

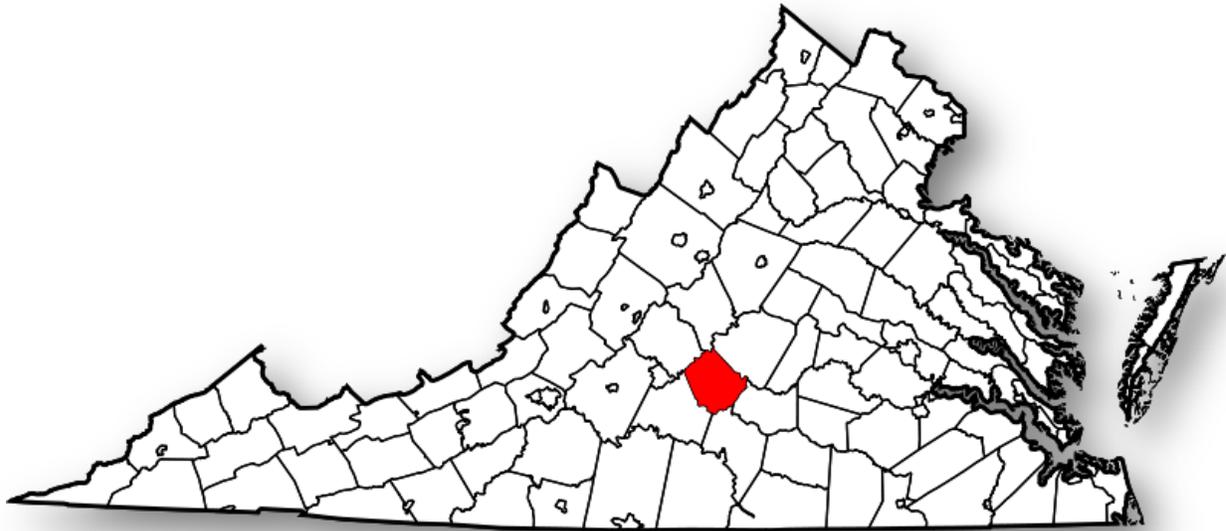


Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

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Situation Analysis Report



Appomattox County

2013

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Introduction

A situation analysis review was conducted for the Appomattox County Extension Unit during the summer and fall of 2013. The 2004 and 2008 situation analysis were reviewed and compared to the most recent data available. An agriculture focus group was held in cooperation with the Appomattox County Farm Bureau and the Appomattox Farm Bureau Woman's Committee. An on-line survey was prepared using Qualtrics (attached) and offered for county citizens either online or hard copy (11 respondents). This survey was advertised using the Facebook webpage for the Appomattox Extension Office and additionally advertised to County Administration, the Board of Supervisors, the local Department of Social Services, the Master Gardener Association of Appomattox, the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District and the local Virginia Department of Forestry office. The Master Gardener Association and the employees of the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District utilized the survey as a framework for a focus group discussion. Members of the Appomattox ELC were participatory in the focus group sessions with Appomattox Farm Bureau and the Master Gardener Association of Appomattox. Results of this situation analysis were presented to the Appomattox Board of Supervisors on December 2, 2013 during the annual Appomattox Extension Office Appreciation Dinner and Report to the Board.

Unit Profile

Appomattox County is located in the Central Piedmont region of Virginia. The county is 333.7 square miles and has 44 persons per square mile. The nearest metropolitan area is the City of Lynchburg where many county citizens work and shop. The total population of the County increased from 14,218 in 2007 to 14,820 (4.2% increase) in 2011. Approximately 26 percent of the population is under the age of 20 while 15% of the population is 65 or older. The remaining

58% of the population falls between the ages of 20 and 64. Females comprise 49% of the population while males comprise 51%.

The racial makeup of Appomattox County includes 21.4% African American and 77% Caucasian. The remaining 1.6% of the population includes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin and also persons reporting more than one race. The largest growth occurred in individuals reporting more than one race (1% growth between 2007 and 2011).

The median household income in Appomattox County was \$47,992 in 2011 compared to \$62,391 for Virginia. The largest growth segment occurred in households reporting more than \$100,000 (3% increase from 2007 to 2011). The households reporting less than \$10,000 increased 1.8 percent between 2007 and 2011. Approximately 16.6% of the population is below poverty level compared with 10.7% for Virginia. The number of housing units increased 373 units between 2007 and 2011. The home ownership rate was approximately 75% with a median home value of \$140,000 in 2011. The unemployment rate increased from 5 percent in 2010 to 7.4 percent in 2013.

Of the population age 25 and older, 7.4 percent have attained a level of education below 9th grade; 12.5% attended high school, but did not graduate; 38.3 percent have a high school diploma; 21.3% have some college but no degree; 6.5% have an associate's degree; 9.9% have a bachelor's degree; and 4.0% have an education past the bachelor's level. In 2011, 80.1% of high school graduates continued their education compared to the state average of 87%.

There were 24 teenage pregnancies in 2011 with 17 resulting in live births and 7 induced terminations. The teen pregnancy rate per 1000 individuals reduced from 30.7 in 2002 to 26.6 in 2011. Low birth rate affects 9.5 percent of the live births for County citizens.

The median age of the county population is increasing. In 1980, the median age was 31.9; in 2000, the median age was 39.1; in 2011, the median age was 42.

Approximately 17% of the county population does not have health insurance and the ratio of citizens to doctors is 5,009 citizens for every doctor in the county. Eighty eight percent of citizens are screened for diabetes and 65 percent of females have mammography screenings. Adult obesity has increased to 32 percent in 2013 and physical inactivity affects 27 percent of the population. Sexually transmitted infections have reduced from 212 per 1000 individuals to 194 per 1000 individuals.

Agriculture is a vital part of the Appomattox County economy. The 2007 Census of Agriculture puts the value of farm sales at \$7,461,000 up 11% from \$6,682,000 in 2002. The livestock industry provides 84 percent of the farm sales. The county has 323 farms, sixty six less than 2002 (17% decline). The average farm size increased from 218 acres in 2002 to 235 acres in 2007 (8% increase). The average sales of farm products increased 34% per farm from \$17,177 in 2002 to \$23,099 in 2007.

From 2002 to 2007, government payments to Appomattox farm owners decreased 18 percent from \$256,000 to \$209,000. During this same time period, the average per farm payment increased 23 percent from \$1,884 to \$2,321.

Farmland in Appomattox County has decreased from 84,971 acres in 2002 to 75,874 acres in 2007 (11 percent decline). Approximately 35.5% of land is used for cropland, 34.8% used for woodland, 26.2% used for pasture and 3.5% for other uses.

Approximately 45% (145 of 323) of farms derive their entire family income from farm related sources. The average age of the principal farm operator increased from 57.4 in 2002 to 57.6 in 2007. Eighty five percent of principal farm operators are male.

The County only has two operating dairies, one Holstein and one Jersey. Most farms have a beef cattle component. Row crops include dark tobacco, burley tobacco, corn, soybeans, wheat and grain sorghum. 2013 reported acreage to the United States Department of Agriculture included 41 acres of barley, 1,559 acres of wheat, 185 acres of grain sorghum, 90

acres of tobacco, 2035 acres of soybean, 589 acres of corn and approximately 1,969 acres of grass.

Community and Resident Perspectives

All of the survey issues were important to county citizens. Many of the issues were combined under similar headings to formulate the following priority issues. Sub-category important issues are also listed.

1. Profitable and Sustainable Agricultural Production
 - a. Public Awareness and Public Perception of Agriculture
 - b. Biosolids Education and Research
 - c. Natural Resource Management and Conservation
 - d. Science and Technology Education (Adult and Youth)
 - e. Alternative Agriculture
 - f. Food Safety
 - g. Buy Fresh/Buy Local
 - h. Water Resources and Water Quality
 - i. Land Use
 - j. Livestock and Crop Production
2. Positive Youth Education and Activities
 - a. In-school Exposure
 - b. Youth Perception
 - c. Career Awareness and Workforce Preparation
3. Nutrition and Health
 - a. Food Safety
 - b. Aging Population and Caregivers
 - c. Food Preservation
4. Housing, Home and Financial Management
5. Child Development and Parent Education
 - a. Obesity
 - b. Chronic Disease Prevention
 - c. Parenting
6. Local Government and Citizen Leadership Education

Many of the identified issues are complex and require multiple methods for addressing. Many issues can be addressed using ANR, 4-H and FCS joint programming. Issues applicable to Appomattox County may be similar to those in neighboring counties and offer the potential opportunity for area programming.

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Priority Issues

Profitable and Sustainable Agricultural Production

Profitable and Sustainable Agricultural Production is currently addressed through ANR programming. Agricultural producers must remain profitable to stay in business long-term. Appomattox County has seen a recent and gradual shift from cattle and hay production to row crop production. The ANR agent has noticed an increase in equipment size and technology as farmers expand and/or diversify. Major investment in grain production and grain storage has occurred throughout the area. Appomattox County has also been very fortunate to cooperate with other Central Virginia localities to receive grants from the Virginia Tobacco Commission. These grants have assisted area farmers improve on-farm grain storage, feed storage, hay feeding and animal handling. The Appomattox office also cooperates closely with partner agencies, including the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District, the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency and the local Virginia Department of Forestry office. Agency cooperation allows more exposure and assistance to area producers to improve agriculture visibility and public perception.

Public perception of agriculture begins at the farm level. Area programs to educate farmers on improved animal handling and welfare (Beef Quality Assurance), pesticide safety, and farm safety are all important to maintain a positive view of agriculture. Youth perception of

agriculture is also addressed by cooperation with the local Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter in Appomattox. The Appomattox Extension Office additionally maintains a working relationship with the Appomattox FFA Alumni which owns the small farm utilized as a teaching laboratory adjacent to the Appomattox County High School. A major agricultural youth activity is the annual Central Virginia Livestock Show and Sale held on the first Saturday in May each year at the Lynchburg Livestock Market. This event receives positive public support and widespread press. Local youth agriculture awareness days are also key to maintaining a positive and long lasting view of agriculture and its importance to everyday life.

Water quality and water resource availability are also important for profitable and sustainable agricultural production. In July 2009, 25 residents of Appomattox County participated in a drinking water clinic sponsored by the local VCE office and the Virginia Household Water Quality Program. The most common household water-quality issues identified as a result of the analyses for the Appomattox participants were low pH, manganese, nitrate and the presence of total coliform bacteria. Based on the situation analysis, this issue is currently being addressed by VCE statewide, and is still a concern of Appomattox residents. Collaboration between the ANR and FCS agent need to be explored to better address this issue within Appomattox County. A 2014 drinking water clinic is planned for Appomattox County which can help address this issue.

Positive Youth Education and Activities

Positive Youth Education and Activities are addressed with resources through the 4-H program area. The 4-H program is very active in Appomattox County with in-school clubs, after school clubs, summer camp, specialty clubs, local agriculture awareness days and additional educational opportunities such as Reality Store to address youth financial literacy. Public speaking is also a long-standing component of the 4-H program in Appomattox. All activities are mindful and complement SOL requirements. Youth nutrition and obesity prevention are addressed with the after-school cooking class and the Clover Christmas Classic 5K and Youth Mile. The in-school presence was highlighted as a necessary method to reach all youth and the need to maintain this presence was mentioned numerous in the survey results. The ANR

agent and 4-H agent cooperate on many programs to reach more youth. Partnerships with other agencies such as the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District, the Virginia State Police, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia National Guard and the Appomattox Rescue Squad also reach more youth.

Nutrition and Health (Food Safety/Preservation/Aging Population):

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of the children are overweight or obese. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. Here in Virginia, more than 60 percent of the adult population is obese or overweight.

In the United States alone, food borne illness is responsible for about 9,000 deaths each year, with yearly incidences of food poisoning ranging from 24 to 81 million cases and yearly costs ranging from about \$5 to \$25 billion. According to the U.S. Economic Research Service (ERS), food safety research focuses on analysis of the human-illness costs of food borne disease and assessment of food safety incentives and activities of industry, consumers, and government. Safe steps in food handling, cooking, and storage are essential to prevent food borne illness. The 45+ age groups are consistently growing at a faster rate than average and indications are this growth will continue. As our population grows older, issues related to aging such as health care, nutrition and recreational activities will become increasingly important needs within the community.

This issue is being addressed by VCE resources. VCE plays an important role in providing education concerning diet, health issues and nutrition; this is a key to well-being of young families, as well as the elderly. Offerings include, but are not limited to Balanced Living with Diabetes, Food Friends, Parent University, Healthy Weight for Healthy Kids, after-school and summer nutrition/cooking classes, PTA/community-wide Nutrition and Health workshops, and

school and community health fairs. An Appomattox specific office activity is the Clover Christmas Classic 5K and Youth Mile. VCE implements unbiased educational food safety programs to address consumers as well as businesses in preventing food borne illness. Offerings include but are not limited to providing ServSafe, National Restaurant Association Education Foundation coursework and examinations, occasional quantity food preparation (Cooking for a Crowd), home-based food business and food preservation techniques/workshops (Home Canning, Freezing, Drying Pickling/Jam/Jellies). A major hurdle to addressing this area of concern is the recent loss of the Food and Nutrition Program Assistant from the Appomattox office. This position should be filled once funding is identified.

As the population continues to age, someone must assist the elderly population with personal care. The over 65 year old group is increasing steadily and care decisions often become the responsibility of their children. Educational opportunities and resources are needed to cover financial, medical, and legal matters that arise when making choices for an elderly parent. The use of planning prior to the illness or death is needed by both parties. This issue is currently being addressed to some extent with VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to better address this issue.

Housing, Home and Financial Management

Youth and Adult Financial Education is a major issue in Appomattox County. Research by the Federal Reserve indicates that household debt is at a record high relative to disposable income. As the recession recovery finally sets in for many Americans, Virginia residents rank sixth out of all fifty states for the highest in median revolving debt per borrower. Virginia also has the eleventh highest rate for Chapter 13 bankruptcy filings. Some analysts are concerned that this unprecedented level of debt might pose a risk to the financial health of American households. A high level of indebtedness among households could lead to increased household delinquencies and bankruptcies, which could threaten the health of lenders if loan losses are greater than anticipated. This issue is currently being addressed with current VCE unit resources. Based on the situation analysis, no further action is required.

Housing and Home issues could be addressed better if the vacant Extension Specialist for Housing position at Virginia State University could be filled. There is a void that cannot be filled by simply searching the Internet for information.

Child Development and Parent Education

Child Development and Parent Education was identified as a major issue facing Appomattox County. Nearly five children die every day in America from abuse and neglect. According to the National Children's Advocacy Center, more than 78% of reported child fatalities as a result of abuse and neglect were caused by one or more of the child victim's parents. Approximately 1,500 teenagers will attempt suicide in the next twenty four hours and twenty percent of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood. Research has shown that one of the greatest deterrents of child abuse is quality and practical parenting educational programs, and often simple, open and honest conversation between teenagers and parents can prevent a suicide attempt. This issue is currently being addressed with current unit VCE resources.

Local Government and Citizen Leadership Education

Although not directly addressed by the Appomattox unit, these issues are currently addressed or can be addressed through the Community Viability or CV program. This issue was mentioned at all of the focus group discussions. More importantly, the lack of young individuals acquiring leadership traits was highlighted. This overlap highlights the importance of youth education and more specifically the 4-H program offerings such as Public Speaking and Teen Leader positions at 4-H Camp.

Although many other issues could be highlighted in this report, the resounding comments indicate the teamwork approach of Extension and the resources offered by Extension are unsurpassed for meeting the needs of county and area citizens. Extension serves as a trusted liaison between government and community organizations due to the unbiased and research based information we provide.