

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

September 18, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture was held on September 18, 2025, at 9:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Jason Howell, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Jason Howell, Co-Chair; Representative Myron Dossett, Co-Chair; Senators Gary Boswell, Matthew Deneen, Matt Nunn, and Craig Richardson; and Representatives Chad Aull, Anne Gay Donworth, Daniel Fister, Chris Freeland, David Hale, Mark Hart, Kim Holloway, Kim King, Matthew Koch, Candy Massaroni, Shawn McPherson, Adam Moore, Sarah Stalker, Nancy Tate, Walker Thomas, James Tipton, and Joshua Watkins.

Guests: Brandon Reed, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy (KOAP); Mayor Linda Gorton, Board President, Bluegrass AgTech Development Corp (BADC); and Jacob Ball, Executive Director, BADC.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, and Susan Spoonamore.

Approval of August 21, 2025 minutes

The August 21, 2025, minutes were approved by voice vote, without objection upon motion of Senator Boswell and seconded by Representative Freeland.

Update from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Division of Agricultural Economic Development

Brandon Reed, Executive Director, KOAP, stated that the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Division of Agricultural Economic Development (KDA) is ahead of schedule for establishing the Division of Agriculture Economic Development. Board members have established the guidelines and application process and plan to be up and running by October 1, 2025.

In response to Co-Chair Dossett, Mr. Reed stated that KDA has a working partnership with the Kentucky Department of Economic Development and the Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts.

Discussion on Agricultural Economic Development Initiatives

Committee meeting materials may be accessed online at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/261>

Mayor Linda Gorton, Board President, BADC, and Jacob Ball, Executive Director, BADC, gave an overview of its agricultural economic development initiative. Mayor Gorton explained that BADC is a public-private partnership. The goal of the organization is to make Kentucky and the Lexington area the international hub of AgTech businesses. BADC awards challenge grants to promising agriculture startups that will help to reshape the future of food, farming, and sustainability.

Mr. Ball stated BADC's focus areas are to build a protein-secure future and diverse and sustainable agricultural ecosystems, address health needs, customize technologies to support mid-sized farms, and leverage Kentucky's equine, food, and beverage expertise. BADC has awarded two rounds of the challenge grant program resulting in \$925,000 of grant funding to agriculture start-ups in Kentucky. He stated the program has engaged 36 Kentucky farms and impacted 1,600 acres of new crops, which resulted in \$389,000 direct payments to farmers. Mr. Ball stated that BADC wants to expand statewide engagement and participation through partnerships and secure additional funding.

In response to Chair Howell, Mr. Ball said the challenge grant program is a 50-50 match. Companies must submit an outline of what the project entails and how it plans to spend the dollars.

In response to Representative Aull, Mayor Gorton said there are no guidelines as to how many grant funds are designated for any one area, but the dollars raised for Fayette County stay in Fayette County, and the funds obtained from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF) are used for projects across the state.

In response to Representative Moore, Mr. Ball said the funding for BADC is from the KADF. The grant agreement for the selected companies includes a clause that they must stay in Kentucky for two years.

In response to Chair Howell, Mr. Ball said there is a clawback clause in the agreement.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.