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Further Reading:

Conway, S.F., McDonagh, J., Farrell, M. & Kinsella, A. (2019) Human dynamics and the intergenerational farm transfer process in later life: A roadmap for future generational renewal in agriculture policy, *International Journal of Agricultural Management*, 8(1), 22-30.

Read More About:

The [Environment, Development, and Sustainability](#) cluster within the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change.

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Intergenerational Considerations for Generational Renewal in Agriculture Policy Strategies

The senior generation's resistance to alter the status quo of the existing management and ownership structure of their farm is undoubtedly strong within the farming community. This phenomenon has resulted in extraordinary socio-economic challenges for young people aspiring to embark on a career in farming. This study sets forth a series of recommendations aimed at allowing older farmers to maintain and sustain existing activities and daily routines on their farms in later life in order to help ensure their emotional wellbeing in later life, whilst also 'releasing the reins' to allow for the necessary delegation of managerial responsibilities and ownership of the family farm to their successors, in order for generational renewal to occur.

Research Findings

This research explains the reasons older farmers fail to plan effectively and expeditiously for the future. They range from the potential loss of identity, status and power that may occur as a result of engaging in the process, to the intrinsic multi-level relationship farmers have with their farms. The so-called 'soft issues' i.e. the emotional and social dimensions involved, are the issues that distort and dominate their decisions on the future trajectory of the farm. These really are the 'hard issues' in creating an age-diverse farming population.

Policy Implications

- *'Farmer-Sensitive' Policy Design and Implementation*

This study recommends that any new initiatives to support/encourage intergenerational farm transfer should not be conceived so narrowly as to ignore possible social consequences or wider issues of human dignity. A more 'farmer-sensitive' policy approach is essential to encourage the process. For example, on its own, and with the numerous perceived negative connotations associated with it identified, the term 'Early Retirement Scheme' is no longer appropriate language for policy to use in a farming context. Perhaps the term 'Farm Progression Scheme' would be more effective as it portrays a sense of purposefulness rather than one of cessation.

- *Farm Succession Facilitation Service*

The power dynamics at play within farm households suggests that the services of a Farm Succession Facilitator, trained in accordance with an international best practice model, such as the one offered by the International Farm Transition Network (IFTN) in the U.S.A., is essential; particularly when facilitating communication and discussions between family members' objectives, goals and expectations for the farm.

- *Establishment of a National Voluntary Organisation for Older Farmers*

As there are no NGOs or services in existence in Ireland that represent the needs and interests of the older farmer in rural areas, the establishment of a national voluntary organisation that represents the needs of the senior generation, equivalent to that of younger people in rural Ireland i.e. Macra na Feirme is recommended. Such a voluntary organisation would provide farmers with a support around which they could remain embedded 'inside' their farms and social circles in later life.

