

# Workshop offers agriculture producers development training

Marketing trends, product reviews offered for attendees

**BY MADISON PERGEM**  
Kentucky Proud®, the official marketing program of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, is offering a one-day workshop for Kentucky producers to help them develop a plan to market agricultural products to a wider audience. Kentucky Proud is hosting the Retail Readiness workshop in partnership with the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and



Rural Development (KCARD) and the University of Kentucky's MarketReady Producer Training Program  
“We are excited to offer this one-day workshop for Kentucky agriculture producers,” Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell said. “Agriculture drives economic growth, and helping our producers expand their market opportunities benefits not only them but the entire state. Creating strong pathways for success ensures a thriving future for Kentucky agriculture.”  
The workshop, set for 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. EST March 25 in Elizabethtown, will provide an overview of marketing trends and funding opportunities, peer-to-peer panels, discussions, product reviews, and advice from a variety of local retailers as well as hands-on workshops for marketing planning and elevator pitch development.

The workshop has been developed with the emerging producer in mind. Those who have seen success in direct sales and are considering a move into retail sales or wholesale opportunities.  
Attendees can hear from other agricultural producers who are successfully selling in the retail space and support their products with marketing plans. Attendees will learn from the retail community and discover what types of local products are best matched for placement as well as the process for new vendors and safety certifications. Up to three products may be submitted to be reviewed anonymously by mass retailers, specialty retailers, and farm retail markets who will provide coaching and feedback on the overall marketability and attractiveness of the items.  
Participants will leave the workshop with a marketing plan and an elevator pitch that can guide their journey.  
The \$15 workshop at the Hardin County Extension Office, 111 Opportunity Way, Elizabethtown, includes lunch. Digital registration can be accessed at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/retail-readiness-marketing-workshop-registration-1236641651469?aff=oddtcreator>

# Senate bills passed in week 4 of the legislative session

The Senate approved a variety of bills in week four. They are as follows:

**SB 104**, a measure I co-sponsored, strengthens Kentucky's Deferred Compensation program by allowing self-directed brokerage accounts and giving participants more investment choices while ensuring compliance with federal regulations. As co-chair of the Public Pension Oversight Board (PPOB), I am proud that this bill was thoroughly vetted before advancing. Four years ago, we passed legislation to automatically enroll state employees in deferred compensation, which made it easier for them to build savings for retirement. The results have been overwhelmingly positive as over 90% of new employees stayed in the program. SB 104 takes another step forward by allowing those who want more control over their investments to self-direct their accounts. While this option isn't for everyone, it's a valuable tool for those looking to manage their retirement funds. I commend one of our newest members of the Senate, Sen. Scott Madon of Pineville, for carrying this bill.

**SB 10** is another bill that received approval through PPOB. This bill enhances retiree health benefits for County Employees Retirement System (CERS) members by increasing health insurance subsidies to \$40 per year of service for non-hazardous retirees and \$50 per year for hazardous retirees. These adjustments reflect the rising cost of health care and the need to provide adequate support for our retirees. When the current retiree health supplement was set in 2003, it was sufficient to cover monthly health insurance costs, but the landscape has changed significantly in the years since. SB 10 makes adjustments necessary to ensure retirees receive appropriate support while financially sustaining the system. The bill, developed in collaboration with law enforcement, firefighters, and local governments, also introduces contributions from hazardous employees and non-hazardous employees hired after July 1, 2003, to help fund these benefits. The change applies retroactively for eligible retirees beginning Jan. 1, 2026.  
**SB 2** ensures no taxpayer dollars are used for transgender surgeries or hormone therapy for inmates while still protecting access to medically necessary care for conditions like thyroid or hormonal disorders. The bill draws a clear

line between essential health care and elective procedures and prevents state agencies from pushing unauthorized policies behind closed doors.

**SB 13** would cap the number of managed care organizations in Kentucky's Medicaid system at three to streamline administration, reduce complexity for health care providers—especially in rural areas—and lower overhead costs. The measure would allow providers to focus more on patient care by easing administrative burdens. If enacted, the bill would take effect on Jan. 1, 2026.

**SB 15** exempts minor league baseball players from Kentucky's wage-and-hour laws to align with the federally negotiated collective bargaining agreement (CBA). The CBA provides significant benefits for players, including salary increases, year-round pay, health insurance, and housing assistance. Without this legislation, state regulations could disrupt player development and team operations. Kentucky is home to several minor league baseball teams, including the Louisville Bats and Bowling Green Hot Rods, as well as independent teams like the Lexington Legends and Florence Y'alls. Supported by Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, the bill protects these teams' operations. It ensures baseball continues

to thrive as a part of Kentucky's economy and culture.

**SB 18** expands insurance options for licensed vehicle dealers by allowing them to obtain required bonds or insurance coverage from a broader range of insurers, including non-admitted insurers that meet Kentucky's regulatory standards. This change gives motor vehicle dealers, new recreational vehicle dealers, auction dealers, and wholesalers more flexibility in meeting state licensing requirements. The bill also includes technical updates to existing insurance statutes.

**SB 24** strengthens protections against insurance fraud by closing loopholes, deterring fraud, and protecting consumers from inflated or false claims. The bill expands the definition of insurance fraud by broadening what qualifies as a fraudulent statement in property and casualty insurance claims. It updates the definition of “statement” to include estimates for casualty damages and bids or proposals related to property damage. Fraudulent insurance acts now explicitly include any misrepresentation of the scope of damages, including repair costs, towing, storage, and other associated expenses.

**SB 28** establishes a new agricultural economic development program within the Department of Agriculture to strengthen Kentucky's agricultural economy. It creates the Agricultural Economic Development Board,

comprised of the agriculture commissioner as chair and four members representing livestock, row crops, specialty crops, and local economic development. The board will oversee the Agricultural Economic Development Fund, which provides financial support for projects across the state. Importantly, any unspent funds at the end of a fiscal year will carry over to ensure long-term support for agriculture initiatives. The program aims to boost agribusiness, create jobs, and promote development in rural areas, keeping Kentucky agriculture competitive and adaptable to future challenges. Designated as an emergency measure, this bill will take effect immediately and provide timely support for the state's agricultural sector.

**SB 67** proposes a constitutional amendment to shield Kentucky homeowners aged 65 and older from

property tax increases due to rising property values. If enacted, the amendment would freeze the assessed value of a senior's primary residence and contiguous real property at the value recorded when they turn 65 or purchase the property, whichever is later. This measure aims to provide financial relief to seniors on fixed incomes, potentially saving them hundreds of dollars annually. The proposed amendment would modify Section 170 of the Kentucky Constitution. For it to appear on the 2026 ballot, SB 67 must secure three-fifths approval in both the Kentucky House and Senate; gubernatorial approval is not required for constitutional amendments. If a majority of voters endorse the amendment in the 2026 election, it would be adopted shortly thereafter.

**SB 77** updates the membership eligibility for the Education Professional Standards

Board (EPSB), which oversees teacher certification standards in Kentucky. The governor appoints a chief academic officer (CAO) from an independent not-for-profit college or university to serve on the board. The bill allows the governor to appoint either the CAO or the head of the educator preparation program at those institutions. This is one of 15 people appointed to the board by the governor. Since some colleges do not have a CAO, this change ensures they remain fairly represented in shaping education policies. By expanding eligibility, SB 77 provides that all independent not-for-profit colleges and universities have a voice on the EPSB.

**SB 79** updates state personnel policies to improve efficiency, accountability, and workforce management. It clarifies job classifications, removes outdated regulations,

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