

## **Overview of Bourbon County**

**(ROUGH DRAFT)**

As Bourbon County begins its second century we can take pride in its role in the creation and development of this great commonwealth. One of the earliest areas settled in what is now Kentucky, Bourbon County was originally a part of Virginia. The Virginia legislature took land from Fayette County to establish this new county – named for the House of Bourbon, in honor of Virginia’s fight for independence during 1788 and 1789. Portions of Bourbon County were used to create Clark, Madison, Harrison and Nicholas counties. Farm life has been so prominent in the rich history of Bourbon County from generations of both landowners and farm employees, farming is in the very genes of most Bourbon Countians. The rich and outstanding history gives us a sense of pride and belonging and continuity. The prime farmland and scenic beauty of Bourbon County are an unbeatable combination which should provide for its future generations.

Bourbon County’s history and agriculture is a source of pride for its residents. We are the birthplace of many great Kentuckians and American statesmen. Known worldwide for the invention of Bourbon whiskey, burley tobacco, purebred livestock and other agricultural products. Additionally Bourbon County is world renown for producing great Thoroughbred race horses.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC/GEOGRAPHIC DATA**

There were 1,026 Bourbon County farms in 1992 that totaled 200,001 acres. Number of farms dropped to 910 in 1997 and totaled 196,537 acres. Average farm size rose from 202 to 216 acres during this same time period. Large farms over 500 acres in 1992 numbered 104 and in 1997 it was 94. The 1,026 farms in 1992 had a value of \$367,445,000 which rose to \$521,732,000 in 1997. Total cropland remained about the same from 1992 to 1997.

In 1996 and 1997 farm cash receipts were \$133,457,000 and \$141,284,000 respectively. In 1996 farm cash receipts from crops were \$34,205,000 and \$99,252,000 for livestock including horses. But in 1997 we had a total of \$141,284,000 with \$112,546,000 in livestock including horses and \$28,738,000 in crops.

Beef cow numbers rose slightly from 22,155 in 1992 to 22,793 in 1997, with number of beef farms remaining virtually the same. The number of farms raising tobacco dropped from 760 to 587 from 1992 to 1997. Effective tobacco quota fell from 17,440,776 pounds in 1992 to 8,500,000 pounds in 2000.

Bourbon County ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the state in total beef cattle with 42,000 head and 6<sup>th</sup> in the state in number of beef cows at 21,500. Bourbon County produced 39,100 tons of mixed hay and 24,900 tons of alfalfa which ranked 26<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> respectively among Kentucky counties in 1997.

As stated before, the equine industry generates a lot of livestock income to our Bourbon county farms. These farms that produce the great Thoroughbred and Standardbred horses are a cash market for much of the hay and bedding that crop farmers produce. The horse farms also graze cattle as well as horses and contribute to beef cattle cash receipts.

Bourbon County in 1998 had a labor force of 10,016 and only 2.5% unemployment ranking 17<sup>th</sup> in the state. We have approximately 20,000 people living in Bourbon County (equally divided between city and county residents), a statistic that has changed little in the last 20 years.

Bourbon County has an opportunity to change more in the next 5 years than it has in the last 20 years. This will be caused by the completion of the scenic four lane highway that will join Paris with Lexington and interstates 64 and 75 to Louisville, Cincinnati, Ashland, Nashville,

Knoxville and other industrial urbanized areas. The Bourbon County portion is near completion with the Fayette County end to start in the spring of 2001.

This will bring more people to Paris/Bourbon County to live and to work and put demands on prime farmland for homes and support facilities. This brings about the fast changing countryside of farmland to more small farms with a house and barn for a retiree or an individual with a job in industry. However, area planners have calculated Bourbon County to receive no growth in its population for the next 10 years.

We have presented a lot of facts, figures, and statistics but sometimes this is the only way to tell the story. Of our 196,537 acres of farmland 15% is devoted to horse farms. This is the fastest growing sector of the region's and county's agricultural economy but does not currently offer significant help to the average tobacco grower. Often, outside people buy prime farmland and develop it for the Thoroughbred industry (horse farms employ 19% of all agricultural jobs in Bourbon County; nearly twice that of the central Kentucky area). In 1999 it is estimated that Bourbon County generated \$88,000,000 in Thoroughbred horse sales including stallion seasons.

### **Review of the Process**

After receiving notification from the governor's office that county council members should be appointed by August 1, 2000, the various agricultural agencies involved were asked to choose two members – FSA, Conservation District and Extension Council. Each group gave their nominations much thought and consideration. On July 20 the six appointed board members met and discussed the nomination of two young farmers between the ages of 21-40 to serve with the six appointees. Two young farmers were chosen that are very much involved in tobacco production and beef cattle. One of these had the distinction of having the oldest tobacco barn built in Bourbon County which sadly had been destroyed by fire in 1997.

Bourbon County farm field day was held in August and the county council was introduced and

its purpose and objectives presented to 250 persons in the ag community. Handouts were circulated with council information about who to contact with ideas and suggestions.

Letters and articles were sent to both local newspapers, which were received by all citizens of the county. The Bourbon County ADC informed as many people as possible of its purpose and objectives as set forth in HB611. Various members spoke to the Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau Directors Meeting, Annual Farm Bureau Meeting, local civic clubs, financial institutions and government bodies. Scott, Harrison and Nicholas Counties were invited to join Bourbon County in a county council discussion with Mr. John Mark Hack in September. This was a very informative meeting as we were able to ask each other questions and get direction from the state board.

The Bourbon County council mailed a questionnaire to each person on the Bourbon County Extension agriculture mailing list (1041). The questionnaire listed ideas mentioned in discussions and personal contacts. Persons were asked to rate their interest in these ideas. The council received responses from 10% of those on the mailing list. At this point, two open forum meetings were held to allow people to come and present ideas and proposals to our council. These were held in the evening at the public library. The council has also hosted a meeting to discuss beef and forage ideas for Bourbon County, 46 producers were in attendance. The council meets every Tuesday at 11:00 AM at the Extension Office to discuss proposals and to listen to individual groups concerns and needs. These have ranged from vegetable producers coop on a regional basis to tourism in the Bourbon County agricultural community. As input has been received, beef cattle and forages are the main interests in helping supplement tobacco dollars.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

### **Strengths**

Bourbon County has many and varied strengths. We are located in the Central part of the Bluegrass region, twenty miles from Georgetown, Mt. Sterling, Winchester, Cynthiana, Carlisle and Lexington. There is a new scenic four lane highway being constructed between Paris and Lexington and in the near future, new roads are planned to Millersburg, Carlisle, Maysville and Georgetown. Bourbon County has

fertile, well drained soils for production of tobacco, corn, alfalfa hay, clover hay and produce crops. The land is flat to gently rolling and has water supplies from Stoner Creek, Hinkston Creek and Licking River water sheds. Probably best known for its fine pasture and grazing abilities, we are the center of the Horse world; thoroughbred, standardbred, walking horses and pleasure horses. The Stockyards is one of the finest facilities in Kentucky and has weekly auctions as well as special feeder cattle sales, beef replacement heifer sales and purebred livestock offerings. Bourbon County has an outstanding youth program that shows lambs on local, district and state level, second to no one in the State. This is a good tool for our youth and also helps the small farmer have livestock on his farm. As stated earlier, thoroughbred products play an important role in our Ag economy. The horse farms purchase several tons of baled straw and grass hay for bedding and our local hay producers are finding that the horse farms are also willing to pay top dollar for good well prepared quality alfalfa and red clover hay. We are also near the Kentucky Horse Center, Keeneland and Fasig Tipton Horse Sale companies, and the Red Mile. Kentucky History and Tourism must not be overlooked as a Bourbon County strength. We have Duncan Tavern, an old inn where Daniel Boone and Lafayette stayed, Cane Ridge meeting house, a log church enclosed by a great stone super structure, numerous distillery warehouses and old seed houses where the bluegrass was stored while drying. There are numerous log buildings, old house Historic Districts, National Register Homes & Farms, Covered Bridges, fine old homes, new Bed & Breakfasts and quaint country villages. Furthermore, Bourbon County is located less than 20 miles from Lexington, Kentucky's most desirable city. Lexington is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> on the "best cities list" in the U.S. Lexington is home to Kentucky's land grant institution that enables education and information to strengthen landowners and operators. The Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service is an asset that Bourbon Countians can "cash in on."

### **Weaknesses**

Bourbon County is currently limited to producing in a commodity driven ag economy. We sell grains, livestock and other ag products as commodities. There are no livestock processing facilities with capability of any volume in the county or nearby. Our reliance on Burley tobacco as a major source of

cash income has restricted producers from entering other enterprises or taking livestock more seriously.

Tobacco has always gotten top priority!

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

Bourbon County has great opportunities to increase and improve existing livestock production and marketing.

The potential for increased forage production as cash sales and as inputs to livestock are great. Adding value through on-going beef cattle marketing efforts, with expansion of individual electronic identification of animals will bring new information to cow-calf producers. This information can be used as management and marketing tools.

The impending construction of a community farmers market offers opportunity for direct product sales to the community and region. This market may be a beginning of increased tourism to the area. These markets will play a role in the expansion of alternative crop production.

## **THREATS**

While the continued loss of cash income from tobacco has had the greatest immediate impact on production agriculture in Bourbon County in the last three years, there may be greater threats. The continued urbanization of our county will challenge our community at several levels. The booming economy of the late 1990's has provided increased disposable income for many non-farm citizens. This has expanded the situation where farmland is being owned now by non-farming interests. This has resulted in increased farm land value and loss of opportunities for young farmers to purchase land. Urban expansion will also result in a direct threat to the livestock industry in the ability to manage their waste and to expand their operations.

## **County Council Objectives**

Objectives of the Bourbon County Ag Development Council will be to expedite the development of projects and enterprises that will increase the net farm income of farmers impacted by the reduction in tobacco income. This will improve the entire economy of the community and area. Ideas and input will be solicited from the entire community both farm and non-farm. Participation in new businesses or

enterprises will be highly encouraged, as well as participation in value-added segments of current enterprises. Priority will be given to farmers impacted from the loss of tobacco income.

### **MISSION/VISION STATEMENT**

The Bourbon County Ag Development Council will promote and encourage enterprises, projects and/or programs that will educate and facilitate farmers to increase the agricultural income in the county and area. The Ag Development Council hopes to be a facilitator of resources for new enterprises and projects. Retention of existing farm businesses and operators must be a priority. The council must work to diversify agriculture in the area of a product based agriculture economy vs. a commodity based economy. Harmony and cooperation between agriculture and the entire community are critical to the rural economy.

### **SHORT TERM PRIORITIES**

On-going efforts in grazing management, forage production, livestock marketing, beef heifer replacement development and vegetable production/marketing will be supported. Projects concerning beef genetics improvement, livestock/forage improvement and livestock handling facilities are priorities of Bourbon County producers. Appropriate education must accompany these projects. Bourbon County soils and fertility make forage production a very high priority for future potential. The production and cash marketing of high quality hays for the equine industry must be priority for the Bourbon County Ag Development Council.

There are grazing management techniques available and in use that need to be more widely utilized through demonstration farming etc.. (demo farm). There are value added livestock marketing efforts on-going in the county. Central Kentucky Feeders and other pre-conditioning programs offer market premiums. Beef heifer replacement programs also offer opportunities for value added marketing. The Central Kentucky Vegetable Cooperative in Georgetown, Ky offers a viable market for produce for Bourbon County producers.

The Bourbon County government has acquired funds for a farmers market to be constructed in the very near future in Paris. The productions of non-perishable ag products to supply the craft, floral and

hobby markets will offer value added opportunities to both small and large farm operations.

Incorporation of this effort with other Phase I efforts could be beneficial.

### **LONG TERM GOALS**

The Bourbon County Ag Development Council will encourage participation of farm and non-farm sectors to cooperate in projects that will increase and sustain income of the rural economy.

Participation in regional projects with the Ag Development Council's will be a long term goal to progress agriculture to a product based economy.

The Bourbon County Ag Development Council shall encourage the use of electronic identification of feeder cattle marketed in sales, to get information to producers about health, performance and end values of beef cattle. This knowledge will increase the accuracy of price discovery and lead to a more product based livestock economy.

Incorporation of the agriculture community and the business community will foster and explore more ag tourism.

### **TACTICS FOR LEVERAGING FUNDS**

Direct grants to projects of groups and or individuals will be encouraged, but priority will be given to those that include other sources of income. Groups and individuals will be expected to use the advice of the Center of Entrepreneurship provided by the Kentucky Ag Development Board. A clear outline and budget of fund sources and distribution will be expected by grant applicants.

### **EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

Each proposal will be evaluated on the potential to either increase production efficiency, improve marketing productivity, or add value to our local farm economy. Equal consideration will be given to individuals and groups. Small farmers will be given equal consideration with priority being given to the tobacco farmer. The council will evaluate each application based on the criteria outlined by State Ag Council. Proposals with clear goals and objectives, strong business and/or cost share plans have the opportunity to increase farm profitability for tobacco farmers. These tobacco dependent farmers will be given priority. The council must determine if the proposal fits the Bourbon County's Comprehensive

Plan.

We expect frequent progress reports on the status of each project in the form of financial statements, producer's involvement and project activities. Progress of the plans will be monitored by the Ag Development Council or its designees.