costs. The winery is recruiting producers to help meet the demand for their product. Chrisman Mill also has plans to expand production, offering more producers an opportunity to move into grape production.

## THREATS

The continued development of Jessamine county's prime farmland continues to be the biggest threat to agriculture in the county. From 1997 to 2002, Jessamine County lost 9.7% of its farmland to development.

Not only is the loss of farmland a threat, but the inflated land prices created by the demand for this land has made it almost impossible for young farmers to purchase land for use in agricultural production.

More restrictive environmental regulations are also hampering the expansion of farming operations in Jessamine County.

The loss of tobacco income is still a major threat to the stability of our farming sector. Many land owners are dependent on tobacco income for personal income and to pay taxes and insurance on the property they own. Many tenant farmers livelihood is based on the income generated by tobacco.

The average age of our farmers is also a concern. According to the last census, the average age of the Jessamine County Farmer is 55.3 years of age and increasing. High land costs and the uncertainty of tobacco are preventing many young people from entering the field of agriculture, leaving those established farmers to continue this honorable profession.

## MISSION/VISION STATEMENT

The Jessamine County Ag Development Board will strive to identify and enhance those project areas which can insure a positive potential affect on the profitability, sustainability, and quality of life for farm families and our community as a whole.

Funds will be administered in a fair and equitable manner, giving all an opportunity to be involved.

## SHORT TERM PRIORITIES

As part of its short term objectives, the Jessamine County Ag Development Board has recognized a need in very specific areas and has set aside funds to promote these high priority areas.

The Board has set aside \$125,000.00 from the 2003 payment to be used for the development of a Certified Kitchen to allow producers to develop value-added products to increase farm income. The development of this kitchen has the potential to increase farm revenues to a large number of farmers in this community and to other communities is Central Kentucky. 4% of the total allocation is to be set aside from each year's payment to offset expenses incurred by the cooperative extension service for administering the program. (\$9,500 in 2008)

The remainder of the short-term priorities for Jessamine County are listed under 9 main headings. Individual priorities are included under the heading. Funds allocated are based on a percentage of the total allocation remaining and are listed for each main heading.

1. BEEF AND DAIRY(28%) (estimated \$63,000.00)
  - Handling Facilities and Fencing
  - Genetic Improvement Program (state established guidelines)
  - Dairy Diversification
2. FORAGES (17%) (estimated \$38,250.00)
  - (state established guidelines)
  - On farm water enhancement program
3. OTHER LIVESTOCK (sheep, goats, etc.) (6%) (estimated \$13,500.00)
  - Handling facilities
  - Value Added Marketing Issues
  - Genetic Improvement
  - Grazing programs included in the forages initiative
4. ADDITIONAL LIVESTOCK PROGRAMS (28%) (estimated \$63,000.00)
  - Boundry Fencing Program
  - Hay, Grain, Commodity Feed Storage

5. OTHER AGRICULTURE ENTERPRISES (10%) (estimated \$22,500.00)
  - Production Equipment
  - Items included in the Ag Diversification program
  - Establishment Costs
  - Aquaculture
  - Viniculture
  - Vegetables
  - Established crops
  
6. YOUTH PROGRAMMING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION (3.4%) (est.\$7,650.00)
  - 4-H and FFA Projects
  - Adult continuing education programs
  
7. MISCELLANEOUS (1%) (\$2,250.00)
  
8. BROADBAND INTERNET ( 2.2% ) (\$5000.00)
  
9. NON-MODEL CUTTING TORCH TRAINING (4.4% ) (\$10,000.00)

## LONG TERM PRIORITIES

The long-term goal of the council is to support local leadership groups, educational programs and projects which are vital to our Agricultural economy.

The improvement of existing farming enterprises, expanding new opportunities, developing markets and providing educational opportunities to allow producers to continue to farm will remain the top priority.

## TACTICS FOR LEVERAGING FUNDS

The county council will expect proposals to show evidence of in-kind, matching money or other support equal to at least 50% of the total cost of the project for which any application is submitted.

Proposals should clearly outline to whom the funds will be directed and who will be responsible for the expenditure.

Applications must clearly show the individual or groups contribution to the project and the projects potential benefit to the individual farmer(s) or to the Agriculture Community.

The council reserves the right to waive cost share requirements for special proposals from non-profit agencies and associations.

## EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- Council members will abstain from discussion and voting on requests made by themselves or immediate family members and will not be present in the meeting at the time of discussion.
- Small farms will be given equal access to funds as large farms
- Funds will be distributed without regard to age, race, sex or disability
- Proposals will be evaluated on their perceived potential to increase the area's agricultural income through production improvements and efficiency, improved marketing, expansion of the scope of current enterprises, development of new enterprises and a broadening of the educational base.
- The county council will determine how well each proposal fits into the County Comprehensive Plan and the Council's Investment Priorities.
- Applicants will be required to show evidence of in-kind, matching money or other support equal to at least 50% of the total cost of the project applied for. The Council reserves the right to waive cost-share requirements for special proposals from non-profit agencies and associations.
- Priority will be given to requests by groups, associations and agencies that will have greater impact on the agricultural economy of the county and on a greater number of producer's farm income. Investments that benefit more farmers will receive a higher priority over more narrowly targeted projects.
- Investments that will lead to higher incomes and net profits for farmers will receive a higher priority.
- Farmers who have suffered significant loss of tobacco income will receive a higher priority if their projects show good potential for improving farm income.
- The County Council has set maximum funding limits of \$5,000.00 per FSA Farm ID number per project and \$15,000.00 per Farm ID number. This maximum limit may be waived for special applications from non-profits and organizations.

## HOW SUCCESS/FAILURE WILL BE MEASURED

Applicants may be asked, on a periodic basis, to provide reports to the Council on progress made on individual projects.

Applicants may be asked to share their projects with other farmers through Field Days, Tours, or meetings.

Projects funded by this Council are anticipated to have long-term financial and educational impacts on the agricultural community.

## HOW THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WILL BE REVISED

As the county's situation changes, the Council may deem it necessary to revise any/or all parts of the Plan. The Plan will be reviewed at least annually and appropriate changes will be made.