



Situation Analysis Report



Sussex County

2013

Sussex Extension Staff

Shevonne Newby, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent
Kelvin Wells, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent
LaSonya White, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent
Diana Hundley, Unit Administrative Assistant

Sussex Extension Leadership Council

Linda Jackson (Chair)
Jeanne Beale
Glover Pegram
Elizabeth Zimba

Brenda Drew
Deborah Davis
Chequila Fields
Caroline Wright

Introduction

The Sussex County Extension office conducted a situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and the Sussex County Extension office. The ELC and the Sussex County Extension office were both involved in the development of a Sussex County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the County. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified.

An extension survey was created and shared via the traditional mailing system. Sussex County VCE Staff reviewed the responses and a list of priority issues was identified.

Unit Profile

Sussex is made up of four small towns, Jarratt, Stony Creek, Waverly and Wakefield. Sussex is a rural county in southeastern Virginia or coastal plain except for the extreme western corner which is in the Piedmont Plateau. It borders on the northeast by the Blackwater River and partly on the west by the Nottoway River. The county was formed in 1754 from part of Surry. The county was named after either the English shire of the same name or Lord Sussex. English settlement of Sussex County began prior to 1700 when people began to move south of the Blackwater River. Sussex County encompasses 317,400 acres or 496 square miles. Sussex County is strategically centered between Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Southern Virginia along the I-95 and US-460 corridors.

According to the FAQs of Sussex County website, as of 2010, the county of Sussex is inhabited by approximately 12,500 people. Additionally, there are 130 farms in Sussex with an average size of 571 acres according to the 2002 county summary by the [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#). Twenty-five percent of the County's land is devoted to agricultural production. Principal crops are peanuts, cotton, corn, flue-cured tobacco, small grains and soybeans. The market value of agricultural products in 1995 was \$21 million. Sussex ranks 17th among Virginia counties in total cash receipts from agricultural production.

Statistics show that Sussex County's median household income is \$39,635; approximately \$22,756 below the state average of \$62,391. Statistics also indicate that the unemployment rate in Sussex County is currently 9.2%.

In Sussex County, for the year of 2013, 4.6% of residents are under the age of 5 yrs. and 16% of the residents are under the age of 18yrs along with 15.8% of the residents being 65 yrs. and older.

The racial composition of Sussex County is 40.4% White, 57.8% Black or African American and 2.3% Hispanic or Latino.

In Sussex County, the population age 25+ that have completed a bachelor's degree or higher is 10.3% compared to 35.2% in Virginia.

The percentage of population from Sussex County living below poverty level between 2009-2013 was 15.3% compared to 11.3% in Virginia. Additionally, data indicates that 24% of the children are living below the poverty level.

Statistics indicated that 18.6% of residents under the age of 65 yrs. are currently without health insurance in Sussex County.

In Sussex County, 70.90% of the children were eligible for free lunch compared to 31% overall in Virginia.

The data indicates that in Sussex County the adult obesity is 32% compared to 25% as the Virginia average and ranked at 127 out of 134 counties within Virginia. Sussex County data indicates that 11.6% of its adult residents have diabetes and 14.8 % of its low-income preschoolers are obese.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Issues identified in Sussex County VCE Situation Analysis were gathered primarily using the created questionnaire. The following 10 issues were listed as priority issues for the residents of Sussex County: Aging/caregiving, ANR/water control issues, Before and After School youth programming, Parenting/child development, Profitable Agriculture & Natural Resource Production, Positive Youth Activities/4-H Projects, Youth Health and Wellness, Diet, Health & Nutrition across the lifespan, Pest Management Issues and Food Safety/Food Preservation.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspective data, the following top priority issues were identified for the County of Sussex. Many of these issues can be addressed through Virginia Cooperative Extension resources. Others are outside the scope of VCE programing and should be referred to the appropriate government agencies. The following key priorities are listed in no particular rank or order.

Issue 1: Aging / Caregiving

With 15.8% of the residents of Sussex County being over the age of 65 years old, it is not surprising that aging and caregiving be listed as a top priority. Seniors within the county of Sussex have special needs and priorities. Health and nutrition education are areas that VCE has resources already deployed. Also mentioned were programs to assist seniors with life transitions. Estate and transition planning are examples of effective programs that VCE can offer to the senior population affording them an opportunity to gain knowledge about matters that impact their lives.

Issue 2: ANR / Water Control Issue

An increasing population places demands on a finite water supply and raises the public scrutiny of all water users. The Sussex Unit ANR Agent can advise citizens to contact the Chowan Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) as well as work with the local planning department to address the concerns regarding water control issues of the citizens of Sussex. Likewise, the ANR Agent can provide education to the public about solutions to water issues such as nutrient management and soil erosion prevention. VCE also participates in programming such as the Household Well Water Testing Program that addresses individual concerns regarding water quality.

Issue 3: Positive Youth Activities / 4-H Projects

The 4-H.org website, states that 4-H is the nation's largest positive youth development and youth mentoring organization, empowering six million youth in the U.S. Extension has an opportunity to continue providing quality research based education and hands on learning experiences through 4-H Youth Development in collaboration with Sussex County public and private schools located within the community. Additionally, partnerships with other organizations in the communities along with the different church affiliations in the county offer even more opportunities for engagement with our youth.

Issue 4: Parenting / Child Development

Extension programs, through Family and Consumer Sciences pillar Human Development can address this priority with science and evidence based instructional workshops. These workshops can be provided for citizens of Sussex in collaboration with the Department of Social Services with an intended goal of providing education and support so parents can nurture their children and provide a strong foundation allowing their children to grow into being confident, responsible, productive contributing citizens. Additionally, 4-H Youth Development can play an active role through partnering with Family and Consumer Sciences to provide programming that supports the family unit working together as a whole to strengthen parenting skills and open communication between youth and parents.

Issue 5: Youth Health and Wellness

According to the CDC, Obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure. In a population-based sample of 5- to 17-year-olds, 70% of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Extension programming can address this issue through interdisciplinary programming opportunities by Family and Consumer Sciences programs teaching the youth the importance of making healthy food choices along with engaging in physical activity as well as encouraging them through 4-H Youth Developments healthy living initiatives. Lastly, this priority issue affords ANR an opportunity to promote the importance of youth knowing the life cycle of healthy foods and how they are grown, produced and can contribute to healthy lifestyles and continued good health.

Issue 6: Before and After School Youth Programming

According to Afterschool Alliance, students who participate in afterschool programs have improved school attendance and engagement in learning as well as improved test scores and grades. These two statistics alone are impressive and offer insight into why the citizens of Sussex feel that before and after school youth programs are priority issues for the county.

Currently there is no Department of Parks and Recreation in Sussex County that can assist with providing before and after school programming, however there are several after school programming outlets available to youth within the county operated by the Improvement Association and collaboration with the Surry County Office on Youth. The programs offered by these two organizations (Project Discovery (grades 7-12) and Power (age 16-21) are a perfect fit to partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension. Extension has the resources to offer educational programs and summer camps that allow for interdisciplinary programming opportunities for the 4-H Youth Development Agent along with the ANR and FCS Agents.

Issue 7: Diet, Health & Nutrition Across The Lifespan

The CDC website states, “The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses”. Virginia Cooperative Extension has the resources to promote this concept for the citizens of Sussex County across the lifespan. Additionally, because the resources are researched based and provide opportunities for open discussion citizens can trust they are receiving reliable information that can help their families live a better quality of life.

Issue 8: Profitable Agriculture & Natural Resource Production

According to the Sussex County, VA webpage, “Twenty-five percent of the County's land is devoted to agricultural production. Principal crops are peanuts, cotton, corn, flue-cured tobacco, small grains and soybeans. The market value of agricultural products in 1995 was \$21 million. Sussex ranks 17th among Virginia counties in total cash receipts from agricultural production”. With a substantial economic contribution to the county coming from Agriculture, Agricultural education is a continuous role that Virginia Cooperative Extension provides. Additionally, Agriculture profitability has been an unceasing issue that has been constantly addressed as an agriculture concern. Extension can provide opportunities to explore agri-tourism, further processing of agricultural products, analysis of new enterprises, and management seminars on improving efficiencies of production.

Issue 9: Pest Management Issues

Virginia Cooperative Extension continues to be a front runner in providing researched based education through annual pesticide recertification trainings that provide the knowledge to the county farmers as well as county landowners who have personal home gardens. Additionally, the ANR Agent has an opportunity to invite county residents to consider participating in Master Gardner training programs that will provide them with first-hand knowledge in learning about pesticide management.

Issue 10: Food Safety / Food Preservation

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that each year one in six Americans get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne illness. The overall cost to the public is high, with the estimated economic cost of foodborne illness approximately \$77.7 billion dollars per year, or approximately \$1626 per foodborne illness case. Between 2007 and 2009, the state of Virginia averaged 21 foodborne outbreaks per year resulting in an average of 400 sick individuals per year. These statistics are staggering and Virginia Cooperative Extension through Family and Consumer Sciences programs are working to eradicate these figures by providing education to the citizens of Sussex. The citizens are able to participate in food handler's workshops as well as food safety workshops that provide them with hands on experiences and scenarios detailing proper food safety measures. Moreover, Family and Consumer Sciences programming can offer a Master Foods training program which will provide the participants an opportunity to learn about food safety and food preservation allowing those individuals to return to the community and provide research based education to the citizens of Sussex.