

TOBACCO SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT FUND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes

June 12, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee was held on June 12, 2025, at 10:30 AM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex.

Representative Michael Sarge Pollock, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Jason Howell, Co-Chair; Representative Michael Sarge Pollock, Co-Chair; Senators Amanda Mays Bledsoe and Craig Richardson; Representatives Myron Dossett, Daniel Fister, Erika Hancock, Kim King, and Rachel Roarx.

Guests: Brandon Reed, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy (KOAP); Bill McCloskey, Deputy Executive Director, KOAP; Myrissa Christy, Executive Director, Community Farm Alliance (CFA); Jamie Fitzwater, Director, Kentucky Double Dollars; Melissa McDonald, Executive Director, Feeding Kentucky; and Sarah Vaughn, Programs Director, Feeding Kentucky.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, and Rachel Hartley.

Approval of minutes for the meeting of May 22, 2025

A motion to approve the May meeting minutes was made by Senator Howell and seconded by Representative Roarx. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Report on the projects considered for funding by the Agricultural Development Board

Brandon Reed, Executive Director, KOAP, updated the committee on various events and site visits in May. Mr. Reed also stated the Kentucky Historical Society is hosting KOAP on June 20, 2025, to celebrate 25 years since the passage of House Bill 611.

In May 2025, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board (KADB) approved \$4.3 million in funds, and the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation approved \$3.4 million in funds.

Bill McCloskey, Deputy Executive Director, KOAP, highlighted the following projects approved by KADB:

- Bourbon County Fire and Rescue was approved for \$10,000 in Bourbon County funds to purchase grain rescue equipment.
- The Kentucky Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (KCARD) was approved for \$837,000 in state funds to aid and expand its services.
- Mount Vernon Animal Clinic, LLC was approved for \$66,115 in state funds and \$13,327 in Rockcastle County funds to purchase veterinary medical equipment.

In response to Representative Roarx, Mr. McCloskey said there have been discussions with Auburn University about adjusting its selection process to the veterinary school. There is a need for more large animal veterinarians.

Senator Howell stated Kentucky could control the selection process if it had a state university with a veterinary program.

In response to Representative Pollock, Mr. McCloskey stated constituents can contact KCARD through an extension office.

Update from Community Farm Alliance and Kentucky Double Dollars

Myrisa Christy, Executive Director, CFA, stated CFA formed during the farm credit crisis of the 1980s and it supports family-scale farming. Kentucky Double Dollars doubles federal incentives, such as the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infant, Children (WIC) program, at farmers markets and retail outlets.

FreshRX for Moms now includes WIC eligible recipients, not just pregnant mothers. CFA is piloting several new programs including a delivery and box bundle program, a certified roadside stand program, and a senior health bucks program. CFA is matching KADF funds with over \$2.2 million in federal and private funds.

The total economic impact of CFA's programs is \$4.5 million, with \$2.7 million paid directly to farmers. CFA has served up to 1,500 farmers across 80 farmers markets, and 86 percent of surveyed farms reported increased sales.

In response to Representative Roarx, Ms. Christy stated “farmgate” refers to dollars going directly to the farmer. The biggest impact to CFA funding would be if there were dramatic cuts to SNAP. CFA would not have funds to match. Jamie Fitzwater, Director, Kentucky Double Dollars, stated Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program funding has been canceled in other states, but funding remains in Kentucky due to a strong agricultural presence.

Update from Feeding Kentucky

Melissa McDonald, Executive Director, Feeding Kentucky, stated they are the state’s largest charitable organization, supporting seven food banks across 120 counties. The food banks serve approximately 1,000 partner agencies such as church pantries, soup kitchens, and school pantries.

Food insecurity impacts 16.6 percent of Kentuckians and four Kentucky counties are in the top 10 nationally of most food insecure counties. One in three children in some eastern Kentucky areas are food insecure.

Sarah Vaughn, Programs Director, Feeding Kentucky, stated for more than a decade, Farms to Food Banks has helped Kentucky farmers deliver surplus produce to families in need. From 2011 to 2024, 37.2 million pounds of Kentucky-grown produce has been distributed, 4,473 farmers have been supported, and \$8.9 million has been reimbursed to Kentucky farmers. Ms. Vaughn gave a brief overview of the process for farmers to utilize Farms to Food Banks.

Ms. McDonald stated the Kentucky Kids Eat program increases access to school breakfast and lunch, summer meals, and afterschool meals to ensure kids have access to healthy food year-round.

In March 2025, Feeding Kentucky became the administrator for the Kentucky Food Action Network, which is a collective of individuals and organizations creating accessible and resilient food systems that prioritize the health of Kentuckians.

In response to Representative Roarx, Ms. Vaughn stated food insecurity is defined as lack of consistent access to reliable, nutritious food sources.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.