An action plan for economic development through agriculture in Eastern Kentucky

James R. Comer
Commissioner of Agriculture
Commonwealth of Kentucky
Appalachia Proud: Mountains of Potential

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INTRODUCING
“APPALACHIA PROUD:
MOUNTAINS OF POTENTIAL”

A NEW REGIONAL “KENTUCKY PROUD” BRAND SHOWCASING THE BEST OF EASTERN KENTUCKY

Kentucky Proud is commonly referred to as the “most successful marketing initiative in the history of the Commonwealth.” It has come to symbolize everything we hold dear as Kentuckians: hard work, quality products, and a sense of community. During my time as Commissioner of Agriculture, we have expanded this brand to include such programs as Homegrown by Heroes, which celebrates our military veteran farmers, and Udderly Kentucky milk, a commodity-specific brand that puts millions of new dollars in the hands of our dairy farmers. Now, for the first time in history, Kentucky Proud will include a regional brand — Appalachia Proud: Mountains of Potential.

This idea was inspired by two years of travel across Eastern Kentucky and countless conversations with farmers, agribusiness owners, and other local business leaders throughout the region. What became abundantly clear is that Appalachia is a special place with untapped potential, particularly in the areas of agriculture, food production, and agritourism. When you marry untapped resources with a workforce that has an unbreakable spirit, the possibilities are endless. Most people don’t know that Eastern Kentucky is already home to one of the largest tomato producers in the Commonwealth, one of the few heifer development operations located on a strip mine, and some of the most beautiful orchards in the world. Our hope is that, through the launch of “Appalachia Proud,” now they will.

The report that follows details our travels throughout Eastern Kentucky, highlights unique farming enterprises, includes current agriculture and economic development data, and offers recommendations and specific ideas to improve the state of agriculture and the tourism economy for the region. Our goal is to shine a bright light on the existing success stories of Appalachia and to build on them for the next generation of Eastern Kentuckians. Please join me in welcoming to the Kentucky Proud family “Appalachia Proud: Mountains of Potential.”

Sincerely,

James R. Comer
Commissioner of Agriculture
Commonwealth of Kentucky
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $15.6 million
- Bath County boasts one of the largest farmers’ market pavilions in the state.
- Custom Food Products announced a $44 million expansion in September 2013 that is projected to create 200 new jobs.
- Bath County farmers raised 1.65 million pounds of burley tobacco in 2012.

Noteworthy Bath County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Bath County Farmers’ Market
- French Club Lambs
- Good Shepherd Cheese
- Kentucky Market Pavilion
- Sheltowee Farms
- Lanette Freitag — sheep, llama, alpaca producer, fiber artist

Bath County had an estimated 27,000 head of cattle as of Jan. 1, 2013.
- Bath County farmers produced 45,000 tons of hay other than alfalfa in 2012.
- Bath County High School has an FFA chapter.

At Bath County town hall meetings, former Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association president and local farmer Mike Bach discussed with Commissioner Comer how to get more Kentucky-grown beef into the Owingsville processing facility that supplies many Arby’s franchises.

Bath County at a glance

- 2012 population: 11,802
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................ $29,632 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 30.4% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 1.8% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

Noteworthy Bath County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Bath County Farmers’ Market
- French Club Lambs
- Good Shepherd Cheese
- Kentucky Market Pavilion
- Sheltowee Farms
- Lanette Freitag — sheep, llama, alpaca producer, fiber artist

County Extension Agent: GARY HAMILTON

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Bell County

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $361,000
- Bell County High School has an FFA chapter.

Noteworthy Bell County Kentucky Proud members:
- Clover Creek Farm
- Henderson Settlement
- Laymon Produce
- Morgan Stables
- Pursifull Farm
- Red Bird Mission Food Security Project/Farmers’ Market

Bell County at a glance

- 2012 population: 20,183
- Median household income, 2008-2012 .......... $25,952 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012....... 33.5% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 3.2% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

Among the topics discussed when Commissioner Comer hosted an agriculture town hall meeting was a community garden in the county, the demand for organic products, and the viability of timber as an agricultural commodity.

County Extension Agent:

STACY WHITE

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $1.047 million
- The Kentucky Alternative Livestock Association in Rush received a Promotional Grant in 2011.
- The first 4-H Horse College in Kentucky was offered in Boyd County.
- Ashland Independent School System started serving locally sourced ground beef to students last year.
- Boyd County has two FFA chapters.

Noteworthy Boyd County Kentucky Proud members:

- Boyd County Farmers’ Market
- Fairview Independent Schools
- Forgiven Acres Farm
- LeMaster Stables
- Miller’s Custom Meat
- Straight Creek Farm

Boyd County at a glance

- 2012 population: 49,164
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $39,076 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 19.2% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 0.8% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)
Breathitt County

Commissioner Comer met with Arch Sebastian and toured his beef cattle farm (all of Sebastian’s breeding stock came from the East Kentucky Replacement Heifer Sale and were developed in Perry County on a reclaimed strip mine at D&D Ranch). Commissioner Comer also led an agriculture town hall meeting at the Breathitt County Extension Office, stopped by the Quicksand Research Station, and visited with Jo Wolfe, who conducts ginseng monitoring.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $1.216 million
- Quicksand Farmers’ Market built a 40-by-80-foot shelter with funding from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Breathitt County Farm Bureau, Breathitt County Ag Development Council, and the Breathitt County Extension District Board in 2013. Four other farmers’ markets were set up in churches in the county.
- Breathitt and Wolfe County Extension jointly provided a series on backyard poultry production.
- Breathitt County High School has an FFA chapter.

Noteworthy Breathitt County Kentucky Proud members and farmers:

- UK Robinson Center Farmers’ Market
- Arch Sebastian

Breathitt County at a glance

- 2012 population: 13,635
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................... $23,049 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 31.4% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 0.4% from 2010-2011 (matching the 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer celebrated the Grand Opening of the new Carter County Extension Office, toured the East Carter High School FFA Land Lab sorghum field, visited with agriculture students, and held a town hall meeting at Carter County Farm Bureau.

**Carter County at a glance**

- **2012 population:** 27,348
- **Median household income, 2008-2012:** $35,415 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- **Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012:** 20.4% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- **Private non-farm employment decreased 0.9% from 2010-2011** (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $5.8 million
- The new Carter County Extension Office held a Grand Opening in December 2012.
- An FFA Land Lab sorghum field is being tended by East Carter High School students.

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**Noteworthy Carter County Kentucky Proud members:**

- Rock Springs Winery
- Garden Gate Greenhouse
- Valley of Hope Farm
- Fallen Rock Farm
- Last Frontier Farms

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County Extension Agent: MYRON EVANS
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $3.974 million
- Clay County farmers grew 640,000 pounds of burley tobacco in 2012.
- Oneida Baptist Institute, a Kentucky Proud member, has a school farm and an FFA chapter.
- Extension hosted six Plate It Up cooking schools last year.
- Extension holds Ag Awareness Days and Environmental Camps at Oneida Baptist.
- Clay County Community Farmers’ Market is a small, growing farmers’ market

Noteworthy Clay County
Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Old Homeplace Farm
- Oneida Baptist Institute
- Raleigh Frazier
- Frank Jones
- Lauren Rudolph
- Brian Jackson
- Roy Jarvis

Clay County at a glance

- 2012 population: 21,556
- Median household income, 2008-2012 .............. $22,296 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 34.5% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

County Extension Agent:

JEFFREY CASADA

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Elliott County

Commissioner Comer at the Elliott County Farmers’ Market.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010) — $2.469 million
- The Elliott County Fair had its eighth annual run in 2013. The livestock sale set a record in its first year in the new livestock building. The fair added a horse show with 87 entries.
- In 2009, Foothills Eco-Agritourism Inc. (FEAT) and the Elliott County Extension Service received a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Grant from the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
- Agricultural Extension Agents in Morgan, Wolfe, Menifee, and Elliott counties mobilized to provide critical assistance to approximately 450 farm families in Morgan and surrounding counties following the devastating tornadoes that struck the area in 2012.

Noteworthy Bath County
Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Elliott County Farmers’ Market
- Tracy Kitchen
- Glenn Skaggs

Elliott County at a glance

- 2012 population: 7,780
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $24,841 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 33.7% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 6.9% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% for the state)

County Extension Agent: MARY McCARTY

★ - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer met with County Judge-Executive Wallace C. Taylor, a part-time farmer and cattleman, to talk about what the Kentucky Department of Agriculture could do to promote Estill County agriculture.

**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $3,818 million
- Commissioner Comer also attended a cookout and toured the high school greenhouses with Estill County FFA.

**Noteworthy Estill County Kentucky Proud members:**

- Beckley Herefords
- Estill County Schools
- Estill County Farmers’ Market
- Snug Hollow Farm Bed & Breakfast

**Estill County at a glance**

- 2012 population: 14,493
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $28,684 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 26.1% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 1.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

**County Extension Agent:**

ERIC BAKER

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Floyd County

Commissioner Comer attended the grand opening of the new Floyd County Extension Service office and toured their commercial kitchen.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $581,000
- Dwight Slone of Prestonsburg exhibited the highest-weight pumpkin, a 1,034-pound gourd, at the 2013 Kentucky State Fair.

Noteworthy Floyd County Kentucky Proud members:

- Appalachian Meats
- Floyd County Farmers’ Market
- Prince Albert Stables
- HF Farms

Floyd County at a glance

- 2012 population: 38,949
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. $29,237 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 28.1% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 0.6% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

County Extension Agent: KEITH HACKWORTH

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting at Imel’s Greenhouse, a greenhouse, landscaping, and vegetable business and agritourism destination.

**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $5,067 million

- Greenup County Extension Services and Farm Bureau have collaborated annually for more than a decade to host the Great Agriculture Adventure. The adventure is a day-long activity to educate school teachers and their students about all aspects of agriculture.

- Greenup County schools have developed their own mobile agriculture classroom and milkable fiberglass cow.

**Noteworthy Greenup County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:**

- Asgaard Farm and Kennels
- Greenup County Board of Education
- Greenup County Farmers’ Market
- Bennett Mills Farm
- Imel’s Greenhouse

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**Greenup County at a glance**

- 2012 population: 36,707
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $43,808 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 16.6% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 1.1% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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Commissioner Comer visited the National Guard ChalleNGe Academy in December 2013 and saw the student-grown raised-bed gardens. Commissioner Comer also visited Terry Creech’s apple orchard atop Black Mountain, Kentucky’s highest point.

**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — **$109,000**
- Hundreds of students, teachers, and volunteers participate in the annual 4-H Environmental Camp at Martin’s Fork Lake.
- James A. Cawood High School has an FFA chapter.

**Noteworthy Harlan County Kentucky Proud members:**
- Harlan Independent School
- Apple Tree Orchards

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**Harlan County at a glance**

- 2012 population: **28,543**
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. **$26,758** (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 32.5% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased **0.9%** from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Agriculture highlights

● Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $5.773 million

● Jackson County farmers produced 495,000 pounds of burley tobacco in 2012

● FFA and Family and Consumer Science students at Jackson County High School made “Jammin’ With the Generals” strawberry jam at the Jackson County Regional Food Center.

Noteworthy Jackson County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

● Blake’s Natural Foods
● Home Pickins
● Jackson County High School
● Jackson County Farmers’ Market
● Shannon V. Jewell
● Sturgeon Creek Farm
● Truett’s Pumpkin Patch
● Jackson County Regional Food Center

Jackson County at a glance

- 2012 population: 13,331

- Median household income, 2008-2012 .................. $22,213 (compared with $42,610 for the state)

- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 33.8% (compared with 18.6% for the state)

- Private non-farm employment decreased 2.4% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

In addition to speaking to a packed house at the Jackson County Farm Bureau banquet, Commissioner Comer visited the Jackson County Farmers’ Markets in McKee and Annville, which showcase Kentucky Proud baked goods, fruits, vegetables, jams and jellies.

The Commissioner also visited the Jackson County Regional Food Center in Annville, a certified commercial kitchen operating for shared-use purposes and as a resource for new food businesses/entrepreneurs to produce small batches.

County Extension Agent: 
JEFF HENDERSON

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer met with County Judge-Executive Tucker Daniel in December 2013 to discuss an agriculture-related economic development prospect and talk about how the Kentucky Department of Agriculture can better serve Johnson County agriculture. In June 2012, Commissioner Comer met with local officials to encourage them to participate in the Kentucky Proud Farm to School Program.

**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $689,000
- Johnson County has a stockyard in Paintsville.
- Johnson Central High School has an FFA chapter.

**Noteworthy Johnson County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:**

- Holy Mountain Farm
- Johnson County Farmers’ Market
- Helton’s Custom Meats
- Black Barn Produce
- Gary and April Davis Farm
- Mike Ferguson
- Jack Holbrook
- James Davis and Jim Patton
- Gary Davis
- Younce family

**Johnson County at a glance**

- 2012 population: 23,383
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $34,466
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 22.6%
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 1.8% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

- 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.

County Extension Agent:

BRIAN JEFFIERS
Commissioner Comer visited with Rep. John Short to discuss agriculture topics such as Farm to School and Farmers’ Markets. Comer toured the Knott County Trail Ride, which is the biggest trail ride in the state.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $262,000
- Weekly Agricultural Commodity Trade Day completed its third year in 2013.
- Two local schools were awarded Grow Appalachia grants to expand local gardens. The Lotts Creek Community School grant is assisting 40 families, and a new grant for Hindman Settlement School is expected to assist 50 families.

Noteworthy Knott County Kentucky Proud members:

- Jeremy Goodson
- Vanison Ritchie
- Adrian Hall
- Childers Brothers Farm Supply

Knott County at a glance

- 2012 population: 16,124
- Median household income, 2008-2012 .............. $32,482 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 24.1% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 4.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Knox County

Commissioner Comer met with the Food Service Director and School Superintendent to discuss the Farm To School Program and the need for healthy, local food in the schools.

In December 2013, Commissioner Comer hosted an agriculture town hall meeting at the Knox County Extension Office. Many farmers, FFA and 4-H members, and local officials attended the meeting.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $2.831 million

Noteworthy Knox County Kentucky Proud members:

- I C Nubians
- Mitchell Foods
- Historic McNeil's Crossing
- Spread the Health Appalachia

County Extension Agent:

ROBERT WAYNE KIRBY

Knox County at a glance

- 2012 population: 31,735
- Median household income, 2008-2012 $24,193 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 35.9% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 3.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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Laurel County

Commissioner Comer visited Laurel County in February 2014 to promote the voluntary donation motorists may give when they renew their farm license plates. In previous years, Commissioner Comer visited both stockyards in the county, held an agriculture town hall meeting at the Laurel County Extension Office, and spoke to the local Optimist Club.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $10.66 million
- Laurel County farmers grew more corn and soybeans in 2013 than in any of the past 10 years.
- 700 FFA and 4-H members are involved in agriculture-related projects.

Noteworthy Laurel County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- London-Laurel County Farmers’ Market
- Rock Bottom Stables & Soap Co.
- Sustainable Harvest Farm
- Hill View Stables
- Sheldon and Robert Hale
- Donnie Lewis
- Brent Cornett
- John Scoville
- Joey, Melissa, and Donnie Massey
- Laurel County has two FFA chapters.
- Laurel County has three veterinary clinics, two livestock markets, and a livestock gathering point.

Laurel County at a glance

- 2012 population: 59,462
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................... $36,835 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 20.1 % (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 1.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer visited Louisa Elementary School West to see a hatching at a student incubation project. He encouraged the students to investigate and learn more about where their food comes from. The Commissioner also keynoted the 2012 Soil Conservation District Dinner.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – **$1.773 million**

- Extension hosted the Heritage Harvest Tour, a driving tour of farms and other agriculture-related attractions, in late September. The Heritage Harvest Tour took visitors to agritourism destinations in Lawrence, Carter, and Boyd counties.

- Lawrence County High School has an FFA chapter.

Noteworthy Lawrence County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Lawrence County Farmers’ Market
- 4 Got N Tymes Farm
- Jay Sexton
- Wanda and Stewart Blevins
- Wesley Vanhorn
- Frank Blevins
- Savage Farms

**Lawrence County at a glance**

- 2012 population: **15,848**

- Median household income, 2008-2012 .................. **$32,622** (compared with $42,610 for the state)

- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... **26.9%** (compared with 18.6% for the state)

- Private non-farm employment decreased **0.9%** from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Lee County

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $1.220 million
- Lee County has an FFA chapter.
- The local 4-H chapter makes salsa using local products and sells it as a fundraiser.
- Several local farms offer cabin rentals.

Noteworthy Lee County Kentucky Proud members:

- KD’s Homemade Barbecue Sauce
- Lee County Schools
- Mountain Farmers’ Market
- Old Landing Farm
- Don Perkins Greenhouses

Lee County at a glance

- 2012 population: 7,706
- Median household income, 2008-2012 .................. $22,789 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ...... 36.9% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 7.2% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

Commissioner Comer visited the Don Perkins Greenhouses, which produce hydroponic tomatoes. Perkins is one of the largest tomato producers in Kentucky, supplying many grocery stores. Natural gas wells on the property provide enough heating to make year-round operation possible. The greenhouse has been lauded for “perfect” looking and “extraordinary” tasting products.

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
The Commissioner visited Thunder Ridge Surface Mine Bee Hives, a project administered through Eastern Kentucky University by Dr. Tammy Horn and Coal Country Beeworks. CCB partners with coal companies to plant nectar-producing plants on reclaimed coal mine sites, promoting development of honey bees.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $32,000
- 4-H members are involved with chickens, rabbits, country hams, and other projects.
- Local farmers graze cattle on renovated strip mines.
- Coal severance money has been used to purchase a small seed drill for deer plots and equipment for gardeners.
- Leslie County is the home of the Osborne Brothers Bluegrass Festival and Hazard Community and Technical College’s School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music. Community leaders are working with private and corporate groups to launch a multi-level initiative focused on creating strong and sustainable communities using strategic housing, tourism, the arts, and agriculture.

Leslie County at a glance

- 2012 population: 11,170
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. $26,386 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 21.1% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 4.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

County Extension Agent: RAY WILSON

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $151,000
- Letcher County hosts the East Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference.
- Letcher County does not have an FFA chapter.

**Noteworthy Letcher County Kentucky Proud members:**

- Highland Winery
- Letcher County Farmers’ Market
- Letcher County Schools
- Fisher Farm
- N&S Farm
- Pine Mountain Grill
- Pine Mountain Paso Finos

**Letcher County at a glance**

- 2012 population: 23,952
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. $29,532 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 25.7% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 0.1% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

County Extension Agent:

**SHAD BAKER**

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Lewis County

The Commissioner visited Big Barn Farm Store, owned by the Bentley family. The all-purpose farm store sells feed, tools, equipment, fencing materials, and farm supplies. At right is Rep. Jill York.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $9.881 million
- Lewis County farmers are producing high-tunnel strawberries and watercress. Rip’s Farm Center operates a soybean seed treatment facility. Garrison Meats is a custom meat packer.
- Lewis County has an FFA chapter.

Noteworthy Lewis County Kentucky Proud members:

- Lewis County Farmers’ Market
- Applegate Boer Goats
- Donny Ray Butler
- Green Hillbilly Farm
- David Jefferson
- Kegley Produce Farm
- Laurel Creek Farm
- Owens Farm
- Red Cedar Icelandics
- Rigdon Farm
- Zornes Farm

Lewis County at a glance

- 2012 population: 13,835
- Median household income, 2008-2012 .................. $27,311
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 31.7%
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 3.8% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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Commissioner Comer discussed Lewis County’s agricultural needs with local officials including County Judge-Executive Todd Ruckel (second from left).

County Extension Agent: PHILIP KONOPKA
Commissioner Comer launched the Kentucky Proud Farm to Campus program at Eastern Kentucky University in April 2013. On the same day, he toured the Berea College farm and participated in a planning meeting for the Berea Farm Store. He went back to Richmond in July for a public meeting at the Blue Grass Stockyards. In other trips to Madison County, Commissioner Comer toured Tri County Fertilizer, a Madison County feed store since the early 1900s owned by Kevin Fields, president of the Agribusiness Association of Kentucky, and stopped at the county clerk’s office to promote the voluntary donation that motorists may make when they renew their farm license plates.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $23,164 million
- Home of the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center heirloom seed swap
- Thirty students from the FFA chapters at Madison Central and Madison Southern High Schools are active in FFA ag projects. Seventy-five are active in 4-H ag projects.
- Richmond will host the Eastern Apicultural Society Conference July 27 - Aug. 1.
- Madison County holds an annual Top of the Crop Bred Heifer sale, with help from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.
The Commissioner toured Tri County Fertilizer in Richmond, a Madison County feed store since the early 1900s. Tri County is owned by Kevin Fields, president of the Agribusiness Association of Kentucky.

Noteworthy Madison County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Acres of Land Winery
- Baldwin Farms
- Berea College
- Berea Community Independent School
- Berea Farmers’ Market
- Billy Glen Turpin
- Blue Grass Stockyards
- Blue Moon Farm
- Chenault Land & Cattle
- Coal Country Beeworks — Dr. Tammy Horn — author, beekeeper, Eastern Kentucky University apiculturist
- Eastern Kentucky University — Farm To Campus member
- Gaining Ground Farm — Michael Lewis, director, Growing Warriors; founding member, Homegrown by Heroes
- Grow Appalachia — nonprofit founded by John Paul DeForia, co-founder and CEO of Paul Mitchell Products, to promote agriculture in Appalachia
- Heron’s Landing Angus Farm
- Kentucky Hereford Association
- Isbell/Smith Farm Fresh Produce
- Lynne Brooke Farm
- Madison County Farmers’ Market
- Madison County Schools
- Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED)
- River Hill Ranch (Alvina Maynard, member, Homegrown by Heroes)
- Salamander Springs Farm
- Single Tree Farm
- Sycamore Springs Farm
- Eddie and Tammy Warren
- Commissioner Comer held a public meeting at Bluegrass Stockyards on infection control and other challenges faced by livestock producers.

* 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Largest cities:

- 2012 population: 13,341

Noteworthy Magoffin County members of Kentucky Proud:

- Don Gardner
- McCarty Farm
- Sweet Dreams Farm

Magoffin County at a glance

- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $25,461 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 33.5% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 1.7% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $1.406 million

- Tobacco production in Magoffin County has gone from more than 350 acres before the tobacco quota buyout to about 20 acres today, and corn acreage has fallen in recent years from 1,200 acres to fewer than 100 acres. Most of what used to be tobacco and corn fields are now in hay. Much of the pasture land in the county is on hillsides and strip mines.

- Agricultural Development Fund money in Magoffin County has been used for hay structures and equipment, fencing, livestock genetics and handling facilities, projects for the local beekeeping association, and two new greenhouses.

- Magoffin County High School has an FFA chapter.

- The county agriculture development council funded 50-50 cost share grants totaling $169,624.37 from October 2012 to October 2013.

Commissioner Comer visited the Magoffin County Extension Office and spoke at the Magoffin County Soil Conservation Banquet. Commissioner Comer met with Stanley Holbrook, superintendent of Magoffin County Schools, in June 2012 to talk about the Farm to School Program.
Commissioner Comer fulfilled his pledge to visit all 120 Kentucky counties during 2012 when he visited Martin County in December. At a town meeting, he spoke of the possibilities of industrial hemp and noted the entrepreneurial spirit of Jim Booth, who is developing a vineyard on a strip mine.

Commissioner Comer also spoke to the Inez Deposit Bank Intern Program, which cultivates outstanding high school and college students from the region. Led by bank CEO Mike Duncan, the program has been in existence for more than 20 years.

Noteworthy Martin County Kentucky Proud member:
- Martin County Farmers’ Market

Agriculture highlights
- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $192,000
- The average farm in Martin County is 365 acres, more than twice the average farm size statewide.
- Livestock, poultry, and livestock and poultry products make up 92 percent of the total market value of agricultural products sold in the county.
- The average Martin County farmer is 47 years of age, compared with the national average of 57.

County Extension Agent: ROGER MOLLETTE

Martin County at a glance
- 2012 population: 12,743
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................ $25,340 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 35.7% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased 2.8% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
In November 2012, Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting at a coffee shop in downtown Whitley City.

**Agriculture highlights**
- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $1.054 million
- McCreary Central FFA won a silver medal in Forestry at the 2013 National FFA Convention.

**Noteworthy McCreary County Kentucky Proud members:**
- Larry King — End of the Road Farm
  Member, Growing Warriors and Homegrown By Heroes
- Farm House Inn B&B (Parkers Lake)

- 2012 population:................. 18,069
- Median household income, 2008-2012............... $21,758
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 30.8%
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 2.6% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $2,143 million

- Agricultural Extension Agents in Morgan, Wolfe, Menifee, and Elliott counties mobilized to provide critical assistance to approximately 450 farm families in Morgan and surrounding counties following the devastating tornadoes that struck the area in 2012.

Noteworthy Menifee County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Menifee County Farmers’ Market
- Hale’s Honey
- Z’s Bees Honey
- Edgar Williams
- Sam Hunt
- Kenneth Pitts
- Paul Justice
- Roger Smallwood

In September 2013, Commissioner Comer spoke to an agriculture class at Menifee County High School to encourage them to pursue careers in agriculture. He toured the ag shop and sent a letter to the Menifee County School Board in support of the construction of a new greenhouse. In September 2012, Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting at the Menifee County Extension Office.

Menifee County at a glance

- 2012 population: 6,220
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $25,988 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 31.0% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment change from 2010-2011: n/a (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.

County Extension Agent: COURTNEY JENKINS
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $13.706 million
- Montgomery County produced an estimated 1.7 million pounds of burley tobacco in 2012.
- Montgomery County had an estimated 26,000 cattle and calves as of Jan. 1, 2013.
- Montgomery County Schools’ food service director Julie Tuttle is one of the early adopters of the Farm To School Program.
- Justin Arnett of Montgomery County 4-H exhibited the reserve champion hog at the 2013 Kentucky State Fair.
- The Montgomery County High School farm is the largest high school farm in the state.

Noteworthy Montgomery County Kentucky Proud members:

- Bramble Ridge Orchard
- Townsend Sorghum Mill
  Danny Townsend, founding member, Homegrown By Heroes
- Ruth Hunt Candies
- Hickory Springs of Montgomery Daylilies

Commissioner Comer toured the Montgomery County High School farm and spoke to the Montgomery County FFA chapter. Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting in the local Extension office; members of Montgomery County’s Farm to School Junior Chef team served lunch at the meeting. Commissioner Comer also visited Townsend Sorghum, owned and operated by Danny Townsend, a founding member of Homegrown By Heroes.

Montgomery County at a glance

- 2012 population: 26,902
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $35,832 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ 25.4% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 8.1% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% for the state)

County Extension Agent: RON CATCHEN

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Morgan County

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $5 million
- The Morgan County Fair hosts the Mountain Horse Celebration and Pleasure Show.
- The West Liberty tornadoes of 2012 destroyed the Morgan County Extension Office along with numerous other buildings, houses, barns, and other structures. Agricultural Extension Agents in Morgan, Wolfe, Menifee, and Elliott counties provided critical assistance to approximately 450 farm families in Morgan and surrounding counties.
- The Morgan County 4-H Teen Club grew to 35 members in 2012 from five members five years prior.

Noteworthy Morgan County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Bryant Fork Shorthorns
- Hensley Homestead Farm
- Holbrook Brothers
- Wildheart Farm
- Morgan County Farmers’ Market
- Oldfield Farm/White Oak Pumpkin Patch
- Whitt Farms

Morgan County at a glance

- 2012 population: 13,668
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. $29,154 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... 29.1% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 1.3% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% for the state)

- 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.

Commissioner Comer visited the Holbrook Brothers Sorghum operation in West Liberty, and also visited Whitt Farms, one of the largest beef cattle operations in eastern Kentucky.

County Extension Agent:

SARAH FANNIN
**Owsley County**

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**Agriculture highlights**

- Farm cash receipts (2010*): $1.33 million
- Owsley County farmers grew 250,000 pounds of tobacco in 2012.
- Owsley County has an FFA chapter.

**Noteworthy Owsley County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:**

- Owsley County High School farm
- Owsley County Farmers’ Market
- Shadytown Farm and Greenhouse
- Southfork Farms
- Taylor Farms
- Phillip Combs
- Gus Turner Jr.
- Eugene Reed Jr.
- Wilgus Edwards
- Larry Pearson
- Virginia Callahan

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**Owsley County at a glance**

- 2012 population: **4,722**
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ................. **$19,624**
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 .......... **36.4%**
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment decreased **5.2%** from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

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* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.

Commissioner Comer toured the Owsley County High School farm and community garden in June 2013. In May 2012, Commissioner Comer and state Senate President Robert Stivers held an agriculture town hall meeting.
Commissioner Comer hosted an agriculture town hall meeting at the Perry County Extension Office in December 2013. In October 2012, Commissioner Comer toured D&D Ranch, a heifer development facility built on a reclaimed strip mine. Comer took 16 of his own heifers there.

### Agriculture highlights
- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — **$419,000**
- Perry County Extension sponsored the East Kentucky Heifer Development Program.
- Perry County Extension hosted the 4-H Appalachian Heritage Day for fourth-grade students to learn about Appalachia’s agrarian roots.
- Perry County has an FFA chapter

### Noteworthy Perry County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:
- Backwoods Farm
- East Kentucky Heifer Development Program and Sale/D&D Ranch
- Hazard-Perry County Farmers’ Market
- Perry County Schools
- Hazard/Perry County Tourism
- Holliday Farm & Garden

**Perry County at a glance**
- 2012 population: **28,241**
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... **$32,676** (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ **25.8%** (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment was **unchanged** from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer welcomed the University of Pikeville to the Kentucky Proud Farm to Campus program in a ceremony with UPIKE President James L. Hurley in December 2013. That same day, Commissioner Comer toured Pikeville High School’s raised beds and greenhouse and visited with the school’s Junior Chef team. In June 2012, Commissioner Comer spoke to Bob Bell, food director at the Pikeville Medical Center, about buying local food for the hospital and visited County Judge-Executive Wayne T. Rutherford to discuss expanding agriculture in the mountains.

University of Pikeville President James L. Hurley, left, and First Lady Tina Hurley present Agriculture Commissioner James Comer with a gift basket of UPIKE and locally made items along with a coal statue of a bear, the university’s mascot, at the announcement that UPIKE was joining the Kentucky Proud Farm to Campus Program.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $294,000

Noteworthy Pike County Kentucky Proud members:

- University of Pikeville
- Pikeville Farmers’ Market
- Pikeville High School
- Mother of a Hubbard

County Extension Agent:

SUZANNE STUMBO

Pike County at a glance

- 2012 population: 64,178
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $33,227
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 23.5%
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 0.9% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
**Powell County**

Commissioner Comer and other KDA staff served Kentucky Proud meals prepared by Sadieville caterer, veteran, and Homegrown by Heroes member Jason Noto to more than 430 soldiers of the Kentucky National Guard at the Hidden Valley Training Site near Clay City. U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond

**Agriculture highlights**

- **Farm cash receipts (2010*)** — $2.330 million

- In January 2013, Commissioner Comer met with local officials and members of Powell County FFA and 4-H to encourage motorists to make a voluntary $10 donation when they renew their farm license plates.

- Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting in Powell County in September 2012.

**Noteworthy Powell County members of Kentucky Proud**

- Anderson Farm
- April’s Beer Cheese
- Bry-Kan Farm
- McCoy Farms
- Powell County Farmers’ Market
- Reed's Creekside Farm
- Ridge Runner
- Wood Works
- TG Designs
- The Highlands

- Morgan Anderson of Powell County showed the grand champion steer at the 2013 Kentucky State Fair, becoming the first exhibitor from an Appalachian county to show a grand champion at the state fair. His steer sold at the Sale of Champions for a high bid of $23,000.

**Powell County at a glance**

- **2012 population:** 12,483

- **Median household income,**
  2008-2012 .................. $27,555
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)

- **Percent of population below poverty level,**
  2008-2012 .......... 28.9 %
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)

- Private non-farm employment
  increased 6.5% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

- 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.

County Extension Agent:
MIKE REED
Pulaski County

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $36,565 million
- Produced an estimated 1.3 million pounds of burley tobacco in 2012.
- Had an estimated 64,000 cattle and calves as of Jan. 1, 2013.
- Produced an estimated 114,000 tons of non-alfalfa hay in 2012.
- Produced more than 1 million bushels of corn and 596,000 bushels of soybeans in 2012.
- Somerset will host the Kentucky Green Living Fair March 15.

Pulaski County at a glance

- 2012 population: 63,593
- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $32,788 (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 23.3% (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 0.1% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% for the state)

Pulaski County

The Commissioner addressed the Somerset Chamber of Commerce luncheons of 2013 and 2012.

Commissioner Comer visits Baxter’s Coffee, a Kentucky Proud vendor.

County Extension Agent: RICHARD L. WHITIS

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Noteworthy Pulaski County Kentucky Proud members, farmers, and agribusinesses:

- Prairie Farms Dairy — processor for the Udderly Kentucky milk marketing program
- Haney’s Appledale Farm
- Cave Hill Vineyard
- Bobby Clue
- Cedar Creek Vineyards
- Sinking Valley Winery
- Kentucky Club Lamb Association
- Scott Dunagan Family Show Lambs
- Adkins Farms
- Briary Creek Farm
- Cundiff Red Angus
- Double T Farms
- Hancock Hamps
- Hazelbrook Farm
- Johnny B’s Barbecue
- Leaning Pine Farm
- McAlpin Family Farm
- Miss D’s Kentucky Blueberry Farm
- Mum and Pumpkin Patch
- Pulaski Growers Farmers’ Market
- Soggy Bottom Farm

- Solar Place Farm
- Somerset Farmers’ Market
- The Market on Main
- Triple T Farm and Greenhouse
- PFC Richard L. Vanover Veterans Village — non-profit assisted living facility for senior military veterans. Produces livestock, poultry, and eggs, and grows a community garden.

- Wilson’s Cedar Point Farm

Laura Hancock of Pulaski County 4-H and her 2013 Kentucky State Fair Grand Champion lamb.
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $8,644 million
- Rockcastle County produced an estimated 970,000 pounds of burley tobacco in 2012.
- Corn acreage has almost tripled and soybean acreage has more than quadrupled in Rockcastle County in the past 10 years.
- Nearly $3 million of tobacco settlement funds have been invested in Rockcastle County.

Noteworthy Rockcastle County Kentucky Proud members:

- Growing Warriors — Michael Lewis, director
- Appalachia — Science in the Public Interest
  Nonprofit resource center advocating for “sustainable development, responsible resource management, and informed personal choices”
- Allman’s Beer Cheese
- Rockcastle County Farmers’ Market
- Red Hill Horse Camp

County Extension Agent:
TOM MILLS

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Commissioner Comer welcomed Morehead State University into the Kentucky Proud Farm to Campus Program in a ceremony with MSU President Wayne D. Andrews in September 2013. Commissioner Comer toured MSU’s horticulture farm and met with university farm managers.

Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – $4.003 million
- Forestry products are a major industry in Rowan County with several established sawmills and secondary wood products industries and a new stave mill under construction.
- MSU’s Derrickson Agricultural Complex hosts the annual Kentucky Junior Livestock Expo-East.

Morehead State University President Wayne D. Andrews presents Commissioner Comer with local apples upon the university’s joining the Kentucky Proud Farm To Campus food program in September 2013.

Noteworthy Rowan County Kentucky Proud members:

- CCC Trail Vineyard
- Maple Leaf Farm
- Rowan County Farmers’ Market
- RJ Reynolds Tobacco Receiving Station

Rowan County at a glance

- 2012 population: 23,447
- Median household income, 2008-2012 $33,615
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)
- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 30%
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)
- Private non-farm employment increased 11.9% from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% for the state)

County Extension Agent:
ROBERT D. MARSH

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) — $4.184 million

- The Whitley County High School team finished third in the inaugural Farm to School Junior Chef state tournament.

Noteworthy Whitley County Kentucky Proud members:

- Jumbuck Farm
- Singing Hills Goat Farm
- Whitley Co. Farmers’ Market
- Williamsburg Custom Meats
- C&P Quality Meats
- Taulman Jackson
- Jack Clark

Whitley County at a glance

- 2012 population: 35,499

- Median household income, 2008-2012 ............... $29,876 (compared with $42,610 for the state)

- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ....... 26.3% (compared with 18.6% for the state)

- Private non-farm employment decreased 0.5% from 2010-2011 (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

In November 2013, Commissioner Comer hosted an agriculture roundtable with local officials and received a report on the status of agriculture prospects for the previous year. In November 2012, Commissioner Comer held an agriculture town hall meeting. Following the meeting, Commissioner Comer, County Judge-Executive Pat White Jr., and representatives from a local bank met with two agribusiness prospects.
Agriculture highlights

- Farm cash receipts (2010*) – **$1.624 million**

- Agricultural Extension Agents in Morgan, Wolfe, Menifee, and Elliott counties mobilized to provide critical assistance to approximately 450 farm families in Morgan and surrounding counties following the devastating tornadoes that struck the area in 2012.

- The Chop Shop is working with Critchfield Meats Inc. in Lexington to provide 100% source-verified Kentucky beef. Critchfield Meats Inc. was recently approved for a promotional grant to promote the beef sourced through this partnership.

- Wolfe County High School has an FFA chapter.

**Noteworthy Wolfe County Kentucky Proud members:**

- The Chop Shop
- KD’s BBQ Sauce
- J.R. Farms
- Rose Farm
- Wolfe County Farmers’ Market

**Wolfe County at a glance**

- 2012 population: **7,164**

- Median household income, 2008-2012 .................. **$21,168**
  (compared with $42,610 for the state)

- Percent of population below poverty level, 2008-2012 ........ **41.4%**
  (compared with 18.6% for the state)

- Private non-farm employment decreased **3.0%** from 2010-2011
  (compared with 0.4% increase for the state)

County Extension Agent:

**DANIEL WILSON**

* - 2010 is the most recent year for which county-level cash receipts are available.
I. TELLING THE STORY

As he traveled throughout Eastern Kentucky, Commissioner Comer frequently heard the call for a creative and comprehensive marketing strategy to battle inaccurate stereotypes, highlight success stories in the region, and grow the agriculture economy.

And so Appalachia Proud: Mountains of Potential was born. This new Kentucky Proud regional brand celebrates the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of the region while at the same time honoring its traditions. The logo enables consumers all over the world to immediately identify a quality product from Eastern Kentucky, whether it is a jar of jelly… a cut of beef … or a basket of apples.

Appalachia Proud is now a trademarked brand in the Kentucky Proud family and cannot be copied or used without the express written consent of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). For more information on the program and its guidelines, visit http://www.kyproud.com/appalachiaproud/ or call the KDA’s Office of Agricultural Marketing and Product Promotion at (502) 564-4983.
II. SETTING THE STAGE: ECONOMIC FREEDOM ZONES ACT OF 2013

Federal legislation sponsored by Republican Senate Leader Mitch McConnell and Senator Rand Paul

Economic Freedom Zones will revitalize struggling economies across the United States, including parts of Eastern Kentucky. For qualifying areas, Economic Freedom Zones lower taxes, enhance education, reduce regulatory burdens, and encourage charitable giving. Fundamentally, this initiative incorporates what has long been America’s greatest resource – the ability of individual communities to leverage free minds and free markets to create a more prosperous future.

Eligibility (10 year period):
• City or municipality that has officially entered Chapter 9 bankruptcy; or
• City or municipality “at risk” of bankruptcy or financial insolvency; or
• Economically depressed areas (zones) with three-month rolling average of unemployment rates 1.5 times the national average, or
• Thirty (30) percent of residents living below national poverty the level; or
• “Top 10 High Poverty States,” areas (zones) within qualifying states that have three-month rolling average unemployment rates 1.25 times the national average, or 25 percent of the residents living below the national poverty level.
Promoting Job Creation by Reducing Taxes:
• Reducing the individual and corporate income tax to a single, flat rate of 5 percent;
• Reducing the payroll tax by 2 percent for both the employer and the employee;
• Double the amount of 100 percent expensing of all business investment costs;
• Suspending eligible capital gains taxes

Educational Enhancements to Improve Local Opportunities and Area Workforce:
• Providing states with school choice options with Department of Education Title I portability funding for areas designated Economic Freedom Zones;
• Providing a new $5,000-per-child educational tax credit to parents or guardians;
• Providing an expanded Economic Freedom Zone Tax-Free Educational Savings Account
• Establishing new Economic Freedom Zone Visa (at the state’s discretion) –
  o Entrepreneurial investment: for qualified immigrants creating a new business and employing five U.S. citizens;
  o Abandoned property investments: for qualified immigrants purchasing and rehabilitating abandoned or dilapidated properties; and
  o Education performance needs: for qualified immigrants with a specialty degree or higher education qualification meeting Economic Freedom Zone needs

Reducing Regulatory Burden on Cities:
• Suspending EPA non-attainment designations in Economic Freedom Zone areas;
• Providing municipalities the option to waive certain land use restrictions;
• Exempting eligible municipalities from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System requirements; and
• Streamlining National Environmental Policy Act requirements for construction projects

Encouraging Community Assistance and Rebuilding:
• Suspend Davis-Bacon wage requirements; and
• Establish new Economic Freedom Zone Charitable Tax Credit for entities in eligible areas for:
  o Religious organizations or institutions;
  o Educational entities, including educational scholarships;
  o Homeless shelters and food banks

Many areas of Eastern Kentucky would qualify for Economic Freedom Zones, and this legislation can provide for immediate relief and a turn toward sustainable economic growth. To learn about economic freedom zones, you may visit http://www.paul.senate.gov/files/documents/EconomicFreedom-Zones.pdf.
A. Encourage each college/university to research and develop a niche agricultural product that can succeed in Eastern Kentucky.

Any plan for economic success must begin with sufficient research and education. Therefore, Commissioner Comer has directed the KDA’s commodity experts to encourage and assist all Eastern Kentucky colleges and universities with developing a niche agricultural product that can succeed in Eastern Kentucky. Several institutions of higher learning in Appalachia have already embarked on such projects.

For example, Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) is currently working on some exciting research with honey bees led by EKU’s Dr. Tammy Horn, director of the Lost Mountain Honey Project. Most people may not know that honey bees once thrived in Appalachia. This program is committed to re-establishing bees and beekeeping in the region by creating genetic islands of bees on the reclaimed lands of coal companies. The group is already partnering with two coal companies, the International Coal Group and James River Coal, which are planting nectar-producing trees on former mine sites and designing apiaries that serve as community workshops. Commissioner Comer visited one of these sites in Leslie County with Dr. Horn, and he stated that, with continued research and development by EKU’s talented minds, fostered by private-public partnerships and the proper marketing, Eastern Kentucky could become the “Honey Capital of the World.”

Another example comes from a group of students at The University of Pikeville (UPIKE). In a visit to welcome UPIKE into the Farm to Campus program, Commissioner Comer was told how these students won a $4,000 award at the Alltech Innovation Competition in 2013 by devising the Appalachian Artisan Foods plan. The plan utilizes aquaponics for the local production of fresh, organic foods. The three-tier design maximizes use of greenhouse space for aquaponics. Shade vegetables, including alfalfa, would be grown on the first layer, beneath a second tier of cultivated ginseng and, ultimately, a top layer of hops and vines. Tilapia would also be raised within the greenhouse. The fresh produce and tilapia would be sold to wholesale food corporations in Kentucky, regional groceries, and local restaurants. Again, with sufficient research, development, and a marketing plan, Commissioner Comer believes cultivated ginseng can succeed in Eastern Kentucky.

The KDA’s commodity experts can be reached at (502) 564-4983 or accessed via the Internet at www.kyagr.com/marketing/.
B. Activate an FFA chapter based in every Eastern Kentucky school district.

Commissioner Comer has directed the KDA’s Division of Agriculture Education to work in conjunction with state FFA officials to reach out to every Eastern Kentucky high school and activate or further develop a Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter.

Commissioner Comer, a former state president of FFA, is a firm believer that “the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.” It is, therefore, no surprise that, throughout his travels in Eastern Kentucky, he found a common link: Counties that boasted an active FFA chapter also tended to have a more robust agriculture economy. For example, Commissioner Comer met with the Montgomery County FFA Chapter, which boasts the largest high school garden in the state. At the same time, Montgomery County is home to successful beef cattle, sorghum, and orchard operations and dozens of Kentucky Proud members. Commissioner Comer also toured active FFA chapters in Carter, Menifee, Owsley, Powell, Rockcastle, and Wolfe counties, all of which have growing agricultural operations ranging from high tunnels to farmers' markets to meat processing.

State FFA officials can be reached at (502) 564-3472 or via the Internet at www.kyffa.org. The KDA’s Division of Agriculture Education can be reached at (502) 564-4983 or via the Internet at http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/.
C. Create a new mobile science activity center dedicated to Appalachia and geared toward agriculture in the region.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture currently utilizes two mobile science activity centers to cover the entire state. These 44-foot trailers each have 10 iPad interactive work stations where students conduct activities and investigations related to agriculture such as making biodegradable corn plastic, ice cream in a bag, and soy lip balm. These activities help students make a connection between the agricultural source and commonly used products.

The target grade levels for the mobile science activity centers are fourth and fifth grade. The cost is $200 per day for a maximum of three days per school. The centers are in such demand that they are scheduled almost two years in advance. And one challenge facing the centers is that they are too long and not mobile enough to visit the most remote areas of Kentucky.

Therefore, Commissioner Comer has commissioned a third mobile science activity center to be paid for by private funds that will be built for and dedicated to Eastern Kentucky counties. This center will be shorter, which will make it more accessible to remote areas of Appalachia, but it will be equipped with the same technology as the other centers. This center will tour only those schools located within the 37 counties included in Appalachia Proud, and the goal will be to inspire Eastern Kentucky school children to enter careers in agriculture.

Interested persons can watch videos from our mobile science activity centers and read more about the centers at http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/mobile-science-center.html. To speak with someone about the centers, please call the KDA's Division of Agriculture Education at (502) 564-4983.
D. Launch hemp pilot programs.

Industrial hemp was widely grown in Kentucky early in the Commonwealth’s history and again during World War II. Shortly thereafter, the nylon industry successfully lobbied to categorize hemp as a controlled substance. However, hemp is virtually free of psychoactive properties, and the United States is the only industrialized nation that does not allow hemp production. Hemp can be used in products from cosmetics to automobile parts and can be grown in every region of the Commonwealth.

Kentucky’s Senate Bill 50, passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of the Kentucky General Assembly, exempts industrial hemp from the state Controlled Substances Act but also mandates that Kentucky follow all federal rules and regulations with respect to industrial hemp. The federal Farm Bill, signed by the President on February 7, 2014, allows state departments of agriculture in states where industrial hemp is legal to administer industrial hemp pilot programs in conjunction with universities for the purposes of research and development.

The KDA will initially administer five pilot programs in different areas of the state, each with a unique research focus and university affiliation. The first pilot project, affiliated with Kentucky State University and our Homegrown by Heroes military veteran/farmer program, will study the cultivation of Kentucky heirloom hemp seed on a research plot in Eastern Kentucky. The second project, located in Western Kentucky and affiliated with Murray State University, will cultivate European seed for the purposes of studying hemp fiber. The third pilot project, located on an urban brownfield and affiliated with the University of Louisville, will study bio-remediation, or the detoxifying and environmental effects of industrial hemp. The fourth pilot project, located in Central Kentucky, will address many of the basic agricultural issues involved in the production of industrial hemp such as the machinery needed for proper planting, harvesting and transportation, yield per acre, and overall cost of production. This project is linked with the University of Kentucky for measuring agriculture production and Eastern Kentucky University, which will conduct a renewable energy research project with this crop in its EKU Craft Center. The final pilot project, also affiliated with the University of Kentucky and located in Eastern Kentucky, will focus on cultivating cannabinoids for medical research purposes.

The KDA will utilize private contributions to begin these pilot programs on March 31, 2014. Meanwhile, KDA will also inform the appropriate border enforcement authorities that hemp seed will be imported to be used in pilot programs as detailed in the Farm Bill. While these programs are underway, the KDA will work with the Office of the Kentucky Attorney General to pursue a blanket waiver for Kentucky to produce industrial hemp for commercial purposes and will continue to engage in talks with economic development prospects and potential processing operations.

Producers interested in growing industrial hemp will execute an application with the KDA to affiliate with the appropriate pilot project. These producers can meet at the pilot sites on a regular schedule to monitor progress and collect data that will enable them to successfully grow industrial hemp. For more information on the KDA hemp pilot project, please contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Office of Marketing and Product Promotion at (502) 564-4983.
IV. SELLING THE PRODUCT
IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING NEW MARKETS

A. Viable agricultural uses of mine lands – the Appalachia Proud Wildlife Center

The board of the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation (AWF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit wildlife conservation organization, recently voted to move forward with the creation and construction of a world-class conservation education, science, research, and visitor center. This family-friendly facility, devoted to wildlife conservation, habitat restoration and Appalachian culture, will also feature a new marketplace for locally produced food, arts, and crafts. It will sell fresh honey from on-site bee hives and establish research plots for orchards and vineyards. Because this facility presents a new market for local food, arts, and crafts, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) has agreed to allow the center to use the KDA’s trademarked brand in its name: The Appalachia Proud Wildlife Center. A similar center in Pennsylvania surpassed 350,000 visitors in 2013 since it opened in 2010. See www.keystoneedge.com/features/pennsylvaniaelkcountry0912.aspx and http://elkcountryvisitorcenter.com/drupal/

The Center will be located in southeastern Kentucky on a reclaimed mine site, and several sites have already been identified as possibilities. Wildlife conservationists will enjoy elk, birds, honeybees and butterflies, plants and wildflowers indigenous to the region, in addition to scientific displays demonstrating the geologic origins of coal, oil, and gas. The Center will also offer educational, interactive programs devoted to teaching about the wildlife of the region and the improvement and restoration of wildlife habitat in Eastern Kentucky. And because southeastern Kentucky is a very rural landscape with little artificial light at night, the Center will offer great opportunities for star-gazing and the study of astronomy. A concert and entertainment venue will be included in the center, as well as meeting and conference rooms.

The AWF will own and operate the Center and will raise the funds for its construction. The AWF is working with the coal industry to restore and improve wildlife habitat to Eastern Kentucky through the Mine Land Stewardship Initiative (MLSI), a voluntary program endorsed by the Kentucky Coal Association with input and cooperation from more than 20 wildlife conservation organizations. The MLSI sets certain standards that coal companies can adhere to that would assist in the restoration of wildlife habitat. Companies that participate in the MLSI would become preferred sources of coal for electric utilities, steel makers, and other coal purchasers. The KDA will partner with the Center to source local food, arts, and crafts producers. For more information on the MLSI or the Appalachia Proud Wildlife Center, contact AWF President and CEO David Ledford at 1005 South Main Street, Suite 104, Corbin, KY 40701 or phone (606) 523-1323.
B. Encourage all colleges and universities in the region to join the Farm to Campus Program.

In December 2013, Commissioner Comer welcomed the University of Pikeville (UPIKE) as the fifth member of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Farm to Campus Program in an event at the City View Café on the UPIKE campus. By joining the Farm to Campus program, UPIKE made more local food available for students, faculty, and staff and boosted the local economy by helping family farmers sell their products. Farm to Campus can involve private partners such as Barnes & Noble in an effort to take the farm-to-table movement into campus cafeterias. The initiative provides healthier, sustainable options for students and encourages those who visit the universities to buy local, which is always good for the economy.

Currently, three Eastern Kentucky schools have joined the Farm to Campus program – UPIKE, Eastern Kentucky University, and Morehead State University. The goal for the program is to involve every college and university in Eastern Kentucky to join the buy and eat local effort, which creates more sustainable markets for Eastern Kentucky producers and cultivates a healthier generation of leaders and citizens.

For more information on Farm to Campus, contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s business development office at (502) 564-4983.

C. Increase the number of schools in the Farm to School Program.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Kentucky Proud Farm to School Program brings fresh, high-quality, locally-grown produce into our school systems to promote healthy eating and create new markets for Kentucky farmers. The long-term goal of the program is for school children to grow into healthy adults who demand fresh, locally-grown products.

This past year, the Farm to School Program developed the Junior Chef competition, a statewide high school cooking competition designed to offer youth the opportunity to learn valuable skills in recipe development, food preparation, marketing, public presentation, organization, teamwork, and community involvement. The program stimulated interest in local agriculture, created a non-traditional market for Kentucky producers, increased quality of products available to school cafeterias, and ultimately increased consumption of produce by Kentucky’s students.

Last year, 38 teams competed in the competition, including an Eastern Kentucky team from Whitley County High School that finished in third place in the final competition at the Kentucky State Fair. This year, that number is expected to dramatically increase, particularly in Eastern Kentucky with active teams already in high schools in Owsley, Pike, Whitley, and Montgomery counties. For more information on the Farm to School program and the Junior Chef competition, visit http://www.kyagr.com/consumer/farm-to-school.html.
V. INVESTING FOR SUCCESS

Coal severance taxes are incurred to tax both the severance and processing of coal in Kentucky. The severance and processing tax rate is 4.5% of the gross value of coal per ton. Initially, very little of this money was returned to the coal-producing counties. Later, under the leadership of Gov. Brereton Jones, legislation passed that leveled the playing field for coal-producing counties and mandated that 50% of the tax be refunded to the counties in which the coal was severed, with the other half sent to the general fund.

Through his travels in Eastern Kentucky, Commissioner Comer hears the growing call for 100% of the coal severance taxes to be refunded to the coal-producing counties, since this money was generated off the blood, sweat and tears of citizens and workers in these areas. One of the early challenges with these funds was that they were used only for building industrial parks and land buildings that could house potential new businesses. However, citizens of the region said this did little to economically diversify Eastern Kentucky, and it became obvious that only so many industrial parks could be built. Today, the funds are largely distributed as part of a political process with no real economic development strategy. Based on the information offered in this report, Commissioner Comer believes agriculture production should be a key component in any such strategy. This report demonstrates that agriculture is a developing industry that could grow exponentially over the coming years with the proper focus and investment.

Therefore, Commissioner Comer supports refunding 100% of coal severance taxes to coal-producing counties (many of which are located in the Appalachia Proud area) and proposes that 15% of this money go toward investment in food production and new agricultural enterprises. These enterprises could include food processors, certified kitchens, farmers’ markets, biofuel research projects, and developing niche agricultural products that would grow successfully in the region such as ginseng, honey, sorghum, mushrooms, and orchards. Commissioner Comer looks forward to working with the legislature to develop an overall economic development strategy for coal severance taxes that includes investment in agricultural enterprises and ensures that the people of Eastern Kentucky receive their fair share.