



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Situation Analysis Report

Appomattox

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

Bruce Jones, Unit Coordinator, Senior Extension Agent, ANR – Crop and Soil Science

Bonnie Tillotson, Extension Agent, 4-H

Rebecca Bruce, UAA

Appomattox Extension Leadership Council

Jack Goin

Jody Purches

Bob Martin

Introduction

A situational analysis review was conducted for the Appomattox County Extension Unit during 2018. Situation analysis reports from 2004, 2008 and 2013 for the Appomattox office 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 and offered for county citizens either on-line or hard copy. This survey was advertised using the Facebook webpage for the Appomattox Extension Office and additionally advertised to County Administration and local partners including 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 additionally utilized the survey as a framework for a focus group discussion. Survey results will be presented to the Appomattox Board of Supervisors during a March budgetary hearing meeting.

Unit Profile

Appomattox County is located in the Central Piedmont region of Virginia. The county is 333.7 square miles and has 47 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 slightly increased (5.8 percent) from 14,820 in 2011 to 15,681 in 2017. Approximately 21.5 percent of the population is under the age of 18 while 20.4 percent of the population is 65 or older. The remaining 58 percent of the population falls between the ages of 20 and 64. Females comprise 58.1 percent of the population while males comprise 48.6 percent.

The racial makeup of Appomattox County includes 19.2 percent African American and 76.9 percent Caucasian. The remaining 3.9 percent of the population includes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin and also persons reporting more than one race.

The median household income in Appomattox County was \$52,134 in 2016 compared to \$47,992 in 2011. The largest share of households reports an income in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 range. Approximately 16.6 percent of the population is below poverty level compared with 11 percent for Virginia. The unemployment rate decreased to 3.1 percent in December 2018 compared to 7.4 percent in 2013. Of the population, 84.9 percent are high school graduates and 20.6 percent have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

There were 9 teenage pregnancies in 2015 compared to 24 teenage pregnancies in 2011 (62.5 percent reduction). The teen pregnancy rate per 1000 individuals reduced from 30.7 in 2002; 26.6 in 2011; to 20 in 2015. Low birth rate affects 7.8 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; and in 2016, the median age was 42.8.

Approximately 11.8 percent of the county population does not have health insurance. Adult obesity has decreased from 32 percent in 2013 to 29.9 percent in 2016. Diabetes affects 11 percent of the population.

Agriculture is a vital part of the Appomattox County economy. The 2012 Census of Agriculture places the value of farm sales at \$12,623,000 compared to \$7,461,000 in 2007 and \$6,682,000 in 2002. This higher value is related primarily to higher livestock and grain prices. The livestock industry provided 84 percent of the farm sales in 2007 and 65 percent of farm sales in 2012. The county had 410 reported farms in 2012 compared to 323 farms in 2007. The average farm size remains at 235 acres although the number of farms increased.

From 2002 to 2007, government payments to Appomattox farm owners decreased 18 percent from \$256,000 to \$209,000, but payments increased 76 percent to \$367,000 from 2007 to 2012. The average per farm payment increased 28 percent from \$2,321 to \$2,981.

Farmland in Appomattox County decreased from 84,971 acres in 2002 to 75,874 acres in 2007 (11 percent decline), but increased from 75,874 acres in 2007 to 96,299 acres in 2012 (27 percent increase). Approximately 29.8 percent of land is used for cropland, 34 percent is used for woodland, 31.8 percent used for pasture and 4.5 percent for other uses.

Approximately 43 percent (178 of 410) of farms derive their primary 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 and to 60.6 in 2012. Eighty five percent of principal farm operators continue to be male.

The County has three operating dairies, two Holstein and one Jersey. Most farms include a beef cattle component. Row crops include organic tobacco, fire-cured tobacco, burley tobacco, corn, soybeans, wheat and forages. 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. Estimated acreage of 2018 crops include 900 acres of wheat, 1100 acres of corn, 30 acres of organic tobacco and an increase in hay acreage. Interest in conservation practices focusing on livestock exclusion from natural water ways and the use of well water for livestock consumption has increased substantially related to governmental cost-share opportunities.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The Qualtrics survey questions were developed to coincide with the four educational programming areas of Virginia Cooperative Extension. The program areas include ANR (Agriculture and Natural Resources), FCS (Family and Consumer Sciences), 4-H and Youth Development, and Community Viability. Participants were asked to rank the importance of

each program area using a 0 to 10 number system with 10 being the highest. They were also asked to list their issues or concerns related to each program area for Appomattox County.

ANR (Agriculture and Natural Resources) Issue Identification

The numerical rating of the importance of ANR issues was 8.9. Identified issues included: improved agricultural product marketing; plant health/disease; education on general row crops, forages and new crop opportunities; pesticide education; cattle health and management; timber preservation; timber management; farm safety; general public agricultural awareness; the need for a local farmer's markets; low farm profitability; long term sustainability of farms; land management, use and taxation; the lack of dependable farm labor; the need for more local job opportunities in agriculture; continued conservation adoption; the need for more cost-share funding opportunities for farm improvement and conservation; organic gardening; healthy eating and gardening; and the need for more agricultural education of youth. The need for an agricultural industry such as a milk plant or an industrial hemp processor was identified to increase and support local farm opportunities. The issue mentioned the most was reduced farm profitability followed by agricultural awareness and education.

FCS (Family and Consumer Science) Issue Identification

The numerical rating of the importance of Family and Consumer Sciences issues was 7.2. Identified issues included: the need for more parenting classes; teen pregnancy prevention; support groups for family crisis management (miscarriages, divorce, etc.); financial management; dealing with stress; health (diabetes, obesity and heart disease); drugs; food safety; Farmer's Markets; healthy eating; senior adult care; senior activities; and the need for more family food preparation/cooking education. The issue mentioned the most was financial management followed by health (diabetes, obesity and heart disease).

4-H and Youth Development Issue Identification

The numerical rating of the importance of 4-H and Youth Development issues was 8.5. Identified issues included: the need for more after-school activities; life skill education; positive youth activities; natural resource education; in-school 4-H clubs and classes; summer program availability; safety and emergency preparedness; career education; drug prevention education; gang education; leadership development; increased youth agricultural education; increased cooperation between FFA (Future Farmers of America) and 4-H; and mentoring. The issue identified the most was the need for after-school activities followed by career education.

Community Viability Issue Identification

The numerical rating of the importance of Community Viability issues was 6.7. Identified issues included: the need for business start-up education; business education/mentoring; leadership training; improved tourism; food deserts; volunteer management; reducing volunteer burn-out; and the need for more recruiting of volunteers regarding fire departments,

rescue squads and other organizations. The issue identified the most was business start-up education followed by leadership training.

Priority Issues

Although some identified issues are beyond the scope of Virginia Cooperative Extension educational programs, many of the identified issues are currently being addressed or can be addressed with Virginia Cooperative Extension resources.

Issue 1: Improving Farm Profitability and Sustainability

The lower income level of farms due to falling commodity and cattle prices is affecting many farm families. Stress levels are increasing and there is little short-term hope for price improvement. Identified topics that could be included in this major issue include educational programming in crop production, new crop identification, pesticide education, livestock production, plant health and others. This is a broad ranging topic that can be addressed on many fronts. Although primarily an ANR issue, the other three program areas can help address this as well. Youth education regarding agriculture can assist farm youth regarding new ventures and novel ideas. The FCS program can assist with stress management and financial management education. The Community Viability program can help with information on business/enterprise development.

Issue 2: After school activities

The 4-H and ANR program currently include many after-school activities. Both agents are involved with Spring and Fall After-school academies at the Appomattox Elementary School. The 4-H in-school presence is very strong in both the public and private Appomattox County schools. There are numerous after school or evening 4-H clubs which include Fun with Foods, Hand Bells, Shooting Sports, Livestock, and Horse and Pony. Time, available volunteers and limited resources preclude further expansion of activities.

Issue 3: Local Foods, More Farmer's Market and Better Nutrition

Food security, food safety and nutrition encompass the program areas of ANR, 4-H and FCS. Community Viability could also play in role regarding new business start-ups in this sector. Cooking education. Increased interest in home food preservation has led to the organizing of a canning workshop in 2019 and many informational requests on home gardening and reduced pesticide gardening. This area could include new business start-ups, food preparation education for families, healthy eating and therefore improved overall personal health.

Issue 4: Agricultural Awareness and Literacy

This area continues to gain attention. The Appomattox Extension Office can utilize the local newspapers more frequently to gain publicity for programs and youth recognition. The Extension Office currently partners with numerous organizations and sister agencies to conduct programming in the County. The office assists the local Farm Bureau with dairy month activities in June, book readings in the schools to celebrate Agriculture Literacy Week in March and other community functions as they arise. Partnerships with the Appomattox FFA can help reach additional youth and their families as well. The 4-H horse club and livestock club compete at state level events which broaden the experience of the youth. A first-time event held in 2018 was a Young Farmer Day held at the Appomattox Elementary School. Although an inaugural event, the school principal and teacher were very pleased and have requested this become an annual event. The 4-H and ANR agent also routinely assist the Appomattox Primary School with Little Farmer Day which is primarily organized by the Appomattox FFA.

Issue 5: Career Education/Leadership Preparation

Career education is addressed by the current 4-H Reality Store held at the Appomattox High School. The 4-H agent will initiate more discussion with the organizing teachers to expand upon this identified issue. The ANR agent routinely assists with this program and regularly visits the agriculture classes. The 4-H public speaking focus in Appomattox County schools helps address the leadership development concerns and helps prepare youth for interaction with others in job opportunities.