



# **Strategic Roadmap for Kentucky Agriculture: 2025-2030 *Strategies & Tactics as of 6/1/24***

More than 200 stakeholders have been involved in the process of identifying needs in Kentucky agriculture, then developing actionable and measurable tactics to address those needs since November 2023. The tactics will continue to be refined, and organizations willing to take the lead will be identified. A final product will be released November 15, 2024 during the Kentucky Agricultural Summit in Louisville.

## ***I. Help protect farm transitions & sustain Kentucky farmlands.***

- 1. Producer training:** Create a statewide training plan to go where farmers are (existing mtgs/conferences) for farm succession/generational transition that reflects long-term goals to develop understanding about vision for future and includes:
- 2. Communications & Marketing:** Help current owners create a vision for the future and motivate them want to have the discussion. Help next generation see opportunities.
- 3. Policy changes:** Pursue changes in state and federal policy around tax planning, life insurance planning, new and beginning farmers – focused on long-term opportunities.
- 4. Mentoring:** Establish a mentoring program for new farmers with 4-year degree or with background working on farm to connect with experienced farmers and/or funding.
- 5. Farm internship:** Encourage farmers to develop internships and mentorship programs, coordinate list for matching.

## ***II. Engage agriculture in Kentucky's economic development discussions.***

- 1. Economic development qualifier:** Pursue policy change that includes a multiplier for ag economic development projects that puts ag on same playing field as businesses bringing jobs.
- 2. Regional economic development networking:** Coordinate regional meetings with KDA to showcase ag as economic development, provide data around economic impact, and foster networking.
- 3. Project coordination:** Work with KDA and KY Cabinet for Economic Development to help attract projects and coordinate economic development activity related to food and ag, including Tennessee.

- 4. University outreach:** Continue to foster relationships at universities in ag economic development degree and research. Universities need to showcase agriculture as cutting edge.
- 5. Chamber leadership:** Help KY Chamber, KY Chamber Executives, and local chambers identify ag folks and agribusinesses to talk with leadership programs as part of Ag Literacy Network. Train and incentivize farmers and help them understand.

### ***III. Prioritize workforce development to provide an adequate employee base and broaden young people's understanding of career opportunities in agriculture.***

- 1. Identify and meet high need sectors:** Determine current and future career needs. For example, there is a shortage of accountants/tax preparers, especially those working with farmers, as well as meat processors and large equipment operators and mechanics, welders, ag economic dev experts, CDL, et al.
- 2. Education and career mapping:** Help people navigate in the educational space elementary through adult learning.
- 3. Career influencer outreach:** Focus on career influencers (i.e. counselors, career coaches) in high school and middle schools with meetings, career opportunities, transferable skills. Provide diverse agrifood career exposure through panelists, connecting with professionals, and having students visit employers.
- 4. Ag in the Classroom:** Continue to prioritize career exposure and connections with teachers and students outside of agriculture to build awareness of agrifood jobs.
- 5. Employer education:** Approach as a long-term marathon, looking for partners.
- 6. Technical education:** Identify specific ag career pathways that can lead to internships, apprenticeships, and certifications for non-university bound students. (e.g. HVAC and plumbing). Remember employer side looking for transferrable skills.
- 7. Post-secondary training:** Explore the opportunities for two-year degrees or ag technical degree with KCTCS and colleges (4 ag tech associate programs exist).

### ***IV: Foster more supply chain coordination to improve market access.***

- 1. State-funded institution incentive:** Help change incentive structure at state level to purchase KY grown farm products for schools, state parks, hospitals, and universities (both state run and state-funded).
- 2. Local foods in schools:** Prioritize and seek food system investments to leverage school farm relationships.

3. **Distributor expansion:** Encourage/discover incentive structure for distributors to expand purchasing from more KY farmers.
4. **Farm-to-school relationship-building:** Work with KDA administering USDA \$3.2M farm to school grant by April 2025 with goal continue local products going into 80-90 schools (all commodities) when grant is completed. End date is April 2025 for full expenditure.
5. **Meat processing needs:** Explore tangible/realistic needs for added beef/meat processing. Needs to be targeted. Educate producers about what is needed for finished animals and quality needed for processors.
6. **Best practices research:** Identify similar or neighboring states who have robust farm to school or state institution statewide requirements e.g. WV buy local model.
7. **Grain processing & training:** Grow small grain processing and storage by helping farmers understand quality concerns, processing needs storage options, and innovative practices.

## ***V: Continue diversification and innovation across farm, food, fuel, & fiber.***

1. **Coordinating ag tech connections:** Facilitate and coordinate with innovation networks throughout state.
2. **Diversification & innovation networking:** Identify diversification models, how to make enterprises on the same farm work together, existing training, and mentoring programs.
3. **Innovation Vision:** Create shared vision across state of what technology and innovation is.
4. **Elevate Biorenewables:** Work with existing KDA, regional, and association efforts to elevate interest in renewable fuel and build understanding of needs/logistics. e.g., methane digesters, ethanol aviation fuel, woodland waste, sustainability requirements/ carbon market, etc. Consider legislative action, industry needs (e.g. UPS), research, and regional needs.
5. **Distillery:** Identify ways to leverage local with distilleries to have Kentucky corn, barley, rye, wood, and other crops put into products. Help drive case for farmer trials.

## ***VI: Create more value-added markets across the Commonwealth***

- 1. Build value-added capacity:** Need producer education to build capacity, including technical assistance, how to evaluate risk vs. reward, financial viability, understand food safety concerns, market research, and baseline numerator.
- 2. Identify and communicate existing value-added programs:** Develop a cheat sheet of existing value-added programs.
- 3. Research value-added trends and opportunities:** Explore conventional (row crop, beef, etc.) value-added sustainability opportunities for export markets or carbon neutral options (e.g. cover crops, no-till, EU requirements, etc).

## ***VII: Develop agriculture's partnerships in the food and health space.***

- 1. Farmer health:** Address farmer physical and mental health through screenings and programming at ag meetings, county level ag orgs, trade shows with bilingual support. In addition to physical and mental health, farmers need help from dietitians with healthy eating decisions that are practical on the farm.
- 2. Food insecurity coordination:** Identify what programs are purchasing KY products and build coordination to purchase more KY products to impact more people living with food insecurity through state line-item funding and connecting those directly addressing food insecurity, state commodity groups wanting to feed people, processors with product, et al. Need a bridge between all the entities and the bridge keeper.
- 3. Food system dialogue:** Foster dialogue around the bigger food system and how KY agriculture contributes by working with partners. Start by identifying and prioritizing partner groups in public health space.
- 4. Food & health system research:** Create a comprehensive inventory and best practices of food as health and food as medicine efforts around the state to understand programs, engage the different players, identify gaps, mechanism of referral, food distribution, and collaborate to avoid duplication.

## ***VIII: Build understanding around farm and food amongst all Kentuckians.***

- 1. Ag 101:** Develop presentation for businesses, restaurants, health professionals and healthcare students, community organizations, et al. delivered by members of the Ag Literacy Network in-person, but also available virtually.
- 2. KY Ag Video:** Create short video about KY Ag for events and visitors. Include importance of ag, NASS, national security, etc. Appeal to public, e.g. Florida video example at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijCHxXe9ZtY>
- 3. Teacher curriculum:** Work with local ag organizations to sponsor non-ag classroom supplemental activities, designated K-5 and 6-8. Continue to identify needs of classrooms for science-based material about agriculture for future development.
- 4. Inventory:** Determine what ag literacy efforts are already being done by KAC members, categorized by target audience.
- 5. Elected officials:** Focus on connecting with state elected officials, outside of session, in districts. Work with local Farm Bureaus to help represent ag as one voice and provide insight on ag economic development and impact, environmental issues at local level, work with consumers. Need to help local events repeatedly say ag is important – elected officials need to hear it from constituents often.
- 6. Teacher certification:** Market how to certify K-6 teachers to have ag as a special like music or art, with hands-on learning and STEM approach, using NAIC pilot.

## ***IX: Grow collaboration, coordination, and communications within Kentucky ag.***

- 1. Information sharing:** Foster communications through KAC member orgs and down to county level with information library and resources.
- 2. Biosecurity/issues/natural disaster protocol:** Develop a playbook for issues we know may arise.
- 3. Ag literacy:** Promote ag literacy network and help schools understand where they can go for resources.
- 4. Networking Groups:** Create standard time for networking groups to meet with set agenda.