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Perception of Intergenerational Farm Transfer by Cocoa Farmers in South- West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Inter-generational farm transfer, a multifaceted process involving succession plan, retirement and inheritance has been recognized as the main and major approach to overcome the issues of ageing population and family farm sustainability. The study therefore focused on the perception of inter-generational farm transfer by cocoa farmers in South-west, Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 331 cocoa farmers. The data was collected through interviewer administered questionnaire and analysed using percentage, frequency distribution, means, charts and chi square. Results showed that majority of the respondents were male (77.0%), having farm size of 5 ha and below, the mean age of the respondents was 58 years while the mean household size was 6. The result showed that 77.0% of the respondents have not retired from active involvement on cocoa farm while 83.0% of the have not identified a successor. The result further shows that 85.0% of the respondents have high (positive) perception of inter-generational transfer. Moreover, only few of the respondents (5.4%) had a formal or written inter-generational farm transfer plan. The study concluded that majority of the cocoa farmers have not retired from the farm and had positive perception of inter-generational farm transfer. The study recommended that cocoa farmers should endeavour to start planning for inter-generational farm transfer by selecting and grooming selected individuals in their family. Moreover, relevant stakeholders should create more awareness and orientate cocoa farmers on the importance and need to identify and engage possible successors early in order to ensure family farm sustainability and food security.

Keywords:
Perception, Intergenerational farm transfer, Cocoa farmers

1. Introduction

Fasina (2013) reported that the average age of most Nigerian farmers is 60 years. Consequently, as the Nigeria farm owners advance in age, the law of diminishing return sets in which affect their productivity, it therefore becomes necessary for cocoa farmers to transfer the farm maintenance and ownership to the young generation of farmers who still have the strength to perform optimally on the farm for increased farm productivity in order to ensure family sustainability. According to Oladele (2015), global agriculture is faced with numerous contemporary problems like climate change, commercialization of agriculture, ageing farming population, lack of youth interest in agriculture and family farm sustainability, while various approaches have been developed to combat the issues of climate change and other related problems in agriculture, inter-generational farm transfer has been recognized as a main and major approach to overcome the issues of ageing population, attraction/ retention of youth into agriculture and sustainability of family farm, hence cocoa farm, an example of a family farm can only be preserved and sustained through inter-generational farm transfer.

Inter-generational transfer of farm and farm assets is a distinctive process and procedure that take place over a period of time in which farmers planned for the transfer of skills, knowledge, labour, control and ownership of farm and farm asset from the older or exiting generation to the younger generation. This process usually involved three

distinct but almost related processes which are: succession plan, retirement and inheritance. Succession plan may be defined as the transfer of farm management skills, knowledge and control of the farm and farm assets to the next generation. Retirement refers to the total or partial withdrawal of the present farm owner from active managerial control and/or involvement in the farm operation, while inheritance means the legal transfer of possession and ownership of the farm business and farm assets (including land). Lobley *et.al* (2016) reported that inter-generational farm transfer is a process that happened over a specific period in which older farm owner make plans for the transfer of knowledge, skills, management, labour, control and ownership of the farm enterprise to the next generation through a well- planned progression process. According to Glauben (2005), farm businesses remain a largely heritable business and one in which the transfer of business control and ownership to the next generation is important and essential for the continued existence and survival of the business. Corsi (2004) accounted that whether a farm business or family farm will be sustained continually for decades or will crumble and die off as years go by depends on many factors: one of which is intergenerational transfer of the farm through a well-planned intergenerational farm transfer process

Ogunlade *et al.,* (2014) affirmed that perception is a psychological or emotional process in which an individual interprets information from the environment and, on this basis, shape/ figure his own image or picture of the world. It turned out that, if a farm owner perceived that the work on the farm and the farming way of life as generally being stressful, and if they are worried about the further continuity of the farm or has no assurance in the farm as a primary source of income, the likelihood of the farm being taken over and further farming on it is significantly lower than if the owner has a supportive positive attitude and perception. Moreover, through positive perception, support, satisfaction, and happiness with work and life on the farm, and a good opinion of the farm, its structure (especially economic structure), and its current and future development, the farm owners can consequently have an important influence on their potential successor or heirs 'choice to take over the farm and to continue farming thus preserving the intergenerational continuity and thereby enabling the further growth and existence of the farm. A farm owner's opinion that they would take over the farm and run it if they had the opportunity to decide again reflects their satisfaction with the profession. It also reflects their happiness with working and living on the farm, their respectful relationship to farming, and the preservation of the previous generations' heritage. Therefore, an ageing and exiting population of Nigeria farmers particularly cocoa farmers demands a clear understanding of the issues surrounding inter-generational farm transfer for them to have a positive perception in order to encourage and fast track the transfer of farm control, maintenance and ownership to the young entrants in order to ensure family sustainability. It is against this that study seeks to assess the perception of inter-generational farm transfer by cocoa farmers in South- west, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. describe the socioeconomic characteristics of cocoa farmers in the study area;
ii. determine the inter-generational farm transfer status of cocoa farmers in the study area (retirement and succession status);
iii. identify the form of intergenerational farm transfer plan among cocoa farmers in the study area;
iv. examine the perception of inter-generational farm by cocoa farmer in the study area.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The Study Area

The area of study is South-west, Nigeria. South-western states were purposively chosen for the study because cocoa is widely grown in these areas. These states are Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, Oyo, Ondo and Ogun. The geopolitical zone is bound by the Republic of Benin on the West, Edo and Delta States on the East, Gulf of Guinea in the South and in the North by Kwara and Kogi States. It lies between latitude 70 5'N to 9020N of the Equator and longitude 3030'E to 10'E of the Prime Meridian. It has a total land mass of 76,852 square kilometres and a population of 27,581,992 people and controls up to 60% of the nation's industrial capacity. South western States has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons: the raining season (April-October) and the dry season (November- March. The major occupation of the inhabitants is farming. Agricultural practice and is still largely traditional and is characterized by small land holdings (1.2 ha average holding). The use of simple tools such as hoe and cutlass, communal or family land holding and shifting cultivation are still predominant. Food crops cultivated include: Yam, Cassava, Cocoyam, Maize, Rice, Plantain, leafy and fruit vegetables, Cash crops include: Cocoa, Kolanut, Oil palm, and Rubber. Timber is also found in the forest region.

2.2 Data and Sampling Procedure

The study used a quantitative and non - experimental design. From the population of 6843, a three -stage sampling technique was used in the selection of respondents. Firstly, three states were purposively selected out of the six states in South-west, Nigeria because they are the major cocoa producing states. Secondly, ten cocoa farming communities were randomly selected from each of the state selected. Lastly, a 5 % proportionate random sampling was used to select 342 respondents out of the total registered cocoa farmers under the Agricultural Development Project to

determine the sample size. Data were collected through interviewer administered questionnaire and analysed using percentage, frequency distribution, means and multinomial logistic regression at 0.05 significant level.

2.3 Analytical Techniques

The data was analysed using Descriptive Statistical Tools which includes: pie chart, bar chart, frequency, percentage, standard deviation, mean ranking.

The perception of inter-generational farm transfer by cocoa farmers was measured by placing twenty nine (29) perception statements on inter-generational farm transfer plan on a 5 point likert scale where 5= Strongly agreed, 4= Agreed, 3= Undecided/ neutral, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly disagree. To determine their level of perception, the cut –off point of 3.0 was established. Any perception statement whose mean is greater than 3.0 (>3.0) depicts high perception while any perception statement whose mean is less than 3.0 (<3.0) depicts low perception. The maximum possible score that could be obtained by each farmer is number of variables (29) multiply by highest score on scale (5) = 170 score. To classify the perception status into different categories, the perception index of each respondent was computed using this formula:

Perception index = Respondents Total Score X 100

Total possible score (145)

To determine the perception level of the respondents on the perception items in general, the percentage scores of each cocoa farmer was later converted into perception index as: Low perception and high perception with percentage scores of 0 – 50% and 51 – 100% respectively.

3. Results and Discussion

Socio economic characteristics of the cocoa farmers

Result in table 1 shows that majority (77.0%) of the respondents are male, while 23.0% were female. This signified that the male dominated the cocoa sector in the study area. This could be due to the fact that farming generally is regarded as male work because of its drudgery nature (Omoare *et al*., 2016). Moreover, the result of this study agrees with the findings of Uwagboe *et al*. (2016) who reported that male dominate the cocoa production sector of Cross River State of Nigeria. The result shows that about half of the respondents (52.3%) were between ages 31-60 years and the mean age was 58.4 years. This implies that respondents are ageing and young generations who are still vibrant are yet to be involved in managing cocoa farms. According to Fasina *et al. (*2013), farmers 'productivity is deemed to diminish as they age. Besides, the finding is in agreement with Adeogun *et al*., (2010) who reported that majority of the cocoa farmers in Nigeria are more than 54 years. This result showed that 30.2% of the respondents had Secondary Education while 21.8% of the respondents had Primary Education. This implies that cocoa farmers were fairly educated. This finding agrees with Adeogun (2008), who reported that very few of the cocoa farmers had attained tertiary education in Nigeria. The result shows that majority of the respondents (69.5%) were married. The large number of married respondents may imply that more members of the farm family are likely going to be available for labour activities on the cocoa farm in the study area. According to Nmadu *et al.,* (2015), farm labour force used to be restricted to family population and the size of active family member. The mean household size was six. Larger household size implies higher number of domestic needs within the farming household. However, the household size might have impact on cocoa production. This implies that household size of cocoa farmers might have influence on their output and income. The result of this study agrees with the findings of Akinnagbe (2017) who reported that larger household size is typical of cocoa farmers in South Western Nigeria.

Furthermore, majority (84.9%) of the respondents have farm size of 5 hectares and below. This implies that cocoa farmers have small holdings. This result is in agreement with the findings of Adeogun (2008) who reported that majority of the farmers in the five (5) cocoa producing States in Nigeria have farm size of 5 hectares and below farm. In addition, Uchiyama *et al* (2008) stated that farm size influences the route to intergenerational farm transfer because small farms are likely to provide less opportunity for two generations to work side by side. The result showed that 50.8% of the respondents are into farming other crops aside cocoa. This is an indication that cocoa farming could be combined with other jobs as cocoa farming alone is not sufficient to meet their financial obligations especially during off-harvesting season. This result implies that having supportive occupation would improve the livelihood of the cocoa farmers especially during the off-season period. This result is in agreement with the findings of Kraan (2009) who reported that alternative occupation is an important livelihood strategy out of poverty. The result showed that 50.5% have been farming between 11-20 years and mean years of farming experience of 14 years. This implies that cocoa farmers are informed on the management of cocoa farms. In addition, majority (70.7%) of the respondents made use of family labour on the farm. This may be practice in order to reduce the cost of production. The result is in agreement with the findings of Mugwe et al., (2009) who reported family labour is an important component of labour force for small scale farmers.

Table 1. Distribution by Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents (n =331)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Average
Age			58.4
≤30	5	1.5	
31-60	173	52.3	
≥61	153	46.2	
Gender			
Male	263	77	
Female	79	23	
Religion			
Islam	121	36.6	
Christianity	196	59.2	
Traditional	14	4.2	
Level of Educational			
Non formal	81	24.5	
Primary Education	72	21.8	
Secondary Education	100	30.2	
Adult Education	5	1.5	
Tertiary Education	73	22.1	
Marital Status			
Single	12	3.6	
Married	230	69.5	
Separated	17	5.1	
Divorced	7	2.1	
Widow/widower	65	19.5	
The Number of wives of male respondents			
0	95	28.7	
1	205	61.7	
2	30	9.1	
3	1	0.3	
Household size			6 persons
1-5	151	45.6	
6-10	153	46.2	
≥6	27	8.2	
Farm Size			3.7
1-5	281	84.9	
6-10	45	13.6	
>10	5	1.5	
Secondary Occupation			
Farming other crops)	168	50.8	
Trading	66	19.9	
Artisan	33	10.0	
Agro processing	34	10.3	
Civil Servant	21	6.3	
Farming Experience (in years)			
1-10	167	27.8	
11-20	92	50.5	
21-30	45	13.6	
>31	27	8.2	
Types of labour used			
Family Labour	234	70.7	
Hired labour	219	66.2	
Contract labour	56	16.9	
Pooled labour	27	8.2	
Cooperative labour	1	0.3	

3.2 Retirement status of the cocoa farmers

Table 2 showed the retirement status of the respondents. Majority (77.0%) of the respondents have never retired from the active involvement on the cocoa farm, 71.3% do not want to retire, 57.4% have not thought of retiring while 11.8% are fully retired from the active involvement on the cocoa farm. Retirement plan which involve total or partial withdrawal from active involvement on the farm is essential for developing a sustainable family farm. Thus, lack of an identified successor is often a reason for delaying retirement (Baker *et al*, 2009). If the principal cocoa farm owner never retires from the farm for younger generation to step in and take over the management of the farm, the opportunity for any meaningful intergenerational farm transfer will never take place. This implies that the takeover of the cocoa farms and its entity by successor (s) may not happen until the demise of current aged farmers. Thus, many youths who ought to have taken over would be engaged in other income generating activities and it may be difficult for them to step aside or abandon their own activities to take over the farm management, especially those living out of town. According to Lobley (1992), many farmers do not deem it necessary from retiring from their farming activities as it has become their way of life rather just an occupation.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to retirement status

	Statement of Retirement	Yes	No
1.	Fully retired from active involvement on the cocoa farm	39 (11.8)	292(88.2)
2.	Semi –retired	13 (3.9)	318(96.1)
3.	Never retired	255(77.0)	76 (23.0)
4.	Would like to retire in 1 to 5 years	9 (2.7)	322(97.3)
5.	Would like to retire in 6 to 10 years	10 (3.0)	321 (97.3)
6.	Would like to retire in 11 to 15 years	29 (8.8)	302 (91.2)
7.	Would retire more than 15 years to this time	7 (2.1)	322 (97.9)
8.	Am not retiring any time soon	71 (21.5)	260 (78.5)
9.	Have not thought about retiring	190 (57.4)	141 (42.6)
10.	Do not want to retire	236 (71.3)	95 (28.7)

Source: Field Survey, 2019. Percentages are in Parenthesis

3.3 Succession status of cocoa farmers

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their succession plan status. Majority (83.0%) of the respondents have not identified a successor while only 17.0% of the respondents have identified a successor. This implies a low succession rate It can be deduced in this study that cocoa farmers are still glued to their cocoa farm without preparing for 'this inevitable end "of becoming aged which necessitates the handing over to competent hands or members of their family for the farm continuity even before their demise. According to Barclay et al (2007), very few farms have a succession plan in place. Moreover, Kerbler (2012) found out that the major problem of agriculture in developing countries is low succession rate and a reduction in the number of farm take over or transfer of farms to successors.

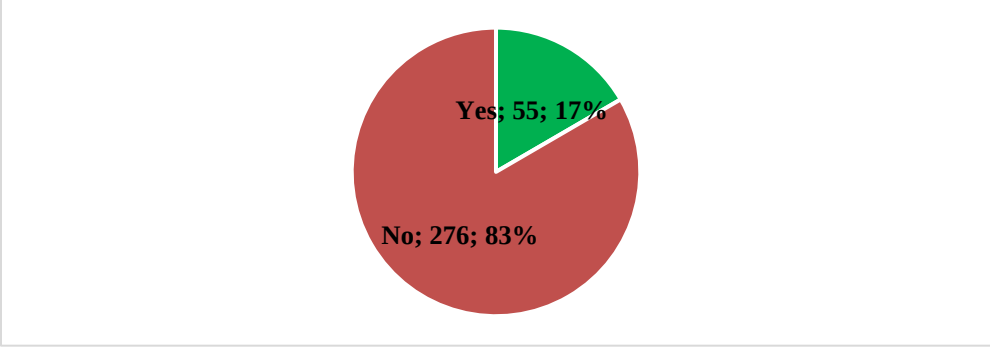

Figure 1: Succession Plan Status of respondents (Yes=I have identified successor)

3.4 Forms of succession plan by cocoa farmers

Result in table 3 showed that majority (46.5%) of the respondents do not have any form of succession plan presently and do not have any interest in planning for succession in the future, while 37.6% of the respondents do not have any form of succession plan presently but will plan for succession in the future, 5.4% of the respondents have a formal written and documented succession plan in form of a will while as claimed by the respondents, 10.5% of the respondents have an informal/oral/verbal succession plan. The few respondents (5.4%) who had a written succession plan in form of a will could be among those that have formal Education (Tertiary Education). This study is in agreement with a Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey carried out in 2006 which reported that small and medium sized enterprises are not adequately prepared for their business succession because only few owners have a formal, written succession plan. In addition, Kerbler (2012) reported that there is low succession rate among farmers in developing countries and among those that have identified a successor, only few have documented succession plan.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their form of Succession Plan

	Forms of transfer	Frequency	Percentage
1.	A formal/ written / documented form	18	5.4
2.	An informal/oral or verbal form	37	10.5
3.	No form of any transfer plan now but in future	123	37.6
4.	No interest in any form of transfer plan	153	46.5
	Total	331	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

3.5 Perception of cocoa farmers about Inter-generational Farm Transfer

Table 4 shows the perception of cocoa farmers on inter-generational farm transfer. The result on table 4 shows overwhelmingly positive responses of the respondents to inter-generational farm transfer. Some of the perception statements that scored high includes; the subject of fairness towards the other children should be discussed with the successor (s) during inter-generational farm transfer (x=4.2), the conversion of cocoa farms to non-farming activities can be addressed through farm succession. (x=4.2), It is necessity to make plans for inter-generational farm transfer (x=4.1), all possible successors have to be objectively considered and evaluated before inter-generational farm transfer (x=4.0), inter-generational farm transfer is a fundamental aspect of continuation of cocoa farmland for sustainable likelihood of the farmer to the next generation (x=3.9) and inter-generational farm transfer is important for cocoa farm business survival and sustainability (x=3.8). This study implies that the respondents have a high (positive) perception about inter-generational farm transfer and they may be willing to embrace any meaningful intergenerational farm transfer provided they have the required knowledge needed to go about the plan. There is therefore need to understand the perception of the respondents before the provision of training on how to go about intergenerational farm transfer. The table also shows cocoa farmers' low (negative) perception as reflected in their negative disposition to such statements as: It is dangerous to consider female heirs as cocoa farm successor, only male heir(s) should be considered as cocoa farm successors and a period of co-management before the transfer is complete should have been set and agreed to by all parties with equal mean (x) values of 2.9 respectively. Inter-generational farm transfer is not essential for farm continuation (x=2.3) and inter-generational farm transfer is a complete waste of time and resources (x= 1.9).

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to their perception about Intergenerational Farm Transfer

Perception statement	Percentage Response (%)					Mean (SD)
	SA	A	U	D	SD	
1. Inter-generational farm transfer plan is a fundamental aspect of continuation of cocoa farmland for sustainable livelihood of the next generation.	33.2	28.4	34.7	3.0	0.6	3.9(0.9)
2. Inter-generational farm transfer plan is important for cocoa farm business survival and sustainability.	27.8	34.7	34.4	2.4	0.6	3.8(0.8)
3. It is necessary to make plans for succession plan.	45.3	26.6	16.9	11.2	0	4.1(1.0)
4. Planned inter-generational succession guarantees the future continuation of cocoa farm.	21.1	26.6	46.2	6.0	0	3.6(0.8)
5. Well planned inter-generational farm transfer does not lead to conflict, tension and disagreement among children or potential successor(s).	28.1	14.8	21.8	19.9	15.4	3.2(1.4)
6. Inter-generational farm transfer plan renders the cocoa farmer, jobless after farm ownership transfer.	53.5	17.2	3.6	6.0	19.6	3.8(1.6)
7. Planned inter-generational succession helps in making a smooth retirement.	26.0	26.9	41.7	3.3	2.1	3.7(0.9)

8. The disadvantages of inter-generational farm transfer plan outweigh its advantages.	43.2	1.2	18.1	14.2	23.3	3.2(1.6)
9. Inter-generational farm transfer plan is a complete waste of time and resources.	2.4	10.0	25.1	4.2	58.3	1.9(1.2)
10. Inter-generational farm transfer plan plan is not essential for farm continuation.	2.7	26.3	15.4	8.8	46.8	2.3(1.4)
11. Farms without a declared successor often end up in decay.	24.2	23.0	22.7	17.5	12.5	3.2(1.3)
12. Inter-generational farm transfer plan ensures smooth transition following retirement or death.	15.7	34.1	29.0	12.1	9.1	3.3(1.1)
13. Planned inter-generational farm transfer ensures smooth transition following cocoa farmer's retirement, incapacitation or death.	22.7	50.8	15.4	11.2	0	3.8(0.8)
14. Serious thoughts should not be given to cocoa farm succession.	19.6	22.4	38.1	2.1	17.8	3.2(1.3)
15. It is dangerous to consider female heirs as cocoa farm successors.	30.5	18.4	0.6	12.1	38.4	2.9(1.7)
16. Only male heir(s) should be considered as cocoa farm successors.	32.6	16.0	0	12.1	39.3	2.9(1.7)
17.The conversion of cocoa farms to non-farming activities can be addressed through inter-generational farm transfer plan.	29.6	28.1	40.8	0	1.5	4.2(0.9)
18. Cocoa farm without inter-generational farm transfer plans are more likely to be converted to non-farm use.	35.6	37.8	24.8	1.2	0.6	3.5(0.8)
19. Cocoa farm inheritance problems between parental and younger generations can be solved through a well-planned succession.	28.7	20.8	48.9	0.9	0.6	3.7(0.9)
20.Advisors such as extension agent, attorneys, financial planners, and facilitators may be brought in to help assemble a good plan.	2.1	2.1	37.2	8.5	50.2	1.9(1.1)
21. Sometimes, it is the younger generation that must prompt the planning process.	2.1	0.9	23.0	2.1	71.9	1.6(1.0)
22. All potential candidates for succession have to be objectively considered and evaluated before succession.	34.7	10.6	39.0	3.3	12.4	4.0(0.8)
23 .Alternative careers, interests and skills of each candidate have to be examined before successor is chosen.	23.6	30.2	44.4	1.2	0.6	3.7(0.8)
24. The subject of fairness towards the other children should be discussed with potential successor(s).	51.1	18.1	30.8	0	0	4.2(0.9)
25. The obligation of the successor(s) to work on the farm should be completed and discussed before the transfer.	30.2	14.8	49.5	1.5	3.9	3.7(1.1)
26. A period of co-management, before the transfer is complete, should have been set and agreed to by all parties.	26.9	2.1	41.1	2.4	27.5	2.9(1.5)
27.Employees that are not family members should collaborate/join forces in the integration of the successor(s).	3.3	0.3	27.2	10.0	59.2	1.8(1.1)
28.The successor(s) is/are well-versed in the different aspects of management and administration of the business - specifically, bookkeeping and financial management.	0	1.8	3.3	56.2	29.6	2.4(1.0)
29 .There is need to attend a workshop or seminar to get an overview of the issues on succession plan of a cocoa farm.	4.8	1.8	34.7	2.4	56.2	1.9(1.1)

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U=Undecided, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 5. Perception Index of respondents on Intergenerational Farm Transfer

Categories	Percentage Range	Frequency	Percentage	Average score of categories
High	51 – 100	280	84.6	
Low	0 – 50	51	15.4	
Total		331	100.0	62.0

3.6 Perception Index of respondents on Inter-generational Farm Transfer

The result in Table 5 shows that majority (84.6%) of the respondents had high (positive) perception level on inter-generational farm transfer plan and 15.4% of the respondents had a low (negative) perception level on inter-generational farm transfer. This study is in line with Arowolo *et al*. (2017) who reported that poultry farmers in South-west, Nigeria had a high perception of intergenerational succession plan. The implication of high perception level is that most of the cocoa farmers would be ready for inter-generational farm transfer plan provided they have the required knowledge and are enlightened about the importance of timely and early intergenerational transfer even while they are alive. This indicates that the cocoa farmers will participate in any training programme that will improve their knowledge on intergenerational farm transfer since they already had a positive perception.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, the study concludes that majority of the cocoa farmers are not fully retired from the active involvement and participation on the farm for the next generation to take over. Consequently, they have not identified a successor and only few have a written/ documented succession plan. Moreover, majority of the cocoa farmers had a high (positive) perception of inter-generational farm transfer. As a result, they may be willing to plan for transfer of farm management and ownership to the next generation provided they have the required the knowledge about the plan. The study recommended that cocoa farmers should endeavour to start planning for inter-generational farm transfer by selecting and grooming selected individuals in their family in order for them to retire from the farm. There should be more research work in the area of inter-generational farm transfer on livestock and cropping. Relevant stakeholders should create more awareness and orientate cocoa farmers on how they can carry out inter-generational farm transfer and the need to identify and engage possible successors early in order to ensure family farm sustainability and food security. Government may need to provide intervention in terms of legislations or policies that will make farmers (such as poultry farmers) put succession planning in place as early as possible on their farms so as to avoid undue liquidation or forfeiture of their hard raised farm assets to undeserving inheritors within or outside the family. Those who have enough evidence to show that they have commenced the process and possibly groomed selected individuals should be motivated by government in very tangible forms (such as occasional and unexpected awards, tax rebates etc)

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