



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Situation Analysis Report

### Orange County

# 2013

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## Introduction

Orange County Extension staff and Extension Leadership Council (ELC) members conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during Fall 2013. The process included input from county residents, Extension stakeholders, elected officials, and Extension volunteers. The unit profile was developed with data from the 2010 U.S. Census, 2007 Agricultural Census, and 2012-13 Youth Risky Behaviors Survey by Orange County Public Schools. Statistical data, residents' perspectives, and results of an online survey were available to ELC members as they prioritized issues and made recommendations for further Extension efforts or not.

Identification of local needs is ongoing and not limited strictly to the Situation Analysis period. Extension staff regularly meet with 4-H leaders, Central Virginia Cattleman's Association board members, and administrators of Head Start and Orange County Public Schools, to name a few. ELC members represent all four Extension program areas - Agriculture, Youth Development, Family & Consumer Sciences, and Community Viability - and serve as key informants for the changing educational needs of local residents. In addition, ELC members represent all geographic areas of the county and share needs of their smaller communities in the context of the greater Orange County community.

## Unit Profile

Orange County is located in the northern central part of Virginia's Piedmont, 70 miles west of Richmond and between the more populated areas of Charlottesville and Fredericksburg. Comprising 341 square miles (218,240 acres), Orange County is home to 33,481 residents with an average household income of nearly \$54,000. The annual growth rate is 2.9%. In the past decade, total households increased 27%, public school enrollment increased 22%, and senior citizens (age 65 and older) appear to be the fastest-growing population at a 35% increase.

There are nine schools and almost 5,000 students in Orange County Public Schools. Private institution Grymes Memorial School serves an additional 180 children from Orange and surrounding counties. Head Start early education programs are available in four areas of the county, and several private preschools also operate. Germanna Community College is located in the far eastern end of the county (Locust Grove campus), and Orange residents are also served by Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville.

Primary employers in the county are government, manufacturing and retail. Agriculture, mining, and construction comprise 20% of businesses in Orange County and employ 15% of the workforce (considerably higher rates than national averages). Some manufacturing has left the county and more employees are looking for employment. Orange County's unemployment rate is just slightly higher than the state average (6% in August, 2013).

According to 2007 USDA Ag Census\* data, there are 518 farms in the county with 104,606 total acres farmed. Top agricultural commodities are nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod with sales totaling more than \$45 million, making Orange County the state's largest producer in

this category. The majority of these gross sales are from two large greenhouse operations located in the county. The beef cattle industry is the second largest agriculture commodity in the county with livestock sales totaling over \$25 million in 2007. These totals are expected to be significantly higher in the new census data. *\*New agricultural census data is expected after the due date for this report; the last ag census was conducted in 2012 and data has yet to be published.*

The following trends and statistics are of importance to planners and educators:

### **Families, Health, Housing**

- Approximately one quarter of households are led by single parents (24%).
- Youth in poverty increased six points from 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2013.
- The local Hispanic population increased 10% in the past decade, but still represents a relatively small percentage of the total population.
- The obesity rate is higher than both state and national averages at 31% and is continuing to rise (4% in adults from 2010 to 2013).
- The Orange County Comprehensive Plan shows a need for affordable housing for limited resource families and seniors who require one-level housing or assisted living residences.

### **Youth**

- 70% of Orange County High School graduates (2012) planned to pursue additional education post-high school.
- 90% of Orange County High School graduates are continuing education post high school, up from 80% in 2010. Furthermore, 70% of students are continuing to advance their knowledge with at least some college level education.
- High school graduation rates have improved ten percentage points to a 90% on-time graduation rate. The drop-out rate is 4.64%.
- The 2012-13 Youth Risky Behaviors Survey conducted by Orange County Public Schools on middle and high school youth reports the following in the executive summary:
  - Student use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants and other drugs is too high;
  - Student involvement in premature sexual activity is too high;
  - Bullying behavior is demonstrated too frequently; and
  - Parents tend to establish clear rules regarding substance use.
- 79% of high school students report having non-parental adults in their life that encourage them to do their best.
- 35% of high school students self-report that they bully others; 51% report being bullied.
- 60% of high school students exercise three or more days per week.

### **Agriculture\***

*\*As stated previously, 2012 Ag Census data has not been released at the time of this report.*

Expert observations and annual agriculture summary reports yield the following data:

- Total acres farmed have remained relatively level since 2007.

- Crop acreage has increased significantly and farmland consolidation has occurred.
- Total numbers of farms figures are expected to decrease, while the average farm size should increase.
- Higher grain prices in recent years have encouraged farmers to increase their acreage in row crops.
- The market value of most agriculture products has increased significantly in the past few years and that has encouraged local expansion.
- The increase in revenues has also encouraged a significant increase in operating costs. With the higher volatility in markets, financial risk of running a farming operation is at an all-time high.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

Based on the issue areas identified in the unit profile and information provided by Extension advisory groups, an electronic survey was created listing 29 issues. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of each issue from one (not at all important) to seven (extremely important). In addition, survey respondents were asked to comment on educational programs that should be conducted to address the most important needs and to list which Extension programs should no longer be offered. The survey was distributed widely - to 556 unique e-mail addresses of stakeholders, on Facebook pages of The Orange County Review and Orange County 4-H, and promoted at a Central Virginia Cattleman Association Twilight Meeting and Orange 4-H Achievement Night. Elected officials, school administrators, and key teachers received electronic notifications and invitations to complete the survey, and each ELC member was asked to forward correspondence to 3-5 residents in their area.

Of survey respondents, 57% were female and 43% male, and the majority of completers (59%) were of middle age, 40-59. Half were “very familiar” with Extension’s mission and programs, 29% “familiar” and 20% “somewhat familiar”.

Initial survey results for prioritizing key issues in Orange County were inconclusive as the average values had little variation, even identical values in some cases. Most issues averaged a score of 5.5-6.5 on a scale of 7. Next, key informants were identified to rank the top five issues in each programmatic area. The key informants were from the following agencies and organizations: Orange County government (elected officials and county employees), Virginia Department of Health staff, 4-H club leaders, Extension volunteers, Office on Youth staff, Parks and Recreation staff and Central Virginia Cattlemen Association members.

**The top six Family & Consumer Science issues were:**

Rank by ELC	Issue	Score of "Importance", Range 1-7
1	Family Health and Wellness	5.47
2	Financial Management/ Family Budget	5.45
3	Food Safety/Food Preservation Education	5.53
4	Small Business Development	5.41
5	Availability of Quality Childcare	5.35
6	Nutrition/Cooking Skills	5.28

**The top six Youth Development issues were:**

Rank by ELC	Issue	Score of "Importance", Range 1-7
1	Life Skills Development	5.88
2	Workforce/Career Development	5.84
3	Financial Education for Youth	5.67
4	Leadership Skills Development	5.76
5	Availability of Extracurricular Activities	5.84
6	Character Education/Bullying Prevention	5.55

**The top six Agriculture issues were:**

Rank by ELC	Issue	Score of "Importance", Range 1-7
1	Animal and Livestock Production	6.58
2	Agriculture Profitability	6.51

3	Farm Safety	6.22
4	Agriculture Marketing	6.13
5	Environmental/ Best Management Practices	6.10
6	Public and Youth Awareness of Agriculture	6.07

Other agriculture issues were rated significantly lower on average and had considerably higher standards of deviation within the results as compared to these top six issues.

Regardless of program area, it should be noted that electronic survey respondents were asked how they preferred to receive Extension information. Participants could select multiple choices; 81% wanted e-mail communications, 67% wanted information online, and 64% wished to meet face-to-face with Extension staff to learn.

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues were identified and ranked by the Orange Extension Leadership Council.

### **Issue #1: Agriculture Production and Agriculture Profitability**

Agriculture is one of Orange County's largest industries with recent growth in the greenhouse and nursery industry. However, the recent explosion of inflationary input costs threatens the stability of agriculture, especially the livestock industry. VCE assists beef producers in adding value to their livestock through a local Beef Quality Assured marketing program. Animal production programs for livestock farmers are provided using short courses, field days, meetings, farm visits, cattle sales, responding to requests, and local demonstration projects. VCE also meets monthly with the Central Virginia Cattlemen board of directors and receives input on programing needs.

### **Issue #2: Family Health and Wellness**

VCE offers nutrition and wellness programs through in-school enrichment, Head Start, adult workshops, Farm-to-School programs and youth cooking programs. Programs specific to the 2013 programming year include: Cooking Matters, Food Friends, Mighty Moves and Farm-to-School taste testing at three Orange County Schools.

### **Issue #3: Life Skill Development in Youth**

Development of skills in youth, such as teamwork, communications, and decision making, was identified as the greatest issue facing youth in Orange County. Extension continues to address this issue through year-round 4-H clubs, volunteer leader trainings and education, and camps and school enrichment programs that allow for hands-on learning. Partnerships are

already established with public and private schools, youth organizations, and county youth agencies. Additional adult volunteers are needed for training and program outreach and delivery in order to serve a larger audience more frequently.

#### **Issue #4: Farm, Family and Youth Financial Management**

This issue is being addressed by VCE with individual, family, farm and business counseling, in-school and after school youth financial literacy programs. In addition, farm transition programs are being offered on an annual basis.

#### **Issue #5: Workforce / Career Development**

Community members have expressed a need for increased skill development and workplace readiness in teens and adults. VCE has established relationships with school counselors and the career coach and has previously offered job shadowing programs to high school juniors and seniors. More programming can be offered by VCE in the areas of soft skills development and general employment skills. A Career & Technical Education Center would address this need, but has not had available funding in the community.

#### **Issue #6: Farm Safety**

This Issue is addressed in the VCE 3rd grade Agriculture Day for youth and in pesticide recertification classes for agriculture producers. In past years VCE has coordinated several farm safety programs for adult, teen and youth audiences. The Orange ELC has requested that VCE explore coordinating a farm safety day again.

#### **Issue #7: Food Safety and Home Food Preservation**

VCE and Virginia Department of Health continue to foster a partnership to offer food safety education to restaurants, non-profit organizations, business and individuals. ServSafe, Cooking for Crowds, ServSafe Foodhandler's course and home food preservation continue to be offered to address this need in Orange County.

#### **Issue #8: Character Education/Bullying Prevention**

This was identified as a key issue in Orange County. Extension currently partners with Locust Grove Primary School to offer CHARACTER COUNTS! character education programming; evaluations demonstrate this is an effective program. Opportunities for growth include expanding to additional schools, training 4-H volunteers to deliver CHARACTER COUNTS! in club meetings, and incorporating character education and bullying prevention in camping and school enrichment programs.

#### **Issue #9: Environmental / Best Management Practices**

With the emphasis on the Chesapeake Bay and environmental regulations in recent years, agriculture producers are under increase pressure to implement Best Management Practices

on their farms. VCE continues to offer field days, meetings, farm visits, and responding to request from farmers on this subject. Nutrient Management plans, soil testing, quick nitrogen test on corn fields, and forage management advice is also provided for producers.