

Evolution of Farming

By Charles Mattox
News Reporter

People have been farming for thousands of years in Robertson, Fleming, Nicholas, Bath and Menifee County.

Like many modern farmers, ancient Native American farmers engaged in domesticating plants and animals. Ancient Native American cultures practiced animal husbandry and domesticated at least four types of dog hybrids and one type of wild turkey in northeastern Kentucky.

Excavations of the Cloudsplitter Rock Shelter in Menifee County indicates some forms of agriculture, including

Ky Farms Paid to do Right by Nature

Berna Ky. Some Kentucky landowners are getting back some of the time and money they invest through a program that compensates them for the carbon sequestration in their trees.

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growing squash, in addition to nut and seed gathering, was being practiced almost 4,000 years ago. Dogs had been domesticated in Kentucky since at least 7,000 B.C. and a necklace of domesticated dog canine teeth were found in an archaic burial by archaeologists at the Lawrence site in Trigg County. Archaeologists estimate the Lawrence Site was inhabited approximately 9,000 years ago.

By 1200 A.D. the Native Americans who lived in these counties had been engaged in growing maize and beans. It also appears likely that these people, called Fort Ancient people by archaeologists, were busy domesticating, including

Older crops like maize, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, gourds, tobacco and cotton, were being grown as were old world grasses, such as clover, timothy and alfalfa.

Wooden, horse drawn plows were replaced with iron plows in the late 1790s, which were likewise replaced by steel bladed plows in the 1830s.

In 1850 Kentucky was the second largest corn producing state in the Union.

Hemp and tobacco production figured early in the state's history and were grown by the top in northeastern Kentucky into the 20th century. Early Kentucky farmers raised sheep, but it would be the hog that would be the staple to farmers in the Licking River watershed.

Livestock shows, which showcased the efforts of hog, horse and cattle producers, began in 1816 at Sander's Gar-

den in Lexington and shows are still popular among 4-H organizations and fairs across the state. The increase in mechanical farming began in the 1840s with horse and mule-powered equipment being replaced with steam, gas and diesel engines.

Rubber tired small tractors began to come into more use in the 1930s and a type of grass known as fescue was introduced in the state during that same period.

The dynamics of the small family farmed has changed drastically in the last decade with dairy prices dropping and causing a vast decrease in the number

of dairy farms in the region. Small family tobacco farms are all but extinct with most farmers growing dozens of acres of burley tobacco.

Farming methods have changed in the last half-century with an earlier reliance of chemical fertilizers and pesticides being replaced with those that are less harmful to the environment. Farm diversification is steadily gaining a foothold across this section of the state with a variety of different crops and animals punctuating the landscape. Families in this region of Kentucky still enjoy a close relationship with the land just as they have for hundreds and thousands of years before.



Photo by Charles Mattox

Nicholas County Black Berries

Eric Tincher is shown picking delicious black berries from Shumate farms in Nicholas County. Known far and wide for their delicious taste, farm owners are working with scientists to tap into the healing effects of the berry and are manufacturing products with tested medicinal attributes as part of farming diversification practices.

USDA offers loans to area farmers

USDA Farm Service Agency offers loans to area farmers in Montgomery, Bath, Clark, Menifee, Powell, and Estill Counties. Farmers can obtain loans from FSA including but not limited to the following purposes to purchase farms, build or repair a dwelling, complete real estate improvements, purchase livestock, purchase machinery, refinance debts, and for annual operating expenses.

Under the farm ownership loan program loans can be made to purchase farm real estate, construct or repair a dwelling, do real estate improvements, and complete conservation practices. Loans made under this loan program can be made for a period of up to 40 year with a fixed interest rate. The current interest rate in effect for October 2009 is 5%. Loans made under the operating loan program

can be used to purchase livestock, purchase machinery/equipment, refinance qualifying debts, and pay annual farm operating expenses. Annual operating loans are made for a 1 year term; whereas, loans made for other purposes can have a term of 7 years with a fixed interest rate. The current rate for October 2009 is 3x125%.

FSA can also make loans under a youth loan program to youth between the ages of 18 and 20. These loans can be made to establish a money making project for the youth; some examples are purchase beef cows, purchase show heifer or steer, goat, lamb, or pig, machinery for a farming enterprise. These projects need to be carried out under the supervision of local FFA advisor or 4H agent. The youth loans are limited to \$5,000.00 per youth. These loans are made over a period of

1 to 7 years depending on the loan purpose. The current interest rate for October 2009 is 3x125% and this is a fixed rate.

Farm Service Agency can make loans to socially disadvantaged farmers or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group, without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this USDA program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

USDA Farm Service Agency is dedicated to helping beginning farmers as each year Congress targets a percentage of loan funds to beginning farmers.

Beginning farmers must have been in the farming business fewer than 10 years and meet other certain requirements.

To qualify for these loans applicants must meet all eligibility criteria and guidelines, have an acceptable credit history, be able to demonstrate adequate repayment ability, and have sufficient collateral for the loan. To inquire about a farm loan with Farm Service Agency call the FSA office in Mt. Sterling at 859-498-5487 or visit the office located at 509 Willm Way in Mt. Sterling. The office hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5 P.m. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits its discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

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