



## “I DECIDED TO STAY”: EMOTIONAL ASPECTS AS DETERMINING FACTORS OF THE SUCCESSION PROCESS IN IPIRANGA DO SUL/RS

## “DECIDI FICAR”: ASPECTOS EMOCIONAIS COMO FATORES DETERMINANTES DO PROCESSO SUCESSÓRIO EM IPIRANGA DO SUL/RS

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### Abstract

Obstacles in the succession process in family farming have been worrying families and instigating academia for decades and worldwide. The absence of successors generates uncertainties, while well-balanced processes of family succession can serve as an example for conducting future actions. Therefore, the question arises: Which aspects determine this success? What interferes with the children's decision for succession? The present study sought to analyze the process of generational succession in family farming from the perspective of the successors. Methodologically, this research is as qualitative and the technique used for data collection was the semi-structured interview. For data collection, ten interviews were carried out with young successors intentionally selected in the municipality of Ipiranga do Sul, in the Northwest of Rio Grande do Sul. The results indicate that the determining factors for succession are the love for agriculture and the desire for income alternatives for the production unit; also, having participated in agricultural activities motivated them to remain in the production unit. The challenges of the succession process are the uncertainties inherent to agricultural activities and family relationships, such as power relations and differences of opinion.

**Keywords:** Family Farming. Youth. Barriers. Uncertainty. Succession.

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## Resumo

Os entraves no processo sucessório na agricultura familiar vêm preocupando as famílias e instigando o meio acadêmico há décadas no mundo todo. A ausência de sucessores gera incertezas, enquanto processos bem acertados de sucessão familiar servem de exemplo para a condução de ações futuras. Por isso se questiona: Quais aspectos determinam esse sucesso? O que interfere na decisão dos filhos pela sucessão? Diante disso, o presente estudo buscou analisar o processo de sucessão geracional na agricultura familiar na perspectiva dos sucessores. Metodologicamente a pesquisa classifica-se como qualitativa e a técnica de coleta de dados adotada foi a entrevista semiestruturada. Foram realizadas dez entrevistas com jovens sucessores selecionados intencionalmente no município de Ipiranga do Sul, no Noroeste do Rio Grande do Sul. Os resultados apontam que os fatores determinantes para a sucessão são o amor pela agricultura e o desejo de alternativas de renda para a unidade de produção; ainda, ter participado nas atividades agrícolas os motivou a permanecer na unidade de produção. Já os desafios do processo sucessório são as incertezas inerentes às atividades agropecuárias e ao relacionamento familiar, como as relações de poder e divergência de opinião.

**Palavras chaves:** Agricultura Familiar. Juventude. Entraves. Incerteza. Sucessão.

## Introduction

The theme of family succession in agriculture is long-standing in discussions and research worldwide and has been gaining prominence in social and political debates. The growing concern of academics and rural families about succession stems from the growth of selective migration in the countryside, which causes young people, especially young women, to migrate to the urban environment. Young people leave rural establishments in search of new opportunities for work and socialization in urban centers, threatening the continuity and development of family properties (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA, 2019). The urbanization of young people can compromise food security and sovereignty, and hinder the occupation of labor, income distribution, the cultivation of traditions, knowledge, continuity, and maintenance of rural areas (CENCI; DEGGERONE, 2016).

Contrary to what would be ideal, in most families, there is no succession planning, and, rarely defined ahead of time who will stay in the establishment (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA, 2017; 2019). In this way, the successor does not undergo preparation for the succession process and also, there are no rules on how to reward non-successor brothers. Also, the delay in choosing and preparing the successor implies the omission of significant decisions to be taken in the production units, such as those related to future investments (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA, 2017; 2019).

Despite managerial limitations and the lack of succession planning in most family units, many

of these are still an accomplishment in the succession process and, at least one of the children takes over the property (MATTE et al., 2019). Well-balanced family succession processes can serve as an example for conducting future procedures and reducing problems or conflicts in families that have not yet experienced such situations. Concerning these successful processes, the question arises: What aspects determined success? What interferes with the decision of the children for succession?

From the problematization and given the importance of succession planning for the reproduction of family farming, this research analyzed the process of generational succession in family farming from the perspective of the successor children. Specifically, we sought to: a) socioeconomically characterize young people and your farms; b) identify the motivations and determining factors for intergenerational transference; c) list the challenges of the succession process. This study on family succession in agriculture in Ipiranga do Sul is justified considering the importance of the family farmer in the municipality. This category is present in 376 agricultural establishments, in other words, at 90.8% of all municipality agricultural establishments (IBGE, 2019).

### **Succession: rural youth and family farming**

The terms youth and young have different definitions in contemporary literature (TROIAN, BREITENBACH, 2018). However, because this is a study of rural areas, our research adopted the concept of Weisheimer (2005), which considers rural youth as a transient process that defines the passage from the social condition of dependence to that of independence and from childhood to adulthood, without chronological limits.

On the other hand, family farms are those establishments where the land, labor, and management are linked by blood ties, not restricting their definition to legislation (SCHNEIDER, 2004). Family farming stands out in the development of countries, especially for its capacity to supply basic foodstuffs for the domestic market, in addition to generating employment and income (WANDERLEY, 2003). The social reproduction of this category is linked to the successful process of family succession since it is the children who will continue what has been developed in the family property, as well as the social and cultural aspects intrinsic to the family (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA, 2019).

However, the category has been facing hard difficulty in succession processes, the period in which responsibilities, management, knowledge, and, in some cases, ownership of the property possession

from parents to children. In family farming, such processes are the responsibility of the parents, who determine the form and timing of succession (CAVICCHIOLI; BERTONI; PRETOLANI, 2018).

The succession process in family farming occurs by several motivators and young people are influenced by different aspects, being the main conditioning factors to motivate the permanence, namely: *a) positive perception of young people about themselves and their ability to take over the property* (MORAIS; BINOTTO; BORGES, 2017); *b) proximity of the production unit to economically dynamic areas* (CAVICCHIOLI; BERTONI; PRETOLANI, 2018; PESSOTTO et al., 2019); *c) characteristics of the heirs* (CAVICCHIOLI; BERTONI; PRETOLANI, 2018; SHAHZAD; ABUBAKR; FISCHER, 2021); *d) income from farming activities* (PESSOTTO et al., 2019; MATTE et al., 2019; SHAHZAD; ABUBAKR; FISCHER, 2021); *e) planning the succession process* (PESSOTTO et al., 2019); *f) mechanization/modernization of the production unit* (PESSOTTO et al., 2019; SHAHZAD; ABUBAKR; FISCHER, 2021); *g) number of siblings* (SHAHZAD; ABUBAKR; FISCHER, 2021); *h) valuation of the activity performed* (CHISWELL; LOBLEY, 2015; BERTOLOZZI-CAREDIO et al., 2020; COOPMANS et al., 2021); *i) family traditions and emotions* (MATTE et al., 2019; BERTOLOZZI-CAREDIO et al., 2020); *j) existence of agricultural policies* (BERTOLOZZI-CAREDIO et al., 2020) and, *j) structure of the rural environment* (SPANEVERELLO, 2008; FOGUESATTO et al., 2020).

Among the aspects mentioned as influencing the decision to be a successor, emotional and family factors stand out, through which tradition or traditional thinking and behavior patterns are expressed (KERBLER, 2012). Individual, emotive, and family dimensions are the most influential factors in the potential successor's decisions (BERTOLOZZI-CAREDIO et al., 2020; MATTE et al., 2019). Therefore, it is part of the succession process the transfer of intangible assets, such as values and feelings (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA; DEBASTIANI, 2021).

Moreover, succession planning increases the chances of having a successor, as parents plan and address the topic of succession with their children (PESSOTTO et al., 2019). Most farmers want their children to stay on the farm but do not demonstrate this effectively (WINCK et al., 2003). Parents' encouragement and positive opinion for a son to be a successor, followed by active measures to transfer the farm, are positively associated with successor identification (MORAIS; BINOTTO; BORGES, 2017; PESSOTTO et al., 2019; FOGUESATTO et al., 2020).

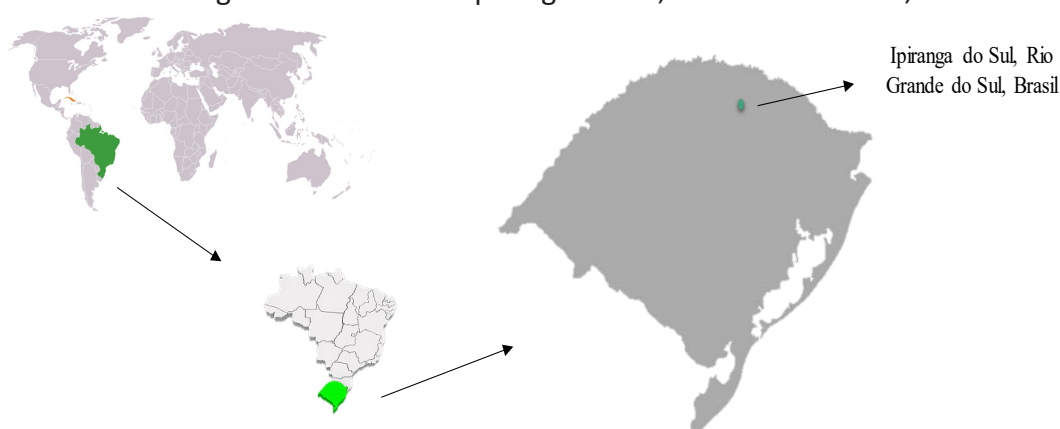
The succession process is even more possible when parents value the activities that young people develop, pass on responsibilities in the work and management of the farm, and give autonomy, and power in decisions and remuneration to them (DEGGERONE; LAROQUE; BARDEM, 2014). Recognizing the challenges present in the succession of family farms, and aiming to understand the succession process in production units with a successor, the next section presents the research methodology.

## Methodology

This research is classified as qualitative and was conducted based on data collection techniques: literature review and semi-structured interview. Qualitative research seeks to verify the relationship of reality with the object of study for the interpretation of facts (DALFOVO, LANA; SILVEIRA, 2008). The semi-structured interview is a technique that allows the interviewer a range of qualitative answers for analysis purposes, and the questions are applied personally to the interviewees (SANTOS; CANDELORO, 2006).

To collect data, we conducted ten interviews with successors, those who have already decided to continue the activities developed on their parents' farms. The successors are from Ipiranga do Sul in Rio Grande do Sul (according to Figure 1) and were intentionally selected, with the first four interviewees indicated by the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company and the Rural Workers Union of the municipality.

Figure 1- Location of Ipiranga do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil



Source: Elaborated based on Google Maps.

Once we had the first names and indications, we used the “snowball” technique, in which one young person indicated another, considering the following aspects: the young people should recognize themselves as young people and be successors. The “snowball” technique is a non-probability sampling that uses reference chains and the selection of participants occurs initially with the indication of key informants (VINUTO, 2014).

We delimited the number of interviews based on the saturation method. We consider data collection saturated when we do not discover new elements and new information is no longer necessary (NASCIMENTO et al., 2018). The research sought to contemplate young successors of both genders, but it was not possible to identify young women successors in the researched universe. Data collection occurred between June and November 2020 using a semi-structured script.

We prepared the interview script taking as reference scientific research and theoretical bases related to family succession in agriculture. We elaborated it in blocks, as follows: a) Block 1 - profile of the youngster; b) Block 2 - farm characteristics; c) Block 3 - family characteristics; d) Block 4 - family succession in agriculture; e) Block 5 - management, work, and rural succession; and f) Block 6 - the incentive for the youngsters and rural succession: motivations to be or not to be a successor. We carried out the interviews in the agricultural production units of the successors. Posteriormente transcrevemos as entrevistas, tabulamos as informações obtidas via questões fechadas e analisamos as perguntas abertas através da técnica de análise de conteúdo de Bardin (2011). Throughout the text, the interviewees’ speeches that were quoted were identified by the letter “J” (for young people), followed by the number that indicates the order in which the interviews occurred.

The municipality of Ipiranga do Sul is located in the Alto Uruguay region of the Rio Grande do Sul, and has a population of 1,871 inhabitants (IBGE, 2021). The municipality has 414 farming establishments distributed in an area of 14,214 hectares (IBGE, 19). Of these establishments, 376 are classified as family farming, representing 90.8%. The agricultural sector is important for generating jobs and income, highlighting the production of milk, corn, barley, poultry, wheat, and soybeans.

### **Rural succession in Ipiranga do Sul/RS**

The young people interviewed, as shown in Table 1, are between 25 and 40 years old. The advanced age of the young people who chose to be successors was explained in the research of

Matte et al. (2019, p. 25). For the authors, in rural families, parents remain in the management of the production unit until they are no longer physically able to continue with the work. This also occurs because succession occurs through a complex process, occurring slowly and gradually (WINCK, 2013).

**Table 1** - Profile of the young successors interviewed in Ipiranga do Sul/RS

Young	Education	Training in agribusiness	Parents' incentive to study	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Resides with parents
J1	High School	No	Yes	39	M	Married	No
J2	Higher Education	Agronomy	Yes	26	M	Single	Yes
J3	Higher Education	Agribusiness Technology	Medium	25	M	Single	Yes
J4	Higher Education	Agribusiness Technology	Medium	27	M	Single	Yes
J5	Higher Education	Agronomy	Yes	40	M	Married	No
J6	High School	No	No	34	M	Married	No
J7	Higher Education	Agribusiness Technology	Yes	26	M	Single	Yes
J8	Higher Education	Agricultural Technician	Yes	31	M	Married	No
J9	Incomplete elementary school	No	No	40	M	Married	No
J10	Higher Education	Agronomy	Medium	29	M	Married	No

Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research.

Most of the young successors (seven) have higher education in the Agricultural Sciences (AC) and consider formal knowledge fundamental to help in farm management. The result may indicate a trend in the field, in which young successors are becoming professionalized since the need for technical and managerial training is part of the demands to remain in the countryside (BREITENBACH; CORAZZA, 2019).

Of the seven young successors who qualified in the CA, four stated that their parents were motivated and made an effort to provide the necessary conditions for them to study. In these cases, parents warned about the importance of education to adopt the technologies and for the development of the family farm. The other three highlighted that the incentive was average and that

their parents did not create obstacles for them to study. What is common among the young people who did not formally become professionals is that they are the oldest among the interviewees, between 38 and 40 years old.

The recognition of the family is necessary for young people who seek to qualify and, at the same time, continue the activities developed in the rural establishment. Parents' encouragement gives young people an impulse to remain as a successor and directs their professional choice (TROIAN, BREITENBACH, 2018). Another aspect analyzed in the present research was the composition of the family nucleus, which can interfere with succession processes, such as having more siblings with an interest in succession. In this sense, Table 2 presents the aspects related to the family nucleus of the young successors.

**Table 2** - Composition of the family group and siblings' intentions in the generational succession in agriculture in Ipiranga do Sul/RS

Young	Brothers	Successor brother(s)	The interest of the brothers in being successors *
J1	1	No	No. Father got sick and the son who was less stabilized returned.
J2	2	Yes (1)	Yes, the twin brother. They both identify with agriculture.
J3	1	No	No. Brother with special needs.
J4	2	No	No. They are women, older, married, and migrated to the city.
J5	0	-	-
J6	2	No	No. They work in the city, they don't like farming.
J7	4	Yes (2)	Three stayed in the countryside. They like farming and the production unit supports it.
J8	2	No	No. They are women and have adapted better to the city.
J9	4	No	No. They migrated to the city and settled there.
J10	2	No	No. They studied another area, they didn't like agriculture.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research. \* Speeches of the interviewees.

In the family group analysis, it is observed (Table 2) that only one of the young men is an only child, and the others have between one and four brothers. Only two interviewees have brothers who remained in the countryside, also male. In the other families, the brothers followed activities in the urban environment. The young people who have siblings as successors occurred because the production unit had the land, income, and labor conditions for the survival of the other siblings, and



also because they liked farming. This result corroborates the research of Troian and Breitenbach (2018) because for young people to remain in the field, adequate conditions are necessary, and there is a commitment to the activities developed in the production unit.

A third aspect addressed in this section is the profile of the production units. Farms that are more structured and have more land available tend to arouse greater interest among young people in generational succession. It is common for farmers' children to show interest in staying on the farm, but face a lack of resources for investments, acquiring new areas, and adapting to technologies and modernizations, causing them to give up on succession (WINCK et al., 2013).

Table 3 shows aspects related to the profile of the production units. The land composition of the production units is diverse, but all fall under family farming (Family Farming Law, No. 11.326/2006). The fact that some young people already have their land is due to a) sharing the inheritance of the deceased mother; b) an elderly father who has already transferred an area of land; c) acquisition of new areas by the successor.

**Table 3** - Profile of family production units of the young successors of Ipiranga do Sul/RS

Young	Land area (ha)			Business Activities	
	Leased	From parents	Own	Main	Secondary
J1	5	40	5	Soybean	Cattle raising
J2	0	50	0	Dairy cattle	Soybean, Maize, Barley
J3	0	50	4	Dairy cattle	Soybean
J4	0	75	0	Soybean	Cattle raising
J5	0	51	70	Soybean	Maize, Wheat, Barley
J6	0	30	0	Dairy cattle	Soybean
J7	20	25	40	Soybean	Maize, Wheat, Barley
J8	60	80	22	Soybean	Maize, Wheat
J9	0	50	18	Soybean	Wheat, Barley
J10	0	44	16	Soybean	Cattle raising

Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research.

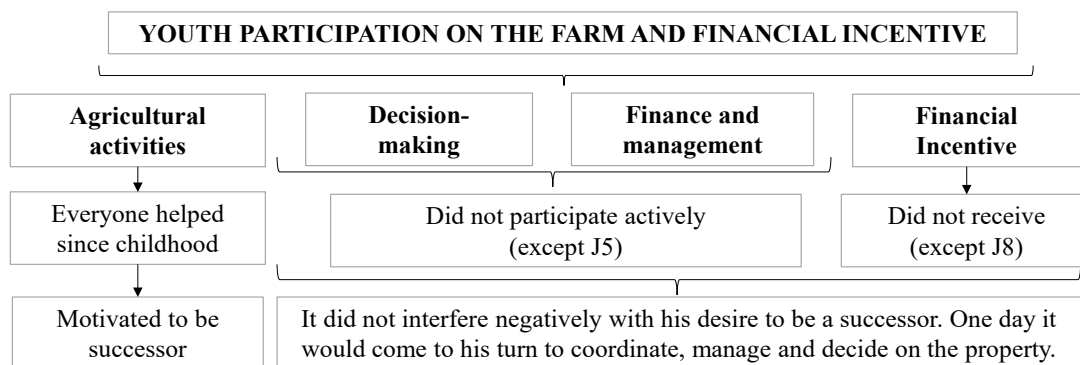
Of the ten investigated production units, seven have soybeans, and three have milk as the main agricultural activities developed for commercialization. This is in line with the municipal reality that points to these two commercial activities as the most economically important for agriculture in the municipality (IBGE, 2019).

**Factors that contributed to the incentive and interest of rural youth in succession**

The research investigated the factors that contributed to the desire for succession in family farming. This section presents and discusses factors that interfered with the decision-making of the children to become successors. Participation in the farm (work and management), parental incentive, and financial encouragement are in the spotlight.

a) *Participation in agricultural activities, decision-making, finances, and management of the family’s production unit.* The main results about this topic are in Figure 1. The ten young people interviewed participated in agricultural activities since childhood motivating them to stay in the production unit, as can be visualized in the speech of one of the interviewees. “I always helped. Certainly, it motivated me because it is when you are small that you get the love for things. What is meant to be good is given from a young age” (J2). In the speech of the successor, the pedagogical function of work in family farming is evident, in which parents assign tasks and responsibilities according to the age and capacity of their children. A similar result was found in the research of Wästerlund (2018).

**Figure 1** - Decision-making and management of the production unit of the young successors of Ipiranga do Sul/RS



Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research.

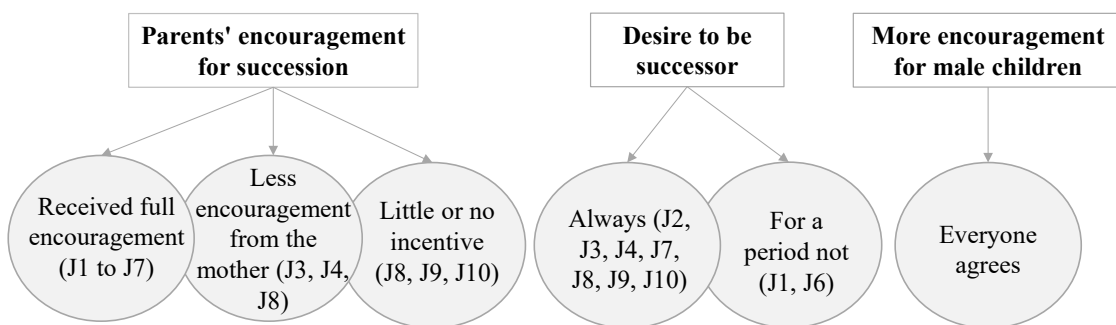
The exception occurs with a successor who followed the business with his father from an early age: “I always followed my father in everything, always knew about the finances. That motivated me and made me have a love for the profession” (J5). For Breitenbach et al. (2019), young people’s participation in agricultural activities develops their love and appreciation for the

profession. However, participation in management and decision-making is also essential in the succession process because it allows the young person to feel participated and valued. It also avoids late family succession and reduces management inefficiencies due to the accumulated experience and training (LOBLEY; BAKER; WHITEHEAD, 2010).

b) *Financial incentive*: before the succession, the youngsters were not rewarded monetarily by their parents for the activities performed in the production unit, except for one of the ten interviewees. Despite this, when they needed money, they requested it from their parents and received it, especially on weekends when they went for social activities. *“No. I earned when I needed it and when I went out on weekends”* (J2). The financial disincentive, according to the young people, did not interfere with their desire to be successors.

c) *Positioning and behavior of parents*. As can be seen in Figure 2, most (seven) of the young participants in the research received full encouragement from their parents to be successors, as represented in the following statement: *“They always motivated me, my father would like someone to stay, but we should do what he wanted, they always told us to study, then we would see what to do”* (J1). Of these seven, three mentioned that their mothers encouraged them less, as J4 reports: *“There was less incentive (from the mother), she thought it was hard to work in the countryside, and always told me to get a job outside”* (J4).

**Figure 2** – Incentives received by parents to be successors and the interest of young people in succession in Ipiranga do Sul/RS



Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research.

The three young men (three) who had little or no encouragement from their parents highlighted that, even though they did not directly encourage them, their parents often expressed the desire for one of their children to stay in the production unit. This aspect interfered positively with interest in succession, as can be visualized in the speech of one of the young men. *“They didn’t give motivation, but they always said that one of them had to stay to continue with the business”* (J8).

The interviewees emphasize the desire of parents to keep at least one child on the property to continue the activities developed. Parents can encourage their children to stay when they express this position, but they also encourage when they give young people autonomy and ensure their income to develop their independence and self-esteem (PANNO; MACHADO, 2014). The choice to be a successor or not is related to the young person’s vocation, but parents must prepare their children for the future. If children grow up hearing their parents complain about farming, they will be more likely to migrate to the city; however, if parents invest in the activity and encourage their children, the chances that they will remain in farming are greater (BREITENBACH, 2019).

The research also identified that most young people (eight) have always considered staying in the field and family succession as their professional and personal destiny. *“Yes, because I always liked agriculture”* (J7). The desire to be a successor, as visualized in the speech, is tied to the liking for farming. Among the two young successors interviewed who did not always have the desire to be a successor, one of them attests to a love for agriculture, but in the past, he evaluated life in the city as being better. *“When I was younger, I wasn’t sure, I liked farming, but I thought it was better in the city”* (J1). The other young man also considered, in the past, the city to have better working conditions and income:

I didn’t think, I worked in the city and always thought that my younger brother would stay, then he left too, one day my father asked me if I didn’t want to go back, I talked to a friend who worked with milk, and he encouraged me, at that time milk had a good price, then by the influence of my father and a friend I went back (J6).

Young people recognize that the parents’ encouragement is higher for their male children. According to them, this aspect occurs in all rural families and is the result of a macho and patriarchal culture still predominantly present in the countryside. According to the report of one interviewee, it is a habit in agriculture to encourage the male child: *“Yes, most parents encourage their male children from an early age. I think that it is by habit to think that it has to be the man”* (J3). Still,

according to one of the interviewees, there is a misconception of previous generations in believing that women cannot be successors.

Our parents' generation usually thinks this way, by culture, and believes that women can't work on the farm because of physical effort and because they like to study and work in the city. Today things have changed, and the current generation no longer thinks this way, today everything is mechanized, and anyone can work regardless of sex (J7).

The predominant idea that agriculture involves hard manual labor and is not suitable for women is old-fashioned thinking. But it is still present in the day-to-day activities of agriculture and decisions about succession. Stropasolas (2002), two decades ago, already warned that the daughters of family farmers are the most disadvantaged in the rural environment for being excluded from the inheritance of the land and for the double work shifts required. Although this has been changing, it is a slow process that affects and intensifies the masculinization of the countryside.

### **Challenges of succession: the (lack of) autonomy, planning, and control of emotions**

The research identified that young people have participated in the activities developed in the productive units since childhood, which helped in the decision to become a successor. However, the succession process occurred without any previous planning, giving insecurity to the young people when making decisions, especially about capital and investments. During the succession process, the young people from Ipiranga do Sul faced some challenges, and the main ones will describe as follows:

*a) The managerial aspects, the uncertainty concerning income, and harvest guarantees are all inherent to the farming activity.* Incertitude appears in the discourse of nine of the ten interviewees. Specifically, seven of the young people interviewed gave their statements. For three of them, J2, J3, and J6, the main challenge is *"Uncertainty in income and production"* (J6). For two others, J10 and J5, the main challenge in succession are related to insecurity and lack of guarantees. *"Insecurity in the face of the capital, working without having a guarantee"* (J10). For two other interviewees (J4 and J7), the *"price scissors"* the high cost of production, is the challenge to be overcome in family succession. *"The biggest challenge is to maintain what we have because every year the profit margin is lower, due to the high cost of production and to make sure that this small profit margin can be new investments"* (J7).

Uncertainty is a characteristic present in agriculture regardless of the agricultural activity. Such risks impact production costs and business profits and can be related to production, credit, and prices (WAQUIL; MIELE; SCHULTZ, 2010).

*b) Family aspects, driven by conflicts, power relations, differences of opinion, and, especially, emotional factors.* In the second analytical category identified in this research are three young people, J1, J8, and J9, who have family relations, the main challenges of the succession process. Patience for the relationship and the understanding that the assets managed are the families and not private are part of the perception of one of the interviewees. *“Having the patience to talk with the father and understand that you don’t own everything, and the uncertainties of agricultural production and prices”* (J1).

For another interviewee, keeping the family together after succession is one of the main challenges of the process, associated with the uncertainty of the productive dynamics in agriculture. *“Keeping the family together, giving continuity in the best way, having a taste for work, and not doing it out of obligation. Managing the property is a great difficulty because the weather is a factor that interferes a lot, and we plant without knowing if we will harvest (J8). Finally, for a successor, the biggest challenge is the divergence of opinions and the generational conflicts between parents and children. “Divergences of ideas and opinions with the parents”* (J9).

One of the main results of this research pointed to the lack of dialogue in families as a central challenge in the succession process. Lack of dialog is an inter-organizational characteristic in family businesses (FREIRE et al., 2010). Breitenbach and Corazza (2019) also found that in family farming, there is little or no dialogue between successor or potential successor parents and children, making the succession process fragile and at risk of failure.

Added to this are the difficulties in gaining the parents’ trust in decision-making. Parents’ resistance was higher at the beginning of the succession process, especially when it came to innovative ideas. The successors need to demonstrate constantly positive results so that the trust between them and their parents is strengthened: *“I had a lot of problems, in the beginning, the father is hardheaded and did everything his way. The property was very disorganized, he only had confidence in my work after I started to show results”* (J10).

This research showed that the decisions on the farm were made based on the past experiences of the parents and grandparents. It's difficult for parents to accept technological innovations and investments. However, controlling costs and income helps young people to demonstrate to their parents that their decisions have been right.

In most cases studied, parents still participate in the decision-making process, and choices are discussed in advance within the family. Also, most young people depend partially on their parents to access financial resources, such as financing and agricultural policies: *“I haven't had any problems regarding this (gaining the trust of parents), but decisions are always made together with the family”* (J7). *“The income is from altogether it is still the father who does the business in the bank usually, one of us accompanies”* (J2).

However, the young successors surveyed are organizing themselves to segment the business and commercial activities, seeking more autonomy and total control over at least one activity among those developed, as explicit in the interviewees' speech. *“Decisions are made together. The income, for now, is from all of us together, except my brothers. But the next step I want to take is to separate the accounts”* (J10).

In general, parents prioritize repeating the actions, are resistant to change and innovation, and conflict with the ideas of their successors. Conflicts are reduced when parents see positive results. The lack of autonomy in performing activities and family conflicts are significant factors for young people to migrate to the city, especially those with higher education (FOGUEZATTO et al., 2020). Chart 1 presents the trust, autonomy, and decision-making of the young successors investigated in this research.

**Chart 1** - Autonomy of the young successors and conflicts with parents in the succession process in Ipiranga do Sul/RS

Process for gaining parental trust in decision making	Autonomy in making operational, managerial, and financial decisions	Parents' acceptance of new ideas and intergenerational conflicts (parents and successor)
They had no problems. But they needed to show competence in their activities and decision-making.	Young people consider themselves to have autonomy, but they share information with their parents and opt for joint decision-making.	Initially, it was difficult, innovative ideas had resistance from the parents. Young people seek to do something different and innovative to strengthen the production unit and improve processes and products, generating resistance from their parents.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research

Despite facing some challenges in the succession process, in terms of decision-making and autonomy, the youngsters were able to implement improvements in the production units, namely: technological innovations (soy and milk, especially); continuous technical assistance; application of scientific knowledge; managerial control; production alternatives, cost reduction, and productivity increase.

When the successors took over the family business, they implemented improvements and innovations on the farms: *“I made improvements and technology in soybean cultivation, technical assistance, and quality inputs”* (J1). On the other hand, investing in technology is difficult for young people because of parents’ resistance to acquiring knowledge and accepting new ideas. *“In the beginning, there was a lot of insecurity. As things were still done in my grandfather’s way, my father felt insecure about the first new ideas that I suggested. But after I showed him the results, he started to lose his fear and let me do it my way”* (J3). In the succession process, young people are constantly challenged and questioned. Their ideas and knowledge are tested by their parents.

*c) Succession planning and emotional aspects.* All the successors interviewed stated that family succession was not a planned process in their families. The succession process occurred naturally, with the insertion of siblings in non-agricultural sectors or with the aging or sickness of the patriarchs. A professional and coordinated preparation of the youngsters within the family farm did not occur.

However, informal preparation occurred throughout their lives, from the participation and collaboration in the agricultural activities developed in the production unit. *“I participated in the activities busily as a youth and teenager. This made me like the work, and that is why I chose to stay in the field”* (J9). The frequent contact with the parents positively interfered with their love for the profession and their desire to be successors.

Above the desire for financial and professional ascension in agriculture, young people consider the positive emotional ties with the land, the profession, and the family as the main motivations to be successors. This context is observed in the statements of two young people: *“affinity with the land, love for the farming profession”* (J8), and *“I always liked it, I was the only son who liked to help his father”* (J10). Similar results were found by Stockdale; Ferguson (2020) and Plana-Farran; Gallizo (2021). They found that attachment to the land and family, emotional attachment, and the feeling of



wanting to continue family productions are central to the decision of young successors.

The present research identified the existence of a barrier in the succession process, in which families do not differentiate the “rural business” from the “family life”. In other words, there is no separation between professional and emotional aspects, a characteristic of family businesses. Thus, the planning of the succession process does not occur formally. The children (successors or not) are not clear about how the heritage will be divided and which will be the rewards or obligations of the successor son are.

In this sense, it is evident the need for families to seek professional guidance to establish the planning of the succession process. In addition to talking to parents and siblings, the family should define the rules for capital division. Such attitudes facilitate the succession process, increase the security of the young successors and other siblings who are not entitled to the land and reduce conflicts in the family.

### **Final considerations**

The succession process in family farming involves several challenges. Identifying the conflicts and divergences faced by the heirs is essential for interventions to be made, keeping the environment productive and harmonious. In this sense, the present research reinforces the need for succession planning to minimize conflicts.

The successors of Ipiranga do Sul, considering their self-definition as young people, are between 25 and 40 years old and show the maturity to continue the activities developed by their parents. The educational level of the successors is high, young people with higher education in the area of agricultural sciences, a differential for the development of the production unit. The production units vary between 25 and 80 hectares and have soybean production and dairy cattle raising as their principal source of income. Still, it is evident the scarcity of women successors in family agriculture in the municipality.

The motivations for young people to become successors are linked to emotional issues. The central aspects in the decision to become successors are love for agriculture, respect for the profession of farming, and the desire for financial alternatives for the production unit, through changes and improvements in the production system. The challenges listed by young people in

the succession process reinforce what research has shown, especially the lack of autonomy of young people and their parents' trust, the uncertainty of the activity, and family conflicts.

Considering these results, there is a perceived need for more space and time for frank conversations between parents and children. Parents need to share the management and trust in the young people to avoid that uncertainty about land property and administration that makes young people opt to leave the countryside. Furthermore, the succession processes must be planned within the family nucleus. The successor son needs to be clear about his duties and benefits when taking over the ownership. Issues such as division of property, responsibility for caring for parents, and income division must be discussed in the family for the successor's safety and planning.

This research identified that being a successor requires patience and flexibility. The successor needs to understand that it is not an easy task for the father to leave aside the activities performed in the production unit, requiring caution and patience about the work and decision-making. The successor needs to know and be committed to the work he will do to show results and gain the parents' trust.

Therefore, the results indicate that young people, even facing challenges and difficulties in the succession process, see more positive than negative aspects in remaining in the production unit. The successors understand that the tardy process of access to land, management, and autonomy for decision-making, are directly related to family and emotional aspects and affective ties with the land.

Rare studies have shown that the emotional aspects, such as love for the land, the profession, and the desire to continue the family dream, are the determining and categorical factors for the children's decision to be successors. However, it should be noted that the succession process is complex, involving several factors, from internal and emotional, to external ones related to the production unit and the accesses. Thus, succession occurs in different ways, which change according to family dynamics and relations, and regional issues, such as availability of land, access to technology, and education, and is not outlined as a linear model or a rule.

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