Agriculture and Forestry

The agriculture and forestry industries are major contributors to the overall economy in Essex County. According to the Economic Impacts of Agriculture and Forestry Industries in Virginia, June 2013, the direct economic impact of the agriculture and forestry industries in the county in 2011 was $68.2 million with agriculture contributing $23.4 million and forestry contributing $44.8 million.

The same impact study also found that there were 470 agriculture-related employees and 371 forestry-related employees for a total of 841 in 2011. Of the 50 largest employers in Essex County, five (10 percent) are agriculture/forestry businesses (Virginia Employment Commission 4th quarter 2013).

According to the 2012 United States Department of Agriculture Ag Census, there are 98 farms in the county with 37,129 acres of harvested cropland. The major agriculture crops harvested in Essex County are corn (15,976 acres), wheat (8,702 acres), barley (2,231 acres), and soybeans (19,254 acres). The county also has about 1000 head of beef cattle.

The market value of agriculture products sold in Essex County was $22.77 million in 2012. Crop sales accounted for $22.43 million while livestock sales accounted for $.34 million. Land in forests in 2012 was 86,940 acres. Estimates at the local level indicate approximately two-thirds of the forest acreage in Essex County are grown in pine with the remainder in hardwood (Forest Inventory and Analysis). According to the Virginia Department of Forestry, the forest harvest value (what landowners were paid) was $4.4 million in 2012.