

# Pack 117

# Type: Backgrounder

2021

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**Backgrounder: Succession planning and shared decision-making in family farming**

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**Why is this subject important to listeners?**

Because family farmers should know:

* The benefits they can receive by engaging their wives and children (youth) in the family farm as co-decision-makers.
* How to make shared decisions in a family farming household.
* How to involve children and youth as they grow into adulthood to ensure that family farms benefit from their knowledge and skills and are transferred to the next generation.
* The challenges and opportunities of engaging children and wives (youth and women) in family farm decision-making.
* That engaging other family members in the farm as co-decision makers does not reduce status within the household.
* The need for shared decision-making in family farms in light of the need to adapt to climate change.

**Key information on family farming, succession planning, and shared decision-making**

*General information:*

* On family farms, the farmer and his or her family conduct much of the labour. This labour should be paid just like it was being done by a hired labourer.
* Family members can make decisions on family farms, but it is typically men or the head of household who must approve these decisions. This means that women and youth must have the man’s approval for them to take action. This should promote family collaboration, but can leave women and youth feeling they cannot make their own business decisions.
* Incorporating youth in family farms is vital to the future of family farming. This can be done by engaging your children in family farm decision-making and creating opportunities for them to lead in parts of the family farm business.
* Most families work together on farms—mothers, fathers, and children of all ages. This provides families with an opportunity to teach their children about farming practices and get them excited about agriculture.
* Working on a farm field is often used as a punishment for children. This leads to a negative image of agriculture for many youths. As a family, try to use engaging with the farm as a positive reward to help grow youth interest in agriculture.
* To minimize conflicts, clear communication is necessary in family farms. This will ensure that each family member’s role is clearly defined.
* When farmers allow youth to access family farms, youth can incorporate new and innovative agricultural ideas with the traditional knowledge they learn from older farmers.

*For further information, see documents 1, 2, 3 and interview*

**Linking climate change to succession planning and shared decision-making in family farms**

* Climate change is forcing farmers to respond quickly to changing conditions. Engaging the whole family (wives and older children) in decision-making on the farm can help monitor the changing climate and help farms be ready for quick changes.
* Youth are quick to make changes. This is why they can be so essential to the health of a family farm facing climate change. Youth often have access to social media and the latest news. Engaging them on the family farm can help them take the lead in providing key information. This can give them a sense of belonging within the family and keep the farm secure for generations to come.

**Common challenges of family farming, succession planning, and shared decision-making**

* Many youth and women face unfavourable land inheritance practices. This results in them needing to purchase land directly, which is costly and limiting, especially during start-up.
* Often, family farms and decision-making authority is not passed down until an elder dies. Thus, someone might be 40 or older before they are able to take a leadership role on the farm, discouraging youth who want to take leadership roles today. It is even more challenging when no decision has been made about who will get the family farm before the elder dies. This can lead to internal family conflict.
* Passing on a farm and decision-making authority can be challenging. Farmer have spent their whole lives working and building their business, and entrusting it to someone else can feel risky.
* Some farmers feel that their authority and standing in a family depends on being a decision-maker and that sharing responsibility for decisions will impact their status and position in the family. However, sharing decision-making can help strengthen that status. The farmer can be seen as an even stronger leader, role model, and as someone with a very strong and wise family.
* Sometimes, families argue over who should get access to the family farm and how they should farm it. These family disputes can make farming less appealing to youth. Also, such conflicts can result in key information and connections being lost, which makes restarting harder.
* Generation gaps, gender gaps, and related inequalities can threaten the continuity of family farming. If the next generation is not prepared to lead the farm, it can be lost to the family.
* In Kenya, as family farms are subdivided further across generations and become smaller and smaller, they become unsustainable as farms, and difficult to operate as profitable enterprises.

**Gender aspects of family farm succession planning and shared decision-making**

* In Kenya, women are responsible for crop and livestock production, but do not own the land on which they farm or rear livestock, which is owned by men. This prevents them from growing their own assets.
* Women or youth who want to grow crops on family farms often have to get permission from the men who own the land.
* For land inheritance, traditions often favour male over female children.
* Women often don’t own or control profitable family assets. There is a local saying “Women own the cow; men own the milk.” It’s men who typically receive money from women’s work.
* When activities become profitable, women are often pushed out. This can result in women wanting to avoid crops that could bring higher profits.
* Women are responsible for balancing the many aspects of household (for example, cooking, cleaning, and child care), with farm work, and thus they need access to parts of the family farm that work with their schedules.

**How families can encourage youth to go into family farming**

For youth to be involved in family farming, families can engage them in the following ways:

* Listen to and let youth express themselves, and allow them to air their opinions.
* Show youth that farming can be profitable by connecting them to the best markets for their produce.
* If youth see their parents being rewarded for farming, this could change their attitude and help them embrace family farming.
* Allow youth access to family land and finances since they lack savings to obtain their own land, and accessing loans without collateral is challenging.
* Older farmers in charge of family farms can allow youth to incorporate innovative agricultural technologies and solutions in production and marketing.
* Allow youth to take part in decisions on how a family farm is run instead of relegating them to their traditional role of labourers on their parents’ farms.
* Equitably and fairly distributing farm income with youth can encourage them to go into family farming.
* In order for youth to farm on existing family farms that have become degraded and yield poorly, arrangements should be made for these farms to be rehabilitated.
* Older farmers should allow youth to join farmer co-operatives to help them be drawn to agriculture and increase their incomes.

**How to support shared decision-making and succession planning**

*Decision-making*

* When selling crop or livestock produce, household members can benefit from hearing the perspective and knowledge of other members of the household. More information not only helps make stronger decisions, it models to younger generations how wise decisions are made. And, even if the household does not move forward with their perspective, household members appreciate that their opinion is sought and heard.
* Women/wives often have different perspectives on how to manage household assets. They often think about children and the family’s food and health needs. Engaging them in decision-making helps ensure that decisions are not only best for the farm, but for the household.
* Take the time to share information. This helps avoid conflict. The problem is not always that people disagree with decision, but are frustrated because they do not know why a decision was made.
* New ideas can sometimes seem risky. Provide family members with space to try new ideas at a small scale. For example, instead of using a new variety of seed for the whole crop, change it for a few rows and see what happens. This allows wise farmers to experiment and make changes while managing risk.
* Ask to be part of decision-making activities. If the answer is no at the beginning, keep asking and explain why you would like to be part of the process.
* Start by listening to the decision-making process. Learn how your family makes decisions and then start contributing to decisions.

*Succession planning*

* Instead of starting with responsibility for the whole farm, allow youth to have responsibility for making decisions on part of the farm. This helps youths feel they have ownership. It also helps them learn as they grow, preparing them for taking on larger amounts of responsibility over time.
* Make farming fun! Use engagement in the farm as an enjoyable reward rather than a punishment. When working on the farm is a punishment, it is not surprising when the next generation does not want to farm.
* Talk openly about what will happen to the farm takes a lot of pressure off family members who are wondering or worrying about it and allows them to make decisions about their lives.
* Family farms that include engagement from different generations get the best of both worlds: energy and new ideas from younger generations and wisdom and experience from older generations.
* Take pride in what you do and share that pride with your family. Producing food to ensure local food security is an honourable profession.
* Encourage their children to engage in agriculture.

*Do not devalue one generation to replace it with another*

* Older farmers are needed to ensure that family farms continue to thrive while a younger generation of farmers takes over.
* Teach your children about agriculture. Share information with them so they are able to keep the farm running for years to come.
* Show children that taking on a new role on the farm is a positive thing. Showing that a family is strong and that the next generation has the skills to take over the family operation elevates a family’s status.

*For further information, see documents 1, 2, 3 and interview*

***Where can I find other resources on this topic?***

1. Agriprofocus and Agriterra, 2016. *Youth in cooperatives management workshop report.* <http://images.agri-profocus.nl/upload/161101_--_Youth_in_cooperatives_management_workshop_report_(Final)1479740192.pdf> (1.32 MB).
2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2014. *Youth and agriculture: Key challenges and concrete solutions.* <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39135645/Youth+and+agriculture_Key+challenges+and+concrete+solutions/e803da0e-edc8-461b-961a-233a2dc61458> (2.57 MB).
3. International Year of Family Farming, World Coordinating Committee, 2014. *Young People and Family Farming.* <https://ypard.net/sites/default/files/resources/young_people_and_family_farming_en.pdf> (5.23 MB).

## Acknowledgements

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