

2022 Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support

Project Summary

1. Project Title and Associated Programme

KT Programme	Farm structures and financial management
Project title	Succession and inheritance project teams

2. Project background

Farm succession and inheritance has persistently emerged as an issue in agriculture on a global scale, despite a range of incentives in the Irish and EU context. The age profile of Irish farmers has increased, with the average of a farmer reaching 59 in 2021.

Farm Succession is complex and involves different professionals to achieve a succession plan. All family situations are different, no “one size fits all” plan will work. It may be possible to design a process that would achieve results for farming families, a holistic approach involving the relevant professionals. In framing a farm succession plan, a solicitor, accountant, farm advisor, mediator, auctioneer and family members need to be involved to achieve a successful result.

The project aims to develop a streamlined process of getting information, advice, and a clear set of steps for each farm family to achieve their desired outcome. This will be achieved by bringing all the necessary professional advisers together with the family to finalise a succession plan. This project aims to develop this concept into a recommended “best practice” to enable and support farming families to achieve farm succession and inheritance plans.

With regard to policy, Generational Renewal is an objective of CAP. (https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/new-cap-2023-27/key-policy-objectives-new-cap_en#briefs).

3. Project aims and objectives

Aim:

To identify and develop a best practice model for supporting farm succession and inheritance decision making using a multi-actor approach.

Objectives:

- To identify the role of the key AKIS actors in supporting farm succession and inheritance decision making.
- Ascertain the need and value for succession project teams in supporting farm families by identifying possible efficiencies and benefits to the farm family in adopting a co-ordinated approach to planning farm succession

- To examine the willingness of farm families to engage with succession project teams
- To develop a best practice model for key professionals to engage and support farm families in succession conversations.
- To examine the need for additional facilitation training for agricultural advisers to assist in the succession project team interactions

4. Suggestions for methodology

The project will employ a mixed-methods approach, using survey data and focus group/participatory generated data. This data will be collected in 2 stages:

1. A survey will be used to quantify key aspects of the farm succession planning process, this will include the role of AKIS actors, identification of bottlenecks that hinder progress towards a viable succession plan, the need for succession/inheritance teams, and the willingness of family farms to engage in such an initiative.
2. A number of pilot projects will be observed in order to develop a best practice model and gather data in a participatory manner.

5. Expected Impact of the Project

Farm Succession and Inheritance is a key part of the Teagasc KT programme with a national campaign delivered through workshops, and media under the title “Transferring the family farm”. Over the last ten years thousands of farm families have attended events to learn how to achieve a successful succession plan. These events provide information such as to how to get started, and put farming families “in touch” with the different professionals. However there is no best practice model to follow. A model when developed could have significant impact on the ability of the different actors in the AKIS model to promote timely succession planning and thus have a major positive impact on Irish agriculture.

KT professionals interact with farm families all along the various stages of the farm family and farm business development cycle. It is vital that KT advisers take a proactive approach to their interactions with families in this area as it provides continuity of support to farm families while farm reaching decisions are being made on the future direction of the business. Advisor assistance to farm families during this process can also ensure continuity of contact with the “next generation” of farmer which can benefit the farm operation in the longer term.