



# Farm-Success

*training farmers for sustainable succession processes*

*Case Studies*

Germany 03

## 1. Intro

The dairy cattle farm was moved out of the village by the predecessor, and developed from an original 12 dairy cows and 8 hectares of farmland to 120 hectares of arable farming and grassland management, as well 45 to 50 dairy cows and their own offspring. When his daughter came to the farm with the son-in-law in 2008, they began working together at the farm. In 2011 an operational company was established. Today, three generations live on the farm. After a challenging period, in 2016 the transition was completed, after the young couple had already planned to leave the farm and establish an agricultural operation elsewhere.

## 2. Promoter Profile

**2.1 Name:** n.n.

**2.2 Age:** 36

**2.3 Gender:** Male

**2.4 Education:** Master of Agricultural Sciences; Beekeeper training; Free agricultural school

**2.5 Marital status:** Married

**2.6 Number of children:** 7 years old and 4 years old

## 3. Farm Profile

**3.1 Address - to be used for the farm location map:** Baden-Württemberg

**3.2 Farm Area in ha:** 130ha

**3.3 Date since when the family owns the farm:** Several Generations

**3.4 N° of workers on the farm:** 4

	N° Full time	N° Part-time/seasonal
Family members	2	1
Other than family members	1	0

**3.5 Farm description before succession:**

The company was greatly improved and expanded by the predecessor. After enormous growth steps, land purchases and leased area, the farm stabilized to about 120ha current land area and a dairy cattle herd of about 45 cows. The female offspring were kept to increase the herd, and male offspring were prepared for slaughter at an additional fattening operation on the farm.

Even before the succession, many changes were made:

- hay-fed milk production
- organic production
- innovative grazing
- beekeeping (20 bee colonies)
- agricultural tourism
- agriculturally related events on the farm

The son-in-law and the father were able to work together to improve on details that were not adequately considered during the period of farm expansion and development.

### **3.6 Farm description after succession:**

After the succession in 2016, which had cost a great amount of energy, everyone involved is glad about the state of the situation, and they are recharged for new tasks. The predecessor is still active on the farm. The entrepreneurs are now planning the next development steps towards agro-tourism, in order to broaden the income base further. The successors want to go their own way, and appreciate the performance of the predecessor generation.

## *4. Succession Process*

### **4.1 Free text:**

The succession process was a great challenge. Already in the year 2010, consultation and mediation were incorporated into the succession process. In the time leading up to their marriage (2011), the son-in-law and daughter were concerned about how they would earn their livelihood in the future, and wanted to legally document their contribution to the current of the farming business. In 2011, the company was founded as a partnership between the father and his son-in-law. A very demanding social process between the two generations took place parallel to the development of the business. There were different positions and beliefs regarding the management and further development of the company. Predecessor and successor are both strong personalities and are very different. The predecessor has very high expectations, and this contributes to fear of failure in the successor. He still feels that he has something to prove to the predecessor. The strong bond of the predecessor to his life work is easy to recognize.

Despite extensive consultation and recurring talks, the succession situation escalated so far that the designated successors at Christmas 2015 made the decision to leave the farm. They began actively to search for another farm. Then the predecessor relented. He symbolically handed the scepter to the successor when he was signing the contract, and everyone went to dinner together to celebrate this step. Even after succession, there are still fears, worries and hardships that bring sand into the gears - both operationally and socially. As before the succession, the successor still says that it will take time to finally find the optimum of proximity

and distance as well as letting go and working together.

All parties have put a great deal of energy into the succession process. Today they are happy to have found a solution, and to be able to continue to live together as three generations on the farm.

#### **4.2 Threats/Challenges:**

**Communication:** You have to talk to each other, and also to clearly communicate your position. Non-verbal communication is also very important. The fact that we have shown ourselves to be consistent, and indeed have planned to leave the farm, in the end brought movement from the predecessor. It is a challenge to talk and to remain at the table when it becomes emotional and prejudices come up.

**Expectations / fears:** different or in some cases excessively high expectations are very difficult to reconcile. Mediation and advice helps. However, in the end, the solution must ultimately be desired by the participants themselves. Clarity in the discussions is important. Instead of constantly focusing on one's own expectations, one should also recognize that one can be a good person, despite one's faults.

#### **4.3 Main Training/Skills/Competences**

A stronger belief in himself would have been helpful for the successor in the situation with the succession and the disputes with the predecessor. Here he would have liked to have been more self-assured.

This also had to do with the fact that in some places the clarity of knowing what you are standing for and what you want is perhaps missing.

Knowing what you stand for and where you want to go, coupled with the necessity of having faith in yourself then leads to an adequate level of assertiveness.

#### **4.4 Successor advice**

“Open up, and be completely clear in conversations with the predecessor! Look at each situation from many angles. This can lead to understanding of others! Do not consider yourself as too important, but be stubborn!”

“In the end it is always helpful to act with virtue: remain honest and do not play games! There is much at stake in the company and personally! “

## 5. Considerations, skills/competences involved in the succession process and queries/questions.

### 5.1 General considerations:

The main problem with the succession was the lack of compromise of the predecessor who did not want to let go of his life work and see it changed by the successor. This did not create any prospects for the entrepreneurs, which led them to seek out an escape from the situation by searching for another farm. Only this step led to understanding and compromise. It was helpful to seek professional advice and, in spite of all human differences, to openly communicate their own wishes and beliefs

### 5.2 Skills/Competences especially relevant for the succession process:

Both parties had a clear vision. This is good on the one hand, but at the same time requires a huge amount of compromise and, depending on the situation, also self-confidence and conviction, in order to clearly communicate one's own viewpoint on key issues.

### 5.3 Queries/Questions

- The predecessor had to make a clear decision to leave the company and give all responsibilities to the successor. Did you make this decision?
- The successor did not let go of his convictions and self-confidently stood up for them which ultimately led to success. Do you have a clear vision and do you follow it?
- Professional advice was the key to the moderated conversation between the two parties and finally led to success. Can advice help you with the succession process?

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