

Be thankful for Agriculture's impact on Graves County

BY Kenny E. Perry, Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources

I recently had the opportunity to lead a tour for the members of the Leadership Mayfield-Graves County class. This program is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and helps to educate those new to the community, or not so new, about the many aspects of Graves County including its history, government, community services, healthcare, education, manufacturing and many other things. My task was to give them a snapshot of agriculture in the county and the impact it has on our economy. I really wish everyone in the county could visit all of the different places that the class did, but I know that's not realistic so here's a little of what they saw and heard.

Graves County's leading agriculture commodity, like Kentucky, is poultry. Pilgrim's Pride and Tyson both have many, many broiler houses located in the county. Not only do they buy chickens from our farmers, but they also buy grain and provide a lot of jobs, both directly and indirectly, to county residents. The most recent estimates that we have suggest that poultry sales were over \$173 million in 2009 for Graves County, and that's not chicken feed (pun intended).

As previously stated, one of the main reasons for the poultry industry being located here is because of the large scale grain production that takes place in our region. Gross receipts for corn, soybeans and wheat in 2009 for Graves County are estimated at \$80 million plus. Farmers grew over 56,000 acres of corn, 82,000 acres of soybeans and 15,000 acres of wheat in 2009. Incidentally, the numbers, both acres and gross receipts, will be much larger for the 2011 crop year, quite possibly going over the \$100 million dollar level.

Graves County typically ranks number one in poultry production for the state, in the top 5 in both corn and soybeans annually and seventh or eighth in wheat production. Although total tobacco production for the state has decreased in recent years, Graves County's production has been fairly constant. In 2009, it's estimated that total gross receipts totaled over \$18 million for the county making that our fourth largest commodity behind poultry, corn and soybeans.

Cattle production, including dairy, accounted for over \$13 million in ag income during 2009. Again, that doesn't count all of the indirect jobs and off-shoots of the industry like feed sales, veterinary services, transportation of animals and numerous other services that are needed by livestock producers.

That's not all of the ag sectors in the county, but you get the idea. I'm proud of the farmers and agriculture tradition in Graves County because it is big and getting bigger every

year. Total gross receipts for all ag production in 2009 for Graves County were estimated at over \$286 million. Economists suggest that for every dollar earned, it “turns over” 5-7 times in a community, and that amounts to a huge economic impact that agriculture has on Graves County.

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