FarmLab Study

Phase 1 - Needs Assessment

Appendix B - Amish Influence

October 6, 2016

Prepared for the Elkhart County Redevelopment Commission

by Phil Metzler

Amish Influence

Elkhart County is commonly associated with a landscape of small farms with Amish and Mennonite roots. Based on 2010 U.S. Religion Census data, Elkhart County was home to almost 7,800 Amish and conservative Mennonite residents.

Table 1: Elkhart County Amish and Conservative Mennonite Populations

2010	Elkhart County
Amish Groups, undifferentiated	6,244
Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches	515
Conservative Mennonite Conference	1,040

Source: 2010 U.S. Religion Census data[1]

These demographics represent an important dimension of agriculture in Elkhart County, both in terms of public perception and in actual operation and distribution. The information referenced in this appendix provides a means of indexing the influence of the Amish community on local agriculture. This feasibility study did not consider further information related specifically to Beachy Amish and Conservative Mennonite groups, however we believe it is reasonable to associate their agricultural practices more closely with Amish practices than with the general population. Further research evaluating these practices through the lens of the Wakarusa Produce Auction could help clarify this influence.

Elkhart County had the 7th highest population of Amish in the country, and 3rd highest population of Amish in Indiana.

Table 2: Counties with Largest Amish Populations

County	Population	National Rank
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	26,270	1
Holmes, Ohio	17,654	2
LaGrange, Indiana	14,005	3
Wayne, Ohio	9,283	4
Geauga, Ohio	8,537	5
Adams, Indiana	6,343	6
Elkhart, Indiana	6,244	7
Trumbull, Ohio	3,864	8
Daviess, Indiana	3,709	9
Crawford, PA	3,510	10
Allen, Indiana	3,466	11

Source: "The Amish Population - County Estimates and Settlement Patterns"[2]

The Amish concentrated on the eastern side of Elkhart County (4,971 people) are part of the same settlement of approximately 20,000 Amish as their neighbors in LaGrange County (14,005 people), so farming practices and resources are closely linked. This settlement is the third largest concentration of Amish in the country. The Amish centered around Nappanee (1,273) are part of a smaller settlement of approximately 5,000 people.[3]

These populations are growing steadily: the 2010 populations are projected to double by 2032, based on current rates of population increase (3.3% per year) and settlement growth. How this growth unfolds in Elkhart County will be influenced by the availability of jobs and affordable farmland. While the cost of agricultural land is rising throughout Indiana, Elkhart and LaGrange counties have seen some of the highest prices and sharpest rates of increase relative to the state and to other counties with large Amish populations.[4]

Table 3: Average Land Value per acre

	Land Value per acre	% increase since 2007
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	$12,529	34%
Elkhart, Indiana	$8,067	45%
LaGrange, Indiana	$7,448	46%
Geauga, Ohio	$7,094	18%
Daviess, Indiana	$6,479	78%
Wayne, Ohio	$6,238	25%
Allen, Indiana	$6,174	53%
Holmes, Ohio	$5,822	26%
Adams, Indiana	$5,794	34%
Indiana	$5,354	49%

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture[5]

Considering the relationship between rising land costs and Amish population growth, Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey observe:

> "We expect that the proportion of Amish men who earn a living from some form of farming will decline, yet, the sheer number of Amish men who farm will increase. In other words, a number of new settlements will be in places where farmland is available and affordable, hence, attractive for the Amish. However, we speculate that the ability to find good farmland will not keep pace with population growth. Hence, a growing proportion of men will be occupied in non-farm jobs."[6] (Donnermeyer, et al.)

The Amish are important to maintaining a diverse and skilled workforce in Elkhart County, and retaining this growing population presents a unique challenge. In 2012, of 4,033 employed Amish household heads in Elkhart and LaGrange County, 50 percent identified manufacturing as a primary source of income, compared to 20 percent for farming (only 11 percent identified farming as their sole occupation).[7] As Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey note, "the entrepreneurship of the Amish is already well documented, and population pressure may increase the need for greater innovation among the Amish for non-farm business start-ups."[8]

Even when employed full-time in industries not based in agriculture, many Amish continue to maintain farms for personal sustenance and to support horses for transportation. Many also generate supplemental income through various enterprises tied to their farms, such as roadside stands, poultry operations, and small livestock operations. Quoting Steve Engelking, agricultural educator for the Cooperative Extension Service office in LaGrange County, with respect the growing number of small-acreage farms in LaGrange County, LeDuc reports:

> "*We're chunking these (larger farms) up and selling them off in little tracts so they can build their homes and have some cottage workshops and some small livestock operations," he said. Even if their main source of income is away from home, many Amish "still seek to have some farming enterprise*," Engleking said. "*They do seek an agrarian lifestyle if they can*."[9] (LeDuc)

Because of minimal use of technology, even fully operational Amish farms tend to be smaller than average. However their large households provide additional farm labor for more diversified or intensive production. These attributes would be very relevant to several key ag census parameters examined in this study as indicators for food localization, ag innovation, and economic development potential.

Of particular interest is the number of functioning small farms that are generally too small (or lack appropriate technology) for cost-competitive commodity production, but might be well-suited for more intensive specialty crop production, livestock operations, or value-added processing. Other relevant indicators include:

- The number of farms producing vegetables;
- The rate of direct sales between producers and customers;
- Direct marketing to retail outlets;
- The amount and frequency of organic production and sales;
- Production and sales of value-added products;
- Farms with on-farm packing facilities;
- Farms with access to labor including multiple unpaid workers.

The data reviewed for this study did not distinguish farms operated by Amish and Conservative Mennonite operators from other farms with respect to the above parameters. To get a general sense of the influence of these farms on the overall agricultural landscape and industry, this report compares the overall production and diversity of practices in nine of the aforementioned counties (containing large Amish populations) with all other counties in their respective states. While not a rigorous statistical analysis, the data suggest that specialized ag activities in these counties are frequently well above average in their respective states, and in many cases are at or near the top. The implication is that the presence of large Amish populations tends to indicate and/or contribute to favorable conditions for small-scale, diversified agricultural activity within some of the most productive agricultural counties in the country.

The following tables highlight some of the areas in which the counties with the highest populations of Amish in Indiana (5), Ohio (3), and Pennsylvania (1) stand out from the rest. All data and rankings are derived from the 2012 US Ag Census data.[10] Its worth noting that Lancaster County, with both the highest population of Amish and the highest priced farmland, outperformed all other counties in Pennsylvania several times over in almost every area listed below.

Table 4: Overall County Rankings

	Total farms	State rank	Total farm product sales ($millions)	State rank
Elkhart Indiana	1,724	3	297	3
LaGrange, Indiana	2,419	1	263	6
Adams, Indiana	1,476	4	250	8
Daviess, Indiana	1,325	5	190	18
Allen, Indiana	1,725	2	188	19
Indiana	58,695		11,211	
Wayne, Ohio	1,928	2	381	3
Holmes, Ohio	1,969	1	205	9
Geauga, Ohio	959	32	44	65
Ohio	75,462		10,064	
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	5,657	1	1,475	1
Pennsylvania	59,309		7401	

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

Table 5: Production Highlights

	Farms Harvesting Vegetables	State rank	Farms selling organic products	State rank	Organic product sales ($1,000)	State rank
Elkhart, Indiana	80	2	20	2	2,206	2
LaGrange, Indiana	81	1	123	1	10,078	1
Adams, Indiana	49	5	2	-	(D)	-
Allen, Indiana	28	-	7	8	333	8
Daviess, Indiana	70	3	2	-	(D)	-
Indiana			283		35,695	
Wayne, Ohio	127	1	83	2	11,550	1
Holmes, Ohio	80	3	95	1	9,996	2
Geauga, Ohio	95	2	18	3	803	11
Ohio	2440		538		46,284	
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	815	1	130	1	18,419	1
Pennsylvania	3968		600		78,525	

(D) - Withheld by USDA to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.
Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

Table 6: Direct Sales

	Farms with direct sales	State rank	Direct sales to consumers ($1,000)	State rank	% increase in direct sales since 2007
Elkhart County	191	1	2,393	1	95%
LaGrange	191	1	1,100	5	172%
Adams, Indiana	70	11	281	26	-3%
Allen, Indiana	100	4	632	11	22%
Daviess, Indiana	104	3	700	10	-34%
Indiana	3,673		26,900		21%
Wayne, Ohio	241	1	1,293	8	-7%
Holmes, Ohio	161	7	1,203	9	101%
Geauga, Ohio	193	4	2,357	1	23%
Ohio	6,612		46,615		-14%
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	782	1	11,916	1	29%
Pennsylvania	7,577		86,030		13%

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

Table 7a: Highlights of Selected Practices

	farms marketed products directly to retail outlets	State rank	farms produce and sell value-added products	State rank	Marketed products through CSA [(a)]	State rank
Elkhart, Indiana	71	1	98	1	18	1
LaGrange, Indiana	56	2	78	2	17	2
Adams, Indiana	19	9	22	30	1	-
Allen, Indiana	25	4	41	3	7	10
Daviess, Indiana	27	3	21	33	2	-
Indiana	991		1,791		230	
Wayne, Ohio	67	2	101	2	14	2
Holmes, Ohio	76	1	80	4	10	8
Geauga, Ohio	60	3	102	1	19	1
Ohio	1,802		3,179		374	
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	337	1	295	1	88	1
Pennsylvania	2,379		3,145		551	

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture
(a) CSA - Community Supported Agriculture

Table 7b: Highlights of Selected Practices

	Farms practiced rotational or management intensive grazing	State rank	Farms raised or sold veal calves	State rank	Farms had on-farm packing facilities	State rank
Elkhart, Indiana	258	2	73	2	34	3
LaGrange, Indiana	701	1	176	1	35	2
Adams, Indiana	64	26	11	7	20	5
Allen, Indiana	111	10	8	12	18	6
Daviess, Indiana	136	3	2	-	36	1
Indiana	5,811		526		549	
Wayne, Ohio	356	2	41	2	30	3
Holmes, Ohio	586	1	54	1	43	2
Geauga, Ohio	182	11	16	5	44	1
Ohio	8,905		418		953	
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	803	1	144	1	173	1
Pennsylvania	9,820		873		1,124	

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

Table 8: Farm size distribution

County	Farms 1-9 acres	State rank	Farms 10-49 acres	State rank
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	787	1	1,709	1
Elkhart, Indiana	453	1	629	4
LaGrange, Indiana	350	2	1,071	1
Wayne, Ohio	278	1	526	4
Adams, Indiana	253	3	661	3
Holmes, Ohio	242	2	480	7
Allen, Indiana	217	4	778	2
Geauga, Ohio	182	5	347	25
Daviess, Indiana	181	6	615	5

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

Table 9: Farms with Unpaid Workers

	Farms with Unpaid Farm Workers			
County	**Farms**	**State rank**	**Unpaid Workers**	**State rank**
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	2,897	1	9,403	1
LaGrange, Indiana	1,204	1	4,651	1
Holmes, Ohio	1,032	1	3,532	1
Elkhart, Indiana	871	2	2,901	2
Wayne, Ohio	926	2	2,607	2
Allen, Indiana	706	3	2,000	3
Adams, Indiana	656	4	1,991	4
Daviess, Indiana	635	5	1,967	5
Geauga, Ohio	553	11	1,782	3

Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture

The above data indicate that counties with large populations of Amish tend to exhibit the following characteristics with respect to other counties in their respective states:

1. Large total numbers of farms, and some of the highest concentrations of farms smaller than 50 acres;
2. Some of the highest sales and numbers of farms selling specialty products such as vegetables, organics, and veal calves;
3. Some of the largest numbers of farms selling directly to consumers and retail outlets, and some of the highest total direct sales;
4. Some of the largest numbers of farms adopting practices and infrastructure that support and add value to these direct sales;
5. Disproportionately high access to unpaid farm workers on family farms.

By focusing on correlations between Amish population and small-acreage and diversified agricultural activities, the intent of this study is not to suggest that Amish are the only contributors to these activities in their respective counties, or that they should necessarily be directly targeted as a “leverage” point for increasing local production. Rather, the purpose is to emphasize that Elkhart County is privileged to contain agricultural resources and capacities that exist in few other counties in the country. These agricultural resources and capacities seem to correlate with a high percentage of Amish farms. Therefore, any ag education, research, and incubation activities initiated through the FarmLab should remain relevant and accessible to these populations if it seeks to build on existing strengths, retain skilled workers, and spur further ag innovation.

References:

1. 2010 U.S. Religion Census data. Available at http://www.thearda.com/
2. Donnermeyer, Anderson and Cooksey (2013). "The Amish Population: County Estimates and Settlement Patterns." Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, April, 2013.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture. Available at https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/
6. Donnermeyer, Anderson and Cooksey (2013), "The Amish Population: County Estimates and Settlement Patterns," Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, April, 2013
7. Miller, J. (2012). "Indiana Amish Directory – Elkhart, LaGrange, and Noble Counties." 2012.
8. Donnermeyer, Anderson and Cooksey (2013), "The Amish Population: County Estimates and Settlement Patterns," Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, April, 2013
9. LeDuc, Doug (2014). "Number of farms increases in northeast Indiana." Kpc News Service. Viewed August 27, 2016, at http://kpcnews.com/business/latest/kpcnews/article_56941dd2-f466-5cb9-a57f-34677a231adb.html
10. USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture. Available at https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/