



## **Farm succession is about much more than just transferring land and property – weaving common ground between generations**

*Insights and reflections from a work session during the Rural Resilience project meeting in Grzybów, Poland, November 2024.*

*Across Europe, farming models are evolving, from traditional family-run operations to innovative structures such as cooperatives and community farming. What unites them is their potential to contribute to eco-friendly, small-scale, agroecological practices, standing in stark contrast to industrial megafarms. At the Weaving Common Ground gathering last November, one recurring theme that resonated throughout the event was the urgency of **generational renewal in farming**. Report by Simone Matouch.*

### **Challenges in Farm Succession**

Whether through family inheritance or new non-family arrangements, the handover of farms brings both challenges and opportunities. Several pressing issues affecting farm succession across Europe were highlighted and discussed:

#### **1. Family farm successors – gaps and opportunities**

A significant number of farms are at risk of closure due to a lack of (family) successors. At the same time, aspiring farmers often face barriers to land access, including exorbitant prices and speculative land markets.

#### **2. Negative Narratives About Farming**

For many farming families, narratives such as “*hard work, low income*” deter younger generations from taking over farms. Additionally, traditional gender roles still play a role, with farms often passed down to sons rather than daughters. Encouragingly, participants from Plessé, France, shared that more well-educated women are now showing interest in farming careers.

#### **3. Generational Misalignment**

Differences in values and life priorities between older and younger generations also pose challenges. For the older generation, the 24/7 work model is a reality that is rarely questioned, while younger farmers value work-life balance and family time. A Polish participant noted in that context the social difficulty farmers face, observing that *only 1 in 10 young farmers can find a partner willing to manage a farm together*.

#### **4. Social and Cultural Challenges**

Patriarchal structures and multi-generational living arrangements can complicate farm handovers. In some cases, e.g. young families taking over farms must also assume responsibility for elderly relatives, often leading to social tension. Women marrying into farming families frequently face unique challenges, having to assert their interests within extended family structures.

## Potential Solutions to Bridge the Gaps

Several innovative solutions spanning economic, social, and legal aspects were explored:

### 1. Economic Tools

- Establishing a *European Land Observatory* to monitor land prices and regulate speculation. Land should not be treated purely as a commodity.
- Addressing housing costs and ensuring affordable land access for aspiring farmers.

### 2. Connecting Generations

- Creating platforms to link retiring farmers with newcomers, such as the Austrian initiative [Perspektive Landwirtschaft](#).
- Proposing a *FarmErasmus* program to foster cross-border exchange, enabling farmers to share experiences and learn from successful examples of intergenerational cooperation.

### 3. Legal Support

- Designing incentives to ease farm transitions, such as tax breaks or pension schemes for retiring farmers willing to hand over their land.
- Value of land - calculated based on its productive value rather than its market value

## Commitments: Changing Narratives and Strengthening Action

The conclusion of the European Rural Gathering emphasized that the future of farming lies in breaking down barriers, fostering collaboration, and shifting perspectives. A key takeaway was the **need to challenge the prevailing narrative that farming is “hard and without future”**. Participants recognized that changing this perception is essential to attracting new generations to agriculture and ensuring its sustainability.