



Situation Analysis Report

Franklin County

2013

Franklin County Extension Staff

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Introduction

Through the calendar year of 2013, the Franklin County Virginia Cooperative Extension Unit conducted a comprehensive Situation Analysis utilizing Unit Staff, VCE volunteers, and active ELC members (throughout this report this group of individuals will be referred to as committee members). The process began by reviewing the two previous Situation Analysis Reports (2004 & 2009) and identifying the methodology used for data gathering. Upon reviewing these reports, minutes from ELC meetings, and speaking with seasoned unit staff it was determined that surveys have proved to be ineffective in our locality for a variety of reasons. Consequently, it was agreed upon to hold public forums in an attempt to reach a greater number of citizens from the County of Franklin. In addition to these public forums committee members took part in face to face meetings with local government agencies to insure stakeholder input was collected.

Subsequently, during the same time frame as the Situation Analysis was being compiled, the County of Franklin was undergoing two other plans that played a pivotal role in the acquisition of local demographics and data. These two plans were the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and an Agriculture & Rural Development Strategic Plan. The Agricultural Plan was led by the Franklin County ANR Extension Agent with the aid of Matson Consulting and the Franklin County Agriculture Development Board. Since this plan covered an array of topics; a large portion of issues and concerns related to Extension were identified during public forums moderated by the ANR Agent. Extension was invited to planning meetings and public forums for the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan to provide advice, information, and to ask questions related to Extension Programming. There were a total of six (6) public forums; four (4) were moderated by committee members and the remaining two (2) were attended by committee members. At the conclusion of these forums, the committee convened to analyze and prioritize the data to compile the final report.

Unit Profile

Note: Though a portion of the data in the following summaries were pulled from the internally provided unit profiles, the vast majority of this data was compiled by the Franklin ANR Agent and Matson Consulting Firm for the purposes of the Franklin County Agriculture Development Strategic Plan.

Demographic Summary

The County of Franklin is located in the westernmost area of Southside, Virginia at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is bordered by the counties of Floyd to the west, Roanoke to the north, Bedford to the north-east, Pittsylvania to the east, Henry/Martinsville to the south, and Patrick to the southeast. Franklin has been given the name of “Land between the Lakes” due to the formation of Philpot Lake and Smith Mountain Lake (SML) for hydro- electrical and tourism uses.

Franklin County’s population in 2010 was 56,159 people, representing almost a 19 percent increase from 2000. The estimated population for 2012 is 56,411, a .4 percent increase since

2010. Trends in the population for Franklin County have increased overall, with the largest population growth occurring within the last 20 years. Since 1960, the population has increased by 54 percent and is anticipated to continue rising over the next 10 to 20 years; the population is estimated to be over 62,000 by 2020.

The age range of the population within the county is varied, but the age group with the highest population is the 50 to 54 years group, which had just over 4,500 people. The most populated age group for Virginia is the 45 to 49 years group, which is also the same for the United States. The 45 to 49 years age group is the second largest for the county, with over 4,300 people. Franklin County's smallest age group includes residents 85 years or older. This age group contains about 950 people for the county and is also the smallest for Virginia and the United States.

The gender distribution of Franklin County has remained consistent over the course of the last decade with males accounting for 49.35% and females 50.65%. This trend correlates equally with trends seen at the state and national level.

Household data shows the majority of household income rates remaining the same and following state trends. Though the mean household income has increased to \$58,858 (up 8% from 2007), this is still lower than the state and national average (30% and 17% respectively). Overall, the basic demographics from Franklin County continue to remain consistent over the years with the exception of the aforementioned factors.

Agriculture Summary

Agriculture continues to be an essential contributor to the local economy, jobs base, stability, and community values. According to the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan, Agriculture is the second (2nd) largest industry, contributing over \$51 million in total revenue from farm values, on farm sales, and local businesses that provide support to the industry. This total revenue ranks the County of Franklin tenth (10th) in the Commonwealth of Virginia for total agriculture production according to the 2007 census. Franklin is also ranked second (2nd) in total dairy production and is subsequently ranked the same in corn silage production.

At the start of the 20th century Franklin was home to 4300 farms. A century later, the 2002 census revealed a 75% decrease in that number to 1000 total farms. However, when more recent data is observed, Franklin County has experienced a 3% increase in total farm numbers from 2002 to 2007. The most vulnerable aspect of agriculture; farmland, has continued to diminish is the presence of a growing population. The thrust of urban sprawl in search of space for additional housing and the necessity for some farmers to subdivide farms to generate cash flow continues to turn arable land into housing developments. From 1910 to 2002 Franklin County saw 237,000 acres removed from agricultural production. This trend remains consistent even today with a 3% drop between 2002 and 2007.

The distribution of farms by sales value has remained relatively unchanged except for a slight uptick in lower income farms (<\$2,500) by 4%. What has changed almost two fold over the past five years is the market value of these farms. The per farm market value average has increased from \$338,976 in 2002 to \$665,563 in 2007 (49% respectively). This is primarily due

to land values doubling from \$2,183 (2002) to \$4167 (2007). Franklin County's lands values are consistent when compared to remainder of the Commonwealth. However, these values are 45% higher than the national average.

Agricultural production of livestock cattle (dairy and beef) and chickens reveal an increase across the board with the exception of a 3% decline in the number of hogs. With Franklin County being home to over 10,000 dairy cows and a spike in milk sales from \$21million to \$36 million, this makes crop production a key resource for two reasons. Initially, to produce harvestable forages to keep on farm and secondly to produce grain crops as an additional source of revenue. Since 2002 Franklin has seen a 23% increase in corn silage to 155,846 tons. However, the county has seen a dramatic change in grain production with a 44% increase in grain corn and 64% increase in wheat for grain.

Health Summary

Mortality

In 2010, premature deaths in Franklin were 7,584 and rose to 7817 in 2013. This mortality rate is 19% higher than the remainder of the commonwealth and 32% higher than the national average.

Morbidity

Individuals in poor or fair health increased 3% from 2010-2013. The morbidity rate in the County of Franklin is currently higher than that of the state and national rate (10% and 14% respectively).

Health Behaviors

Adult obesity has risen 2% locally over the past three years, placing the Franklin County adult obesity rate 2% higher than the state average and 5% higher than the national average. Physical inactivity correlates positively with adult obesity, revealing the exact same ratios and percentages. Excessive drinking has decreased 2% and is 7% lower than the rest of the Commonwealth. Though lower than the state average of 385 cases, sexually transmitted infections have risen from 142 cases in 2010 to 219 in 2013.

Social & Economic Factors

As a whole, the citizens of Franklin are becoming more educated. The high school graduation rate has increased from 80% to 85% since 2010. Individuals with some college education have risen from 15% in 2010 to 51% in 2013, but remains 16% lower than the state percentage. Unemployed persons in Franklin increased in 2013 to 6.6 which is 1.6% higher than the national unemployment rate.

Physical Environment

Citizens who have limited access to healthy foods is currently at 7% which is 3% higher than the state and 6% higher than the rest of the United States. Fast food restaurants are at 55%, 5% higher than the state percentage and 28% more fast food restaurants than the national average.

Education Summary

At first glance the data representing school enrollment and educational attainment appear relatively unchanged and representative of the state and national average. After a closer examination of the aforementioned population demographics, the younger population of Franklin County is growing and a higher number of younger individuals from nursery school age to elementary school age are steadily increasing to an average tune of 1.5% since 2007.

Business & Employment Summary

The County of Franklin houses 635 businesses that provide jobs to over 4,500 employees. The following are the rankings of job categories, the number of businesses in each category, and the subcategory with the most businesses and its' respective number.

1. Service- 336 businesses
 - a. Highest Subcategory- *Other*
2. Industrial- 91 businesses
 - a. Highest Subcategory- *Construction*
3. Retail- 123 businesses
 - a. Highest Subcategory- *Eating & Drinking*
4. Finance, Insurance & Estate- 63 business
 - a. Highest Subcategory- *Real Estate*

Community and Resident Perspectives

The four (4) public forums conducted for information gathering were held at the following locations:

- Rocky Mount Train Depot (2)
- Franklin County Government Center (2)
- Total Attendance: 152

The following community groups and local government departments were represented in face to face meetings:

Aging Services
Child Protective Services
Economic Development
Public School System
Health Department
STEP
Planning & Zoning

County Administration
Commerce & Leisure
Ag Development Board
Board of Supervisors
SML Chamber of Commerce
Tax & Revenue

The following issues were identified during the four (4) Situation Analysis public forums and the two (2) for the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan:

1. There is a significant need for agricultural infrastructure to facilitate future development and market capitalization. Primarily in the grain, beef, and local food industries.
2. Amount of farmland is decreasing for the following reasons:
 - a. Inability for farmers to be profitable and afford taxes
 - b. Population increase and demand for housing making it more profitable for farmers to subdivide farms
3. There is a need for local, location specific, well-structured farmers markets for local products
4. General lack of awareness of what Virginia Cooperative Extension can offer a locality. Public forums stated that this issue is being addressed due to better staffing of Extension personnel
 - a. Better promotion of activities and programs are needed. Forum participants noted that there are other outlets that could be utilized such as county operated digital signs, county website, community organization and church newsletters
5. Each public forum addressed the need for an updated technical education facility for the use of the public school system and adults to become trained for technical careers that are needed in the area
6. A setting (either online or a dedicated office) to connect high school, college students, and other individuals desiring a career on a farm with older farmers in the community looking to retire
7. There is a need for financial workshops for youth, families, farmers, and small businesses
8. The lack of zoning in five (5) of seven (7) local districts
9. There is a need for more volunteers to promote and help with 4-H programs and clubs. Being able to utilize school volunteers would make in school programming easier and would stretch limited 4-H resources out over the thirteen (12) schools
10. Participants expressed the need for having one centralized location for Extension programs. This would call for a facility that would be able to hold large numbers of people during ANR meetings and include a culinary kitchen for FCS and 4-H programs
11. Overall lack of jobs/careers for individuals who wish to remain or move to Franklin County
12. Substance abuse is becoming an increasing issue with young adults
13. There is a need for programming efforts in basic life skills issues such as food preservation, family/parenting classes, nutrition, health awareness, and workforce development for youth and adults
14. Forum participants were concerned about the lack of forestry based programs for landowners and industry personnel since commercial forests comprise 60% of the total land area for the county (266,000 acres)

Priority Issues

Based upon the unit profile and community & resident perspectives the following are the top ten (10) priorities identified for the County of Franklin. Initially, the first sections of priority issues are able to be addressed utilizing Virginia Cooperative Extension resources or already are being addressed but require additional attention. The final section of priority issues are outside the scope of Virginia Cooperative Extension resources and should be referred to the appropriate agency for attention.

Status: The following priority issues are currently being addressed through Virginia Cooperative Extension resources and continued efforts are currently being employed to better these issues.

Virginia Cooperative Extension awareness, marketing, and visibility

Though Extension is providing quality programming in a multitude of disciplines, many participants from the public forum made note that they were either unaware of what Extension offers or had no way of knowing when programs were taking place. For the agricultural community, Extension is a chief resource for their informational needs. However, Extension stands to offer many more resources to a community, outside of the agriculture industry.

Extension has already made awareness and visibility a priority during the calendar year of 2013. Results from these efforts were noted during the public forums from participants stating that they are beginning to hear and see Extension involvement increasing through media, press, and community events. Currently, Extension utilizes mass mailings and flyers to serve as the main source for publicizing programs and the dissemination of information. However, continued efforts are needed to insure that programs and information reach citizens currently not on a mailing list.

General awareness of Agriculture, Support, and Information

Currently, less than 20% of the citizens in Franklin County are directly linked to agriculture as a means of household income. The remaining 80% are becoming less cognizant of what agriculture is and how it impacts the community as a whole. There is a significant need in Franklin County much like every other locality to increase general knowledge, support, and information. Topics that were addressed were: farm to table programs for adults and youth, knowledge of farming practices that can be considered a nuisance to non-farming neighbors, and safety information regarding times of the year when citizens are more apt to come in contact with farmers and equipment on public roadways. Although Extension is currently addressing this, additional resources are needed. Local organizations such as FFA, Farm Bureau, and Young Farmers are also striving to better this issue. This is an opportunity to work collaboratively to stretch resources and expand programming efforts.

Health & Nutrition Education

The unit profile and community and resident perspectives reveal the growing need for attention in health and nutrition education. The increase in obesity, inactivity, and morbidity rates alone show that there is a significant local need for individuals to garner knowledge of how to better their personal health and well-being. Currently the only resources being utilized are for youth through in school programming delivered by 4-H. A resolution to this issue is the addition of a Family and Consumer Sciences Agent to the staff that could provide efforts to educate the general public on healthy behaviors and decisions.

Agriculture Profitability & Infrastructure

Unit profile illustrates that although on farm production has increased steadily over a five year period, the profitability of these farms is slowly decreasing. Farming practices and input expenses are progressively becoming more costly for local farmers. Extension continues to provide resources to offer farmers research and information to help make financially responsible production decisions. However, continued resources are needed as profit margins for farmers become smaller, to ensure the sustainability of Franklin's second largest industry.

Infrastructure for local farmers to capitalize on changing market trends became the main topic of discussion during public forums. An example of this is the lack of grain storage and a local point of sale in the presence of high grain prices and increased production. This issue cannot be undertaken entirely using Extension resources. However, identifying these potential markets and preparing farmers for the transition can be done by Extension. The remaining obstacle of implementing needed infrastructure can be referred to the appropriate agency.

Basic Life Skills and Financial Planning for Youth and Adults

Census data indicates that the age groups between 0-19 are steadily rising. Results from the public forums and individual interviews revealed a lack of basic life skills in youth today. Examples of these skills are resume/letter writing, financial stewardship, and interview skills to name a portion are severely lacking in the younger age range. Extension can provide copious amounts of resources to combat the absence of these abilities. Extension is currently providing resources in the form of in school 4-H programming but the school systems are placing more emphasis on state mandated curriculum requirements rather than basic life skills for students.

Volunteer Development and Participation

Volunteers provide an avenue for Extension programming to span a farther reach than what office staffing can allow. Various face to face interviews exposed the issue of diminishing numbers of willing volunteers for Extension efforts. Currently plentiful resources are being provided to community members to become active in Extension. Trainings are offered to provide these individuals with ample knowledge and preparation in becoming a volunteer. Additional volunteer numbers would permit in-school programming to expand to additional schools and increase the number of available 4-H clubs. A potential resolution to this would be for Extension to tap into other community and school volunteer pools.

Land Use / Zoning & Farm Land Loss

In each of the six public forum sessions, the loss of arable land is becoming a serious concern in the farming community. The issues' surrounding this loss is twofold. Initially, the lack of zoning in five of seven districts makes the formation of residential housing units on agricultural land easier. This issue is compounded by land values doubling over the past five years making the sale of farmland a necessary retirement option for local farmers.

There are two possible solutions to this problem. The first being the most promising, is the completion of zoning in the remaining five districts to ensure that agriculture land is zoned as such, thus making it more difficult for farmland to be transformed into housing developments and commercial use. The second solution is to have a land trust developed for the County of Franklin.

Substance Abuse in Youth

Though census data does not provide accurate data representing an increase in youth substance abuse, public forum participants identified this as a growing concern. Extension can be utilized to educate youth in making wise and healthy decisions with the use of a few curricula that target this issue. Largely, this issue should be referred to the appropriate agency to provide more resources.