Core Strategies and Recommended Actions to Drive Kentucky Agricultural Progress

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Kentucky Vineyard Society
Kentucky Women in Agriculture
Kentucky Woodland Owners Association
Louisville Nursery Association
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A New Strategic Plan for Kentucky Agriculture

An initiative of the Kentucky Agricultural Council and its Task Force on the Future of Agriculture

Executive Summary

Kentucky Agricultural Council
www.kyagcouncil.org

Connecting

Strengthening Kentucky’s Agricultural Economy and Rural Communities 2013-2018

Kentucky Agricultural Council Task Force on the Future of Agriculture
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Kentucky Agricultural Council

A New Strategic Plan for Kentucky Agriculture

An initiative of the Kentucky Agricultural Council and its Task Force on the Future of Agriculture
Kentucky’s Agricultural Challenges and Opportunities

Kentucky agriculture has been fortunate to have access to 50% of the Master Tobacco Settlement funds over the past decade to invest in diversifying and expanding Kentucky’s agricultural economy. However, the future of these funds remains uncertain.

A more immediate and direct concern will be filling the void of tobacco buyout payments ending in 2014 and likely cuts in other government payments (e.g., direct payments), collectively accounting for around 20 percent of our net farm income in recent years. Consequently, Kentucky agriculture, like U.S. agriculture will probably have to depend more on the marketplace to replace these lost dollars. Economic and political challenges to our tobacco and equine industries remain a legitimate concern.

An aging farm population raises issues of creating incentives and educational programs for young and beginning farmers to possess skills necessary to take advantage of both traditional as well as emerging markets. Educating a growing non-farm sector, including policymakers of the vital economic and social/cultural role that agricultural plays in our beloved rural communities will become increasingly important.

Despite growth in other non-agricultural parts of our state’s economy, a broadly defined agricultural industry will likely be critical for the future for the Commonwealth’s farm families and rural communities.

Geographically, farm leaders need to continue to evaluate economic opportunities in eastern Kentucky whose economies have not benefited from the overall expansion of Kentucky agriculture in recent years. Labor availability, costs, and regulations remain a serious threat to labor intensive industries such as tobacco, vegetables, equine and dairy. The future direction of our nation’s energy policy as it relates to both grain and cellulosic ethanol could create both concerns and opportunities for Kentucky agriculture and our rural economies.

Additional changes in environmental regulations, animal welfare standards, land use policies, and food safety requirements may impact future production costs, but could create opportunities for those who can adopt in a profitable manner to meet the demands of a discriminating consumer and a more active and engaged society over food production.

### Top Kentucky Commodities by Dollar Value (2011)

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### The Planning Process at a Glance

In late 2011, the Kentucky Agriculture Council’s 80+ members were invited to nominate representatives to the Task Force on the Future of Agriculture.

Over the course of the 2012 year, the Task Force conducted five formal meetings as a group. Their first sessions identified issues facing Kentucky Agriculture (“Challenges,” “Opportunities” etc.). From this step, and through various subcommittees, they developed a series of Goals and Actions that respond to key themes and issues that had been identified. These formed the Core Strategies around which the new plan was finalized.

### Task Force Vision, Principles and Operating Procedures

In order for the strategic planning effort to achieve its aim and to be widely embraced, participants in the Task Force on the Future of Agriculture adopted at the outset the following Vision Statement:

“Together we will develop the conditions that will enable our agricultural sectors and our rural communities to prosper.”

Principles to guide the planning process and to ensure its inclusive thrust also were developed:

- Focus on planning for the prosperity of agricultural sectors in general; all segments will thus benefit.
- The economic future of rural communities and our agricultural sectors are linked to each other.
- To be enduring the Plan must reflect the interests of all participants; engage the commitment of all participants; and be based on sustainable agreements.
- The Individual organizations participating in the planning process pledged to incorporate the Plan’s overarching priorities, action plans and benchmarks into the strategic plans of their respective organizations.

### Task Force Meetings

#### February 21, 2012
Elizabethtown [Kick-off Meeting; Brainstorming; Distribution of Issues Questionnaire]

#### May 30, 2012
Hopkinsville [Questionnaire results tallied, Theme Identification and Issues Voting]

#### June 14, 2012
Lexington FFA / 4H Youth Focus Group

In addition to formal Task Force meetings, the strategic planning process reached out to this youth audience to get fresh views on the future of agriculture from the next generation of farmers and agricultural leaders.

#### July 11, 2012
Lexington [Committee Break-out groups, preliminary development of Goals & Actions]

#### August 16, 2012
Louisville [Final Committee sessions to refine Goals and Actions]

#### November 8, 2012
Louisville [Adoption of Final Strategic Plan at Kentucky Ag Summit]

### Public Forums

Throughout August and September 2012, the KAC’s strategic planning process included a series of public forums held at seven locations across the state, to which the public and all those interested in the future of Kentucky agriculture were invited. These forums provide important input to the new strategic plan for Kentucky agriculture and the state’s rural communities for the 2013-2018 period.

#### Louisville – Aug 22
Hilton Garden Inn at the Kentucky Exposition Center

#### Murray | Aug 27
Murray State University

#### Henderson | Aug 28
Henderson Community College

#### Bowling Green | Aug 28
Western Kentucky University

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Will Snell, Ph.D.
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Finally, adding more off-farm jobs with decent wages/benefits, improving educational levels, accessible/affordable health care, enhancing entrepreneurship, and overall leadership will be critical for the future for the Commonwealth’s farm families and rural communities.

Geographically, farm leaders need to continue to evaluate economic opportunities in eastern Kentucky whose economies have not benefitted from the overall expansion of Kentucky agriculture in recent years. Labor availability, costs, and regulations remain a serious threat to labor intensive industries such as tobacco, vegetables, equine and dairy. The future direction of our nation’s energy policy as it relates to both grain and cellulose ethanol could create both concerns and opportunities for Kentucky agriculture and our rural economies.

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The KAC’s strategic planning initiative and the work of the Task Force on the Future of Agriculture have been supported by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund.

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