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Transition Planning: A Wrap-Up – or Just the Beginning?

During 2025, I've written monthly columns focusing on each of the 12 steps of a farm transition plan outlined in K-State's *12 Steps to Keep the Family Farming* succession planning reference. If a farm succession is in your future, see the columns on our Meadowlark Extension District Crops & Soils Page:

<https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/crops-soils/> . Additional references will be added as applicable.

While this marks the end of the series, I hope your transition plan work continues. Michigan State University Extension Specialist Craig Thomas made this statement in a piece he wrote back in 2013: *In my work with farm families for nearly thirty years, as a Michigan State University Extension dairy farm business management educator, I have observed that it is nearly unanimous among all farms that the most important goal of the producer is to pass along the farm business to the next generation.* Unfortunately, it comes with some challenges.

In an article entitled *Farm Transition and Succession – Why Bother?*, Thomas references a Farm Journal survey stating 80 percent of farmers planned to transfer control of their operation to the next generation, but only 20 percent were confident their succession plan would achieve it. In an Iowa State study, 71 percent of retiring farmers said they had not identified a successor.

Farms aren't the only ones experiencing transition challenges. The Small Business Administration reports less than a third of family-owned businesses survive the transition from the first to the second generation. Further, only half of those making the first transition survive the transition from the second to the third generation, meaning only about 16.5 percent of family-owned businesses successfully survive to the third generation.

There is no shortage of reasons as to why a farm transition plan is difficult. Inheritance and tax laws, increasing land values and fewer children interested in returning to the farm are all challenges to address. For those interested in that return, however, the challenge is well worth it. Now is a great time to dig into what a successful transition might look like. Great resources are available at the link above, but there are numerous others as well. Drop us a line if we can help you find them to get started.