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FAMILY SUCCESSION AMONG DAIRY FARMERS FROM VALE DO RIO POMBA, SOUTHEASTERN BRAZIL

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The process of family succession in the farming business is essential to encourage the rural population to remain in the countryside, being thus a crucial requirement for the sustainability of farming and agricultural activities. The process begins with the preparation of successors and those to be succeeded and is completed with the transfer of farm management to the next generation. This study aimed to analyze the perspectives of continuity of dairy farms through family succession. A questionnaire was applied to farmers and their successors from 27 milk production units (MPUs) of the municipality of Rio Pomba, southeastern Brazil, in December 2017. The project was supported by SEBRAE via Sebraetec program. There were two or more generations working jointly at 52% of farms (n = 14); of these, 30% (n = 4) were managed by the family. Additionally, 50% (n = 7) of milk producers from these farms were involved in a working relationship among their successors, employees or partners. Only 11% of successors had a degree in agricultural sciences, which showed the need for educational training by either vocational

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or higher education for successors to gain knowledge and enhance the dairy business. It was also found that 37% of farms were acquired by inheritance, 22% were acquired by a combination of inheritance and purchased land, and 4% were acquired by inheritance, purchased land, and farmland leasing, i.e., 63% of MPUs were to some extent acquired by family succession. Only 7.4% of successors report the desire to improve life standards or remuneration by leaving the dairy industry. It's possible to check that a good intergenerational balance and prosperity are expected for the next generations, it's not going to cause an accelerated and high process of rural aging. When asked about the main factors involved in the intergenerational relationship, respondents reported that division of activities, dialog, and respect ensure a harmonious evolution of the family succession. The continuity of new generations in the family dairy business is a requirement for its sustainability and has a significant social and economic importance in the region known as Vale do Rio Pomba, southeastern Brazil.

Keywords: dairy business, milk production, sustainability

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