

# Intention to agricultural farm succession: taking into account the topic of gender

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# Preface

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In front of you lies the Master Thesis ‘‘Intention to agricultural farm succession: taking into account the topic of gender’’. The thesis is written in the context of my graduation from the Master Business Administration, specialisation Innovation & Entrepreneurship, at the Radboud University. As a daughter of an agricultural entrepreneur, I have a family-related background in the agricultural sector. Due to this, I have developed an interest for this sector. The subject of this study combines both the interest for this particular sector and the topic of entrepreneurship.

In conducting the master thesis, I have received guidance from Dr. Caroline Essers. She helped me with setting up the research idea and provided me with feedback during all phases of writing my thesis. I want to thank her very much for her suggestions and wisdom. Next, I also received feedback from my second examiner, Dr. Ir. Nanne Migchels, on my research proposal and would like to thank him for that too. Because of his intervention I added additional and broader literature to my theoretical framework, which made it a more complete and more interesting study.

Next to the guidance I have received from my supervisor and second examiner, I would also like to thank all the research participants. They provided me their opinions and experiences, which sometimes also included some personal information. Besides, some even helped me find other respondents who eventually also took part in the current study.

I want to thank my family and friends for their support and advices that helped me during the process of writing this thesis. A lot of them addressed their own network in order to find potential respondents and provided me names as well as contact information. In particular, I would like to thank my parents for supporting and helping me to successfully finish writing my master thesis.

I wish you a lot of reading pleasure.

Minke Cornelissen

# Abstract

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The research objective of this master thesis is to give insight into what role attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession, in order to contribute knowledge to the scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. The research objective leads to the following research question that is central to this study: *“What role do attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession?”* To answer this research question, data has been collected by means of semi-structured interviews with fourteen agricultural entrepreneurs. These individuals have taken over an agricultural farm, which makes them able to provide their experiences, perceptions and meanings about the different issues that influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. Moreover, because the topic of gender is taken into account, the sample consists of both male and female respondents. The results seem to indicate that attitude-toward-the-act, among other determining factors, influences the intention to agricultural farm succession the most. This finding is supported by the underlying themes part of the attitude; the passion for animals, the enjoyment of the work, ability to be self-employed and the attractiveness of the lifestyle. Besides, several striking differences appeared to exist between the results of men and women, which leads to the conclusion that gender seems to play a considerable role regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession. Altogether, this study concludes that attitude and gender seem to play a substantial role among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession. These insights contribute to the existing body of knowledge about entrepreneurial intention in the specific context of the agricultural sector and the distinct characteristic of successions happening within the family.

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# 1. Introduction

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Academic research seems to recognize that entrepreneurship is a major factor driving economic development (Schumpeter, 1976). Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, Shulman (2009) emphasise that next to these economic contributions, entrepreneurs also change social processes in society. To encourage entrepreneurship, there is a need to understand the concepts and decision making processes that lead an individual to becoming an entrepreneur. Despite the amount of research that has been conducted, only a limited understanding on entrepreneurial intention exists in academic literature (Markman, Balkin & Baron, 2002). Classical entrepreneurship theory proposes financial gains as a driver (Kirzner, 1979). Expectancy models, like that of Douglas and Shepherd (2002), share this viewing point of economic reasons dominating in pursuing an entrepreneurial career. However, according to Deci & Ryan (1985), extrinsic rewards like money are viewed inferior to intrinsic motives with regard to the entrepreneurial intention. An example of this is the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961). Next to these theories, there is a growing recognition that socio-psychological processes can lead to a better understanding of this intention (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). Since entrepreneurship is viewed as an embedded occurrence, subjective perceptions about the environment and the relative position of a person in it are crucial (Jack & Anderson 2002). Therefore, entrepreneurial intentions are argued to be linked to individual perceptions about his or her abilities, the social supportiveness and the business environment (Bird 1988). Entrepreneurship is viewed as an intentional process according to Krueger et al. (2000). Ajzen (1991) developed such an intention model which captures the motivational factors steering behaviour. He regards intention for behaviour as a function of three antecedents; attitude toward performing the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived feasibility. The theory of planned behaviour is seen as a valid model for entrepreneurial intention (Krueger et al., 2000).

According to the review of Fitz-Koch, Nordqvist, Carter & Hunter (2017), research shows that context influences the available range of opportunities, activities and outcomes of entrepreneurship. Although an increasing number of entrepreneurship studies take context seriously, there are important contexts that still have received limited attention. Fitz-Koch et al. (2017) argue that one such context is sector. In their review they show that mainstream entrepreneurship research has largely overlooked the agricultural sector. McElwee (2006) also asks for further research about entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector in his review.

Multiple factors make this particular sector stand out from others. In the agricultural sector, most company takeovers happen within families. Passing on the business to the next generation is more common in the agricultural sector than in other sectors (Jervell, 2011). Reasons given for family farm successions are, among other things, that transferees are growing up with the company. Besides, it also offers possibilities to build capital and make use of fiscal facilities (Veen, van der, Bommel, van, & Venema, 2003). Due to these fiscal aspects, it is hard for external parties to buy an agricultural company (Venema & Spierings, 1998). Besides, other determining factors come into play such as the viability, farm family factors and personal idealism. Family businesses and their takeovers are a relatively old phenomenon, but it is not been adopted that long ago as an important research topic (Centeno-Caffarena & Bocatto, 2006). However, the subject is increasingly gaining interest (Sharma, 2004).

Besides, according to Diaz-Garcia & Jiménez-Moreno (2010), gender plays a key role in the intention to become an entrepreneur. The agricultural sector is traditionally viewed as a ‘man’s world’ (Whatmore, 2016). As a result of this traditional vision on designation of farm successor, a potential female successor is less likely (Simeone, 2005). Moreover, daughters are sometimes not even been considered as potential successors for the family firm (Duma, 1989). Gender is therefore expected to have an impact on the way attitude and other determining factors influence the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Altogether, the research objective that follows from this is to give insight into what role attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession, in order to contribute knowledge to the scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. The research objective leads to the following research question:

*“What role do attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession?”*

The context of the research is the Dutch agricultural sector. In the Netherlands, the agricultural sector consists of over 50,000 companies participating in the worldwide economy (CBS, 2019; Silvis, de Bont, Helming, van Leeuwen & van Meijl, 2009). It therefore is an important economic sector for the country. The agricultural sector consists out of arable farming, bulb growing, dairy farming, greenhouse horticulture, poultry farming, agriculture, pig farming, fruit growing, fisheries, etc. (Wageningen University & Research, n.d.).

The insights that this study aims to acquire, will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about entrepreneurship literature and in relation to context and to farm succession literature. Opportunities and intentions are assumed to possibly greatly differ per sector, so this particular research offers theoretical insights regarding intention to entrepreneurship in another sector than what is currently known. In academic literature, it is concluded that mainstream entrepreneurship research has overlooked the agricultural sector (Fitz-Koch et al., 2017). Therefore, this master thesis provides scientific relevance because it contributes to the theoretical gap in entrepreneurship literature for this particular context. Besides, it provides insights about the subject of family succession and the factors influencing the intention to this phenomenon. These insights can in turn encourage and promote agricultural entrepreneurship.

To answer the research question, a qualitative research design will be used. In this way in-depth insights can be gained from a relatively limited sample, which will give the possibility to describe and understand complex issues in social reality by making visible patterns and meanings. The research has an explorative nature, which entails approaching empiricism with little assumptions and therefore using open questions and an open look. Fourteen interviews will be conducted to collect data with entrepreneurs within the agricultural sector that own a company that is being taken over from a family member. An interview guide will be prepared in a semi-structured way based on the theoretical framework. Taking into account the aspect of gender, this study prefers research subjects approximately equally distributed between male and female agricultural entrepreneurs.

In the remainder of the research, the following elements will be discussed. First of all, a theoretical framework will be discussed, which will provide a theoretical base with regard to the central subject which underlies the research. Thereafter, the methodological chapter will follow which will elaborate on the research methodology including the chosen research design, how the data will be collected and analysed, and the research ethics. Next, the analysis will follow, which will discuss the collected data and search for patterns, similarities and differences. After the results chapter, the discussion section of the study will follow, which will answer the research question central of this master thesis and compare and contrast the findings with previous studies. To conclude the research, a conclusion chapter will follow which will include theoretical and practical implications, a reflection on the conducted study, limitations of this particular study and will provide suggestions for further research ideas.

## 2. Theoretical framework

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In the second chapter of the research, the theoretical framework will be discussed. A review of the relevant literature and a conceptual framework underlying the research subject will be provided. First, the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector will be elaborated on. Secondly, literature about the intention to entrepreneurship will be discussed and a comparison of theories will follow which will lead to a choice of an appropriate theoretical perspective. Thirdly, the notion of gender will be debated on. Thereafter, a conceptual model will be provided to represent the topics of interest and the way these topics are expected to influence the central concept of intention to agricultural farm succession. This model will act as a basis for this master thesis.

### 2.1 Entrepreneurship

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A lot of literature has been written about entrepreneurship and a lot of diverse definitions have been formulated. The word entrepreneur is derived from the French word for undertaking (Kuratko, 2016). It was viewed as someone who undertakes to organize, manage, and assume the risks of a business. According to academician Davidsson (2004), entrepreneurship can be defined as; "Entrepreneurship consists of the competitive behaviours that drive the market process. An entrepreneur supplies risk capital as a risk taker, and monitors and controls the business activities". Another definition of entrepreneurship, provided in a Green Paper from the European Commission (2003, p.6), is as follow; "Entrepreneurship is the mindset and process to create and develop economic activity by blending risk taking, creativity and/or innovation with sound management, within a new or an existing organization." Both of the aforementioned definitions emphasize that an entrepreneur controls and manages business activities, which contribute to the economy and market process. Schumpeter recognizes and confirms that entrepreneurship is a major factor driving economic development (Schumpeter, 1976). Next to these definitions, Gray (2002, p. 61) defines entrepreneurs as; "(...) individuals who manage a business with the intention of expanding that business and with the leadership and managerial capabilities for achieving their goals." Compared to the former definitions, the definition of Gray adds the element of achieving goals to the notion of entrepreneurship. On the basis of this knowledge, a definition with regard to entrepreneurship will now be given in relation to the agricultural sector.

## **Agricultural entrepreneurship**

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According to McElwee (2004) the definition of a farmer is; ‘‘those occupied on a part- or full-time basis and engaged in a range of activities that are primarily dependent on the farm and agriculture in the practice of cultivating the soil, growing crops and raising livestock as the main source of income’’. The interesting aspect of the agricultural sector is that almost all takeovers happen within families, mainly because of the fiscal aspects which make it hard for external parties to buy or start an agricultural company themselves (Venema & Spierings, 1998). Farmers therefore often pursue entrepreneurship within existing organizations by means of succession of a family member. However, farmers operate in a fairly restricted and regulated, complex and versatile context, which act as a significant barrier to entrepreneurial activity (McElwee, 2006). Moreover, entrepreneurship has become the most important aspect of farming and will increasingly remain to be so, according to Smit (2004).

Altogether, the definition of agricultural entrepreneurship that will be maintained in this research is as follows; ‘‘the mindset and process to create and develop economic activity and achieve goals by monitoring and controlling a range of business activities that are primarily dependent on the farm and agriculture in the practice of cultivating the soil, growing crops and raising livestock as the main source of income, within an existing organization’’.

## **2.2 Intention to agricultural farm succession**

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Several studies have researched the subject of intention to entrepreneurship. Multiple expectancy and intention models have been developed to describe the antecedents that influence the intention to become an entrepreneur. These theories offer considerable opportunities for a deeper and richer understanding of entrepreneurship (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Douglas and Shepherd, 2002). In particular, using such a model improves and extends insights about becoming an agricultural entrepreneur taking over the family farm.

One of such expectancy models is developed by Douglas and Shepherd (2002), in which entrepreneurial motivations are modelled. This model offers insights about the economical intention to pursue an entrepreneurial career, like perceptions about the expected earnings, amount of work effort to accomplish this and the related risk. It is grounded in economics and therefore tends to emphasize the monetary gains related to entrepreneurship.

Moreover, according to Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud (2000) entrepreneurship is an intentional process. Individuals do not start or take over a business out of nowhere, but think about it first. People do have a choice if they want to work in another organisation or another industry. Entrepreneurship is therefore viewed as planned behaviour and as a result, using intention models is very appropriate (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). Using these intention models thus provides great utility in advancing theory about what factors influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. Ajzen (1991) developed an such intention model, which is demonstrated as offering a solid model for explaining entrepreneurial intention (Kolvereid, 1996, Sabah, 2016, Kautonen, van Gelderen & Fink, 2015). Central to this theory is the intention of an individual to perform a particular behaviour. These intentions capture the motivational factors influencing behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is a function of three antecedents of intention to perform behaviour; attitude toward performing the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived feasibility.

Another intentional model is Shapero's model of the entrepreneurial event (1982). The strength of this model is that it is specifically developed and useful for the domain of entrepreneurship. It argues that inertia guides people's behaviour until this inertia is interrupted or displaced. This displacement tends often to be negative, like losing your job. It indicates a behavioural change where an individual chooses the best opportunity available from a set of options. Two factors play an important role in this process; credibility and propensity to act. Credibility relates to the perception of the behaviour to be desirable and feasible. The decision to become an entrepreneur requires being an existing opportunity before the displacement and a propensity to act afterwards (Shapero, 1982).

For this research, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is used because it offers a valid instrument to get insights into the intentions with regard to agricultural entrepreneurship. The hardness of intention models supports the versatile use in entrepreneurship research. It helps to explain and model why entrepreneurs decide to start a business or take over a business. When comparing this intention model to the expectancy theory of Douglas and Shepherd (2002), the theory of planned behaviour offers a broader view. The expectancy theory of Douglas and Shepherd (2002) is grounded in economics and therefore pays a great deal of attention to monetary gains as the intention for entrepreneurship. When considering the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), this model has a richer perspective and takes into account the attitude as well as the perceived feasibility. This is in line with the

entrepreneurial event (Shapero, 1982). However, the theory of planned behaviour explicitly takes into account the effect of social norms, which is expected to play a considerable role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. This is in contrast to the entrepreneurial event of Shapero (1982), which argues that exogenous factors do not directly influence intention or behaviour. The model of entrepreneurial event, however, is quite suited for entrepreneurial contexts. Though, it proposes some kind of inertia guiding behaviour, which is not expected as a starting point for the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## **Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour**

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The theory of planned behaviour will now be discussed in further detail. According to this theory, the intention to behave is a function of three antecedents; attitude toward-the-act, social norms and perceived feasibility (Ajzen, 1991).

### **Attitude toward-the-act**

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The first antecedent, attitude-toward-the-act, reflects the perception of the personal desirability of performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). As proposed by Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld (2005), the attitude will be positive toward the behaviour when the perception of an individual is that performing it, with great likelihood, leads largely to favourable outcomes. For entrepreneurship, this can allude to monetary gains, as proposed by classical entrepreneurship theory (Kirzner, 1979). The findings of Praag & Cramer (2001) indicate that people have the intention to entrepreneurship when the anticipated compensation exceeds the wages of employment. This is also confirmed by Douglas and Shepherd (2002) and their expectancy model, in which the entrepreneurial intention is derived from an utility function. This constitutes the perception of the expected earnings, the amount of work effort to accomplish this and the related risk. However, as argued by Deci & Ryan (1985), these extrinsic rewards like money are viewed inferior to intrinsic rewards influencing behaviour. For example, undertaking entrepreneurial behaviour can derive from the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961). Gilad & Levine (1986) researched entrepreneurial intention and constructed two theories. The first one is the push theory, which argues negative external forces as pushing entrepreneurial intention, like job dissatisfaction, the need for flexibility, financial reasons or struggling to find a job. The second theory argues that persons are pulled into entrepreneurship due to drivers like the need for independence, self-development and prosperity. Pull factors were found to be more dominant.

For agricultural family businesses specifically, the intention to agricultural farm succession may result from the drive that transferees are growing up with the company and develop an interest and intention to also perform this behaviour of agricultural entrepreneurship (Veen, van der, Bommel, van, & Venema, 2003). Loyal devotion to the business can be a result of this personal interest, which influences the attitude toward the intention. Research concerning family businesses supports these statements, namely that early exhibition to entrepreneurship and experience with the family business will affect the individual's attitude and intention (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). This intrinsic motivation and the need for self-actualization may trigger individuals to seek opportunities for personal achievement and farm survival, which confirm a sense of who they are (Fitz-Koch, Nordqvist, Carter & Hunter, 2017). The attitude to perform the behavior can also be influenced by the attractiveness of the lifestyle that it provides when choosing an agricultural entrepreneurial career (Greiner, Patterson & Miller, 2009). As elaborated on earlier, the family business can greatly cause the intention to agricultural farm succession to go beyond financial rewards (Alsos, Carter & Ljunggren, 2014). However, next to these more intrinsic motives for undertaking this behaviour, these individuals can still be attracted by gaining fiscal facility outcomes possible from these family takeovers (Veen, van der, Bommel, van, & Venema, 2003). These performance outcomes would be hard to reach when one would be an external party, due to those fiscal aspects (Venema & Spierings, 1998).

The attitude-toward-the-act is expected to be an important antecedent for the intention to be an agricultural entrepreneur. It therefore is relevant to study what role the attitude-toward-the-act plays with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession.

### **Subjective norms**

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According to Ajzen (1991), normative beliefs relate to what important referent people or groups think about performing a given behaviour. Perceived social norms are the perception of social support or disapproval of the behaviour by significant others. This could include expectations from family, friends or other role models. The impact of these social influences on intention can be large, either positively or negatively.

Passing on the business to the next generation is more common in the agricultural sector than in other sectors (Jervell, 2011). Because of the intergenerational basis for takeover, a very important role in the intention to agricultural farm succession is played by the

parents and family of the successor (Kerbler, 2012). As researched by Barnes & Hershon (2018), the family has the ability to play a role in putting pressure on these family takeovers and by demanding loyalty. Possible successors can perceive it as a family responsibility to continue the business (Donnelley, 1988). Hughes (2004) also elaborates on the social pressure to keep the family wealth in the family. As a consequence, agricultural entrepreneurs can feel they are forced to take over the family business. Multiple intentions can play a role like “Dad expects me to” (Walsh & Lachenauer, 2018). Prior studies have stressed the importance of stewardship and kinship in the agricultural sector. Stewardship is associated with the farm being a family home, often for generations, a sense of belonging and attachment to the land. The tradition of looking after the land and keeping the name on the land and farm, suggests it is difficult to shift out of agriculture into other sectors (Alsos, Carter & Ljunggren, 2014). Besides, it sometimes is the case that the younger generation is only provided a glimpse into the business, the part that the senior generation wants them to see. As a result, the social influence offers a wrong picture of the career to enter (Walsh & Lachenauer, 2018). Moreover, in contrast to other family situations, , work and family roles are often intertwined in the situation of a farm family takeover (Melberg, 2003). Altogether, some individuals willingly chose agricultural entrepreneurship, for others this family pressure steers the intention to carry on the family business instead of exploring alternative career options (Dawson & Henley, 2012).

Besides the family, other influences appear to play a role with regard to the social norms affecting the intention to agricultural farm succession. The partner of the successor also has the ability to influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. When the partner shares a negative opinion regarding the farm transfer, this can function as a limiting aspect (Kerbler, 2012). Next to this, the community and friends could also impose expectations about a farm transfer on the potential successor (Lobley, 2010). Melberg (2003) stresses this social support from family as well as friends, neighbours, spouses and other cultural, religious or outdoor activities the potential farmer is engaged in.

Altogether, these social influences are expected to play an important role, because it potentially causes the successor to feel obligated to take over the family farm. It is relevant to get insights about this antecedent to find out if, how and why these aspects play a role with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## **Perceived feasibility**

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The perceived feasibility relates to the self-evaluation of a person's own competences with regard to the given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Self-efficacy is linked to initiating and persisting the particular behaviour (Krueger, Reilly & Carsud, 2000). Perceived behavioural control reflects the perceived feasibility of performing the behaviour. Vesala and Peura (2002) suggest that to understand farmers as entrepreneurs, they need to be asked how they perceive themselves. Because the agricultural environment is becoming more and more complicated, agricultural entrepreneurs need to possess a broad range of competences (Wolf de, McElwee & Schoorlemmer, 2007). These competences include production and management skills, but also entrepreneurial qualities such as risk taking and creativity. McElwee (2006) reviewed literature specifically about entrepreneurial skills in the agricultural sector. Competences he provided as important; risk-taking, innovativeness, opportunity recognition/exploitation, goal-oriented operation, diversification, commitment, market-orientation, constant development of cognitive and professional skills, ready to work hard, problem recognition, cooperation, growth orientation, faith in success enterprise, craftsmanship and profitable production. Verstegen & Lans (2006) also conducted research on competences related to successful entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. They concluded that especially opportunity competences are important, which are related to seeing and realising market opportunities in different ways. Besides, Verstegen & Lans (2006) argue relationship competences, such as negotiating, networking and persuasiveness, and conceptual competences, like problem analysis, vision and judgment, as important.

Important concerning this antecedent is the perception of the competences the successor possesses and if he or she views the behaviour as personally controllable (self-efficacy). Perceived feasibility is expected to have a great influence on the intention to agricultural farm succession. Studying this antecedent of perceived feasibility is relevant, because it offers an understanding if these individuals think they possess the necessary competences, so if they did perceive an extent of behavioural control, and what role this topic played in their intention.

Besides the factors part of the theory of planned behaviour, other factors are found to influence the intention with regard to agricultural farm succession. These include the viability, farm family factors and personal idealism. These topics will now be elaborated on.

## **Viability**

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Next to the aforementioned factors, the intention to farm succession appears to be based upon issues related to the viability of the farm, such as the farm size and type, and the total farm assets (Fischer & Burton, 2014). When individuals do not perceive economic strength with regard to the firm, they are less intended to succession. Barbic (1993) confirms this by arguing that new generations are paying more attention to economic motives than to emotional reasons. Moreover, findings indicate that farm size plays a more crucial factor in the intention to farm succession than income does (Kerbler, 2012). This is also confirmed by Fennell (1981), who shows that a major reason for potential successors to not take over the agricultural business, is the farm being too small and because of that, to pursue other employment. Agricultural farm succession occurs more likely with a larger and highly specialised farm (Glauben, Tietje & Weiss, 2002). Besides that, a small farm is often less able to provide a sufficient income. It also cannot provide a degree of social security that will motivate new generations to farm successions and thereby retain agricultural production and property. Another element that affects the intention to agricultural farm succession is the marketability of the livestock production. Agricultural entrepreneurs need to adapt their production to market demands and produce quality products. Marketability of production can have a motivating effect on the potential successor because dynamic young people cope best with this situation (Vrizer, 1995). Viability is also expressed in terms of the total assets, such as land prices and the value of the equipment. When outdated buildings and machinery are in place and difficulty is experienced in searching enough financial means, a positive vision is obstructed with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession. Altogether, economic criteria related to viability are found to greatly influence the intention to agricultural farm succession (Calus, 2009).

## **Farm family factors**

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Another potential effect on the intention to farm succession can derive from the topic of farm family factors. Such a factor can be related to the intergenerational relationship (Williams, 2010). With regard to family farm succession, it is important that mutual respect is attained between the potential successor and the predecessor. The better this relationship between the generations, the more likely the individual will have a positive experience and intention to agricultural farm succession. Next to this, the perception of the degree of influence one can

exert in the agricultural business affects the intention to farm succession. The more the person can exert personal influence, the more likely it is that the individual will have the intention to farm takeover (Handler, 1992). Besides the relationship between the predecessor and successor, relational influences like sibling accommodation are proven to affect the intention to agricultural farm succession. The better the accommodation between siblings rather than disagreement, the more positive the experience and intention will be towards the succession (Handler, 1992). Communication is crucial to all these relationships, because findings show that communication between the family members plays an important role concerning a family firm succession (Handler, 1992). This causes the burden carried by all parties to be reduced and facilitates a perception of fairness among members of the family (Calus, 2009). Next to these relational elements, it is found crucial that the potential successor has developed actual interest in the family business and the career related to this. Iannarelli (1992) distinguishes several factors that contribute to this interest development in the family firm, in which family members have an important role. This career experience often starts in the preteen years with the early socialization process into the family farm. An important element identified includes the time spent with the predecessor in the business. Next to this, the encouragement and positive attitude from the parent(s) about the firm plays a role, which relates to the previously discussed concept of social norms. Also, making an individual contribution to the family business is witnessed as important. It therefore seems crucial that the successor has developed an interest in the career related to taking over the family farm and family members play a crucial role in this process.

## **Personal idealism**

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The more an individual has achieved fulfilment of personal needs, like psychological needs and life stage needs, the more the individual will likely have the intention to agricultural farm succession (Handler, 1992). According to Calus (2009), in considering taking over the agricultural business, most individuals are driven by the element that it is a childhood dream to continue the family farm. In addition to this vision, the majority of these potential successors view agricultural entrepreneurship as the ideal job. Besides, they really value the continuity of the agricultural family business and are passionate about it. The intention to farm succession is also influenced by educational choices. When the education of the potential successors is related to agricultural business, people are more motivated to take over the family farm (Calus, 2009). This feature relates to the self-image about the competences, as also identified by Iannarelli (1992).

## 2.3 Gender

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There seems to be general agreement in previous research, drawing on the theory of planned behaviour, that attitude is a determining factor in the intention to entrepreneurship. According to Diaz-Garcia & Jiménez-Moreno (2010), gender plays a key role in this intentional process. Gender can be defined as; ‘*the patterned, socially produced, distinctions between female and male, feminine and masculine*’ (Acker, 1992, p.420).

Moreover, the agricultural sector is traditionally viewed as a ‘man’s world’ (Whatmore, 2016). The passing of land from father to son causes women to rarely owning land and traditionally would only enter farming through marriage (Shortall, 2002). According to Aviles (2015), women are constraint in the possession of land, services and possibilities within the agricultural sector. Besides, daughters within a farm family are sometimes not even been considered as potential successors for the family firm (Duma, 1989). Iannarelli (1992) also confirms that daughters are often treated differently than boys with regard to farm succession. Girls were found to spend less time, acquire less skills, and encouraged less compared to the boys. This is due to the situation that decisions are often made for these daughters early on in their lives without them having insights about the available possibilities (Iannarelli, 1995). According to the findings of Gale (1993), succession by one of the sons is regarded as a tradition. As a result of this traditional vision on designation of farm successor, a potential female successor is less likely (Simeone, 2005). In particular, families with both daughters and sons do often not consider daughters as potential successors (Calus, 2009). This is also strengthened by the finding that, in general, woman with the intention to become an entrepreneur are to a greater extent affected by the perception of subjective norms (Welter, Smallbone, Isakova & Aculai (2007).

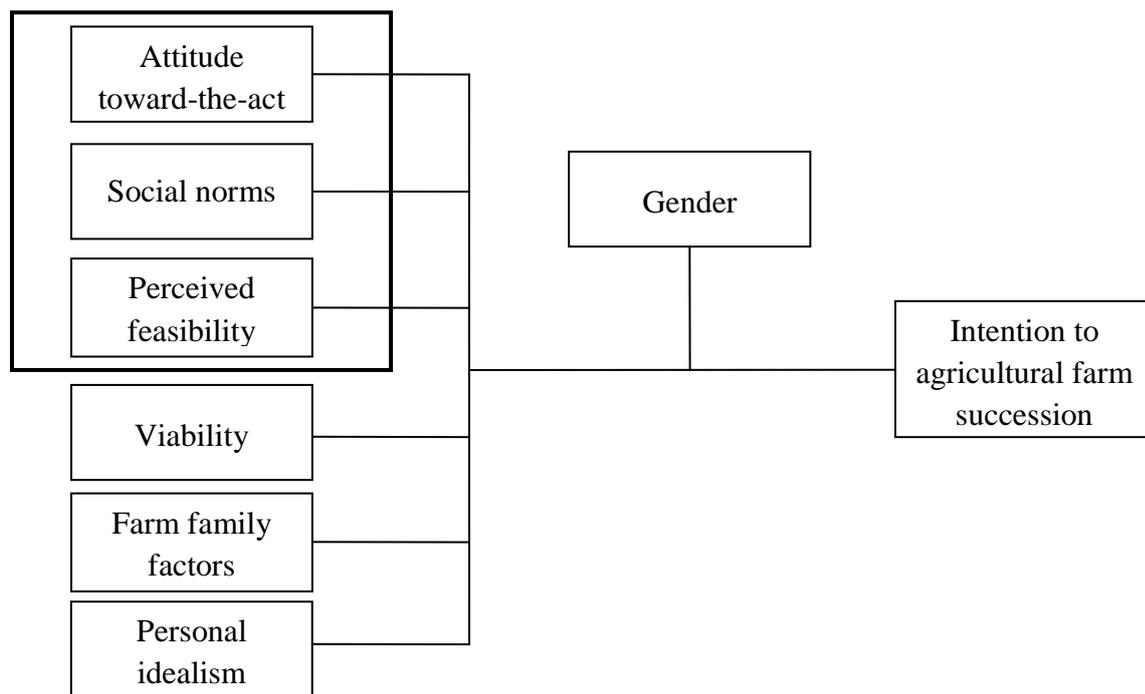
These factors therefore seem to act as barriers making it harder for women to pursue agricultural entrepreneurship, when compared to men. As a result, the topic of gender is expected to impact the way that attitude and other factors influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. Understanding if these differences in gender exists and why is relevant, since gender could affect the way that the identified concepts influence the entrepreneurial intention. When insights can be gained about what causes differences in the intention to agricultural farm succession with regard to gender, potential theoretical implications can be provided.

## 2.4 Conceptual model

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Altogether, the conceptual model that results from the literature discussed in this chapter can be found in [Figure 1: Conceptual model](#). According to the theory of planned behaviour, intention, in this research the intention to agricultural farm succession, is a function of three antecedents; attitude-toward-the-act, social norms and perceived feasibility (Ajzen, 1991). Next to these topics, some other factors were identified as influencing this intention to agricultural farm succession; viability, farm family factors and personal idealism (Fischer & Burton, 2014; Barbic, 1993; Fennell, 1981; Calus, 2009; Williams, 2010; Handler, 1992; Iannarelli, 1992). The topic of gender is expected to affect the way in which the aforementioned determining factors influence the intention to agricultural farm succession (Diaz-Garcia & Jiménez-Moreno, 2010; Whatmore, 2016; Duma, 1989; Ianarelli, 1995; Gale, 1993; Simeone, 2005; Calus, 2009; Welter, et al., 2007).

[Figure 1: Conceptual model](#)



## 3. Method

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To answer the research question ‘*What role do attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession?*’, a research design needs to be set up. In this method chapter, the research strategy will first be discussed. Secondly, the methods of data collection will be elaborated on, including the logic behind the sampling of research participants. After that, the data analysis methods will be argued upon. The fifth section will discuss the anticipated quality of the research and will provide some criteria for this. Next, ethical considerations and mitigating actions to overcome these issues will be discussed. To complete the method chapter, an operationalisation scheme will be provided of the central topics.

### 3.1 Research strategy

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For this study a qualitative method is used, because the research objective is to give insight into what role attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession, in order to contribute knowledge to the scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. The aim of this research is not to provide numbers or proving an effect from a comprehensive amount of research units, characterized by quantitative research, but rich understandings from a smaller amount of respondents (Bleijenberg, 2015). Qualitative data has the ability to capture provisional developing phenomena in a plentiful detailed manner, which is hard to accomplish with quantitative methodologies (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Qualitative research aims to study phenomenon in their natural settings, with the goal of capturing and understanding objects in the way individuals do this (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Researchers therefore aim to come as close as possible to the experiences and perceptions of the participations (Bleijenberg, 2015). Hence, qualitative research is focused on capturing the personal point of view and guaranteeing abundant descriptions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The ability to ensure rich material within qualitative research allows a researcher to make statements about a specific phenomenon in social reality based on a relatively small number of research units (Bleijenberg, 2015). So, the qualitative research method fits well to this particular research because it asks for in-depth, rich understandings of the individual point of view and perceptions of a limited amount of research participants, to make statements about a specific phenomenon, namely the intention to agricultural farm succession.

A case study design will be used and according to Yin (2009, p.18) a case study can be defined as: “ (...) an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. According to Vennix (2011), a case study goes well with a qualitative method of research. Yin (2009) argues that it is appropriate to use a case study design when the research question is focused on understanding how or why something exactly is. The function of case studies is to explore a particular phenomenon in depth. As a result, these conditions are a good fit with this particular research question and objective, because it allows an in-depth investigation and exploration of a particular phenomenon. The research question central to this study revolves around how different dimensions appear to play a role in the intention to become an agricultural entrepreneur and why and to what extent they play a role, which was concluded as an appropriate condition using a case study. Because multiple individuals with different situations and from different companies will be included in the research, a multiple case study is being employed. According to Bleijenbergh (2015), a multiple case study facilitates comparison between cases which allows the researcher to better get insights into the patterns that cohere with regard to a given social phenomenon.

### **3.2 Data collection methods**

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Data has been collected from fourteen persons. Symon & Cassell (2012) argue that selecting a sample must allow collecting the right data and supports addressing the research aim. To enable this, a non-probability way of sampling is employed. With the aid of this sampling technique, respondents are chosen based on the judgment of the researcher concerning the features of the population important for meeting the research objective (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The research sample therefore consists of agricultural entrepreneurs who already have taken over a company. These persons are able to provide their experiences, opinions, perceptions and meanings about the different dimensions that influenced the intention to agricultural farm succession. They can elaborate if, how and why these factors influence this intention. As already appointed, a criteria will be that these respondents have taken over a family business. This with the goal in mind to explore, among other things, the concept of family pressure. Besides that, because the aspect of gender is taken account for, the sample consists of eight male and six female agricultural entrepreneurs. More information about the respondents that participated in this study can be found in Table 1 in Appendix 1.

Data has been collected by means of interviews. Interviews conducted in qualitative research are characterized by their openness of the questions. The respondents are provided the ability to choose the formulation of answers themselves (Bleijenbergh, 2015). This allows the research participants to use their own wording and to not be limited to a preset answer format. This fits well with the research aim by generating rich personal perceptions and experiences. A category of the interview is the semi-structured interview, in which the formulation of questions is predetermined. Also the order of questions can be fixed, but can also change during the conversation (Vennix, 2011). A benefit of this particular kind of interviewing is that all participants receive the same questions, but also allows some room to deepen unexpected issue (Bleijenbergh, 2015). Because of these reasons, a semi-structured interview has been chosen to collect data.

Respondents have been approached by phone or by email to invite them to participate in the research and were first explained the research goals. In that way clarity has been provided about the expectations and implications for them as research participants. After this initial conversation, a further appointment for the interview could be made. The persons were not pressured to participate and could withdraw themselves from the research at any time.

### **3.3 Methods for data analysis**

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After the data had been collected, the analysis process started. The interviews have been fully transcribed, to prevent the possibility of forgetting what has been said. These transcripts have been analysed by means of content analysis. According to Krippendorff (2004) content analysis can be defined as; ‘‘a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use’’. By using this method of analysis trends, patterns and differences can be identified. In line with this, the discursive turn has been central. According to Langley & Abdallah (2011), this discourse analysis is focused on investigating how discourses form understanding of social reality, and how these discourses are developed by discursive practices consisting of the construction, dispersion, transformation, motion and interpretation of texts. In accordance to this discursive turn, next to analysing what is being said, it is also important to pay attention how and why something is being said (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Altogether these data analysis methods fit well to the research aim, because it enables valid inferences from the interview transcripts and thereby identifying patterns and differences in the data to draw conclusions.

### **3.4 Quality of the research**

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As already elaborated on in the data collection method section, semi-structured interviews have been conducted. This method enhances the reliability of the data collection because these pre-structured questions cause all respondents within the research to receive the same questions (Bleijenbergh, 2015). Lincoln & Guba (1985) distinguish four criteria specifically for qualitative research; credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. In trying to meet the credibility criterion, evidence has been provided in the results section of the research, like illustrative quotes. Because the researcher is familiar with a few respondents, which can affect the dependability, biases have been minimised. Next to these aforementioned quality aspects, the purpose has also been to consider alternative explanations in drawing statements to enhance confirmability. When conclusions are drawn from the collected data, boundary conditions will be provided to consider the applicability of the findings to other situations. Next to these quality concerns, reflexivity will also be conducted.

According to Haynes (2012, p. 72) reflexivity can be defined as; ‘‘an awareness of the researcher’s role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes’’. It is therefore important to turn back upon the position of the researcher and the influence it has on the master thesis. The researcher does have a family background in the sector, but also acts simultaneously as a researcher. This could enhance the interpretation by being able to use this extra lens in understanding the backgrounds of the research participants. It also supports the ability to ask further. Next to this, attention should be paid to the concerns around how gender can be of significance during qualitative interviewing. Gender reflexivity is found certainly important in research (Ward, 2016), so the female researcher should reflect on and be aware of this influence. These roles could affect the research process and outcomes, which makes conducting reflexivity important.

### **3.5 Research ethics**

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Research ethics are found very important in doing academic research and are considered as an increasingly explicit, even formalized concern (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Ethics can be defined as; ‘‘code of behaviour in relation to the rights of those who are subject to the research or affected by it’’ (Wells, 1994, p.284). Ethical issues to consider for this particular research are that people could be hesitant to participate because they do not want other people

to know their arguments for choosing an agricultural entrepreneurial career. For example, if family pressure played a role the participants may not feel comfortable to have that published. Mitigations taken against these situations are to make clear that the research participants can stay anonymous and that their personal information and privacy will be handled confidentially and responsibly. It therefore has been clarified that only the researcher, the supervisor and the second reader will have access to the interview transcripts. The transcripts have been saved and analysed on a computer secured with a password. Next to this, it was considered important to behave in a professional manner and collect and interpret data in a careful and appropriate way. All with the reason to treat the participants with fair dealing (Symon & Cassell, 2012). It is of great value to undertake these actions and behave ethically, because it is essential to both be aware of and adhere to protecting the research participants and the researcher herself from harm and unnecessary risks. Next to this it is a way of obtaining respect for autonomy (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

### **3.6 Operationalisation**

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To answer the research question central to this thesis, an operationalisation scheme has been established. The operationalisation has been based in the literature discussed in ‘‘Chapter 2: Theoretical framework’’. The model of Ajzen (1991) has been used as a basis framework to meet the research objective; ‘‘to give insight into what role attitude and gender play between among determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession, in order to contribute knowledge to the scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector’’. By using the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) the antecedents of agricultural entrepreneurial intention could be examined. Three other factors have been added to examine the intention to agricultural farm succession. Besides, the topic of gender will be taken into account. To measure all the central concepts, interview questions have been developed, which collectively result in a semi-structured interview. This semi-structured interview allowed for follow-up questions. The operationalisation schema can be found in Table 2 in Appendix 2. The interview guide resulting from this scheme can be found in Appendix 3.

The code table summarising the coding process is provided in Table 3 in Appendix 4. The research process planning can be found in Table 4 in Appendix 5. Appendix 6 contains the collected data. This separate appendix can be requested for inspection from the researcher.

## 4. Results

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In this chapter, the data collected from the interviews will be analysed and elaborated on. The results will be discussed separately per issue. The findings will be compared and contrasted between all data to argue the role of each concept in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Within these sections, the influence of the topic of gender will be discussed and the influence it has on the way that the topic of interest impacts the intention to agricultural farm succession.

### 4.1 Attitude-toward-the-act

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All respondents were asked by means of specified questions about the role that attitude-toward-the-act played in their intention to agricultural farm succession. During the conversations a convincing majority of the respondents argued that, in the first place, they were not driven by financial reasons in their intention to agricultural farm succession. Ilse confirms this by stating the following:

*‘‘At age 25, it was not my intention to have a farm because I could get a lot of money out of it, but because I love working with animals.’’*

It appears from this statement that monetary gains not acted as a push factor for Ilse regarding her attitude-toward-the-act. Moreover, she clearly emphasises that working with animals was her main driver concerning the intention to agricultural farm succession. Besides, she added to this statement that, in her opinion, this is the correct foundation to take over a farm, because you should not start a farm for financial reasons. Though, she also clearly stated that she would not have taken over the agricultural farm if she did not have the right husband by her side, not sharing the same passion and be part of the business. The same situation applies to Miranda, who also emphasized the role her husband played in the process of succession. If these women did not have such partner by their side, they would not have made the same decision as they did now. Some men acknowledged the importance of their partner but none of them stated that it would have affected their intention to take over the farm. With regard to the influence gender has on the relationship between the attitude-toward-the-act and the intention to agricultural farm succession, this seems to be a striking result.

Next, during other conversations, it seemed to become evident that, though, there should be an income to gain as an outcome of taking over the agricultural business. This can also be noted from the following statement of Cindy:

*‘‘I should be able to get an income from it. I could also take a job with a higher income, but I do not want to because I want to have an own company and I love doing what I do.’’*

This quote expresses the appreciation of Cindy for the monetary gains. However, according to her, this is not the first priority. This can be concluded by her stating that she feels like she also has the option to take another job, which generates a higher income. Because she values being self-employed and enjoys the work, she deliberately chooses to pursue this career within the agricultural sector. Her intention to agricultural farm succession therefore appears to be influenced by financial reasons, but this is not seen as the first priority. This image is exemplary for the overall result of the collected data.

As shown by both the aforementioned quotes of Ilse and Cindy, it becomes evident that financial reasons seem to be dominated by other factors belonging to the attitude-toward-the-act. One of these issues that played a more crucial role with regard to the intention to farm succession, is the enjoyment of the work belonging to running an agricultural business. No respondent said that he or she did not enjoy the work itself. For example, Paul mentioned that it was simple for him; if he would not have liked to milk cows, he would not have taken over the agricultural farm. In line with this, from the total collected data, it appears that the passion for animals and enjoying the work seems to have a substantial impact on the intention to agricultural farm succession.

This passion for animals and enjoying the work also comes forward in the attractiveness of the lifestyle that is associated with being an agricultural entrepreneur. Some respondents acknowledged that it is the whole package that they find pleasing in their intention to agricultural farm succession. Sjoerd describes this by saying:

*‘‘I see it more as a way of life than as my job. Many people are like, I have my job and my job is part of my life and furthermore I also have vacations and hobbies and a family. A farmer views it more as a job that is actually his life. For a big part that method of working also determines your life’’.*

What Sjoerd is saying is that being an agricultural entrepreneur owning a farm is not just a job. It appears to be a whole lifestyle that comes into play. This statement really indicates that taking over an agricultural farm is not the same as taking a regular eight-to-five job at an organisation. Sjoerd wanted to make clear that it consists of more than that, including the variety of the work what makes every day unique. This kind of lifestyle seems to have to suit you, which is emphasized by more respondents.

Next to the impact that the attractiveness of the lifestyle looks to have on the intention to agricultural farm succession, another striking result became evident from the interview with Miranda. She expressed to really valued the opportunities that were given to her due to the farm succession. She said the following:

*‘‘I have raised three children here myself and I never had to drop them off. For me, that counts the most of all. I get satisfaction from that. Of course the company is all wonderful and I am also proud of what the company is today and what we have now. But I think the fact that I was often home with the family... and I also thought it was important to be there at lunch and when they come home from school.’’*

Miranda expresses in this quote that running the family farm provides her to work around the house. This allows her to be with her family and see her children grow up and be a part of their life, which she really valued. The wish to have children and raise them the way she desires, for example by not having to drop them off somewhere else and be there when they come home from school, seems to have been an important factor in the intention to agricultural farm succession. The lifestyle appears to be regarded as attractive by most respondents and the opinion of Miranda is joined specifically by Leo. He also emphasised the enjoyment of being able to see his children growing up and to sit with them at the table during breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Besides the influence of the lifestyle, the fact that you are self-employed and that you yourself are in control also looks to be of great influence on the intention to agricultural farm succession. Almost all respondents stated that they really value being their own boss and therefore be able to make their own choices without being accountable to someone else. One respondent in particular, Richard, claims that independent entrepreneurship was the single most important aspect for him in his decision to take over the family farm. The following statement of Richard shows his point of view regarding this subject:

*“Previously I worked at two companies. (...) I actually took all decisions, but always did it for someone else. I liked it, but I thought I could do this for myself. (...) I wanted to be in charge myself. (...) Making my own decisions without being responsible to anyone else, yes I really enjoy that. (...) I decide what is happening, I decide if I do something or not. I have a good feeling about that. (...) Those are the things I did not have with my previous bosses... it had to be thought through carefully. Now I just do what I want”.*

This statement really expresses the desire of Richard being his own boss. During the interview he talked about his work career and how this led to him taking over the family farm. Before the farm succession, Richard has had two jobs. He really enjoyed these jobs and also experienced a lot of freedom. However, he always needed to make decisions for the sake of someone else and was always accountable to his boss. At a given moment, he made the decision that if he wanted to start for himself, this was the right and possibly last moment. During that same period, his parents needed a successor and the intended successor, his brother, dropped out, so everything came together. By means of the family farm succession he could be his own boss, making his own decisions. Altogether, the ability to be self-employed appeared to steer his intention to agricultural farm succession. . Many of his counterparts join this appreciation of freedom that it provides.

Next to the aspect of being self-employed, several people expressed that having an agricultural business is a busy job with lots of challenges one encounters. But, these challenges also provide a sense of self-actualisation. Days that do not go the way as planned, but in the end are well-managed, makes you feel good and proud. This feeling of self-actualisation is mentioned by several people and therefore appears to be important. Janneke says the following about this matter:

*“(...) the company is very busy and you are confronted with a lot of things, that is also challenging. (...) if you see how much hours I put into it, a lot, because I also have a part-time job and my work at home and a family. But it gives satisfaction. So despite that it costs a lot of time, it also regains energy.”*

This quote emphasises that although it is a lot of work and takes many hours, Janneke was driven by the self actualisation it yields. This becomes evident by her saying it is challenging, but that it also regains energy. This woman has, besides running the farm, a part-time job . She deliberately chose to take over the family farm, because she gains a lot of pleasure and

satisfaction from it. The statement of Janneke makes clear that, despite the many hours and work it takes, she values the balance she has between the farm, her part-time job and the household, and the self actualisation she derives from it.

Overall, the attitude-towards-the-act appears to be very important in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Especially pull factors, part of the two theories developed by Gilad & Levine (1986), were deemed important, like enjoying the work, achieving self actualisation, the possibility of self-employment and the interest in the sector. This in contrast to the push theory, which proposes negative forces to be dominant in the intention, for example financial reasons. Many of the respondents really emphasized that these elements, which make up the attitude-towards-the-act, were the most dominant factors in their intention to agricultural farm succession.

Gender does seem to have an impact on the way that attitude-toward-the-act affects the intention to agricultural farm succession. Two women explicitly stated that they would not have taken over the family farm if they did not have a husband by their side which shared the same passion for the agricultural business and with whom they could run the agricultural business together. This appears to have influenced their attitude, because if they did not have such partner by their side, they would not have made the same decision as they did now. Some men did acknowledge the importance of the partner, but none of them stated that it would have affected their intention for takeover. These results therefore seem to indicate that gender does have an influence on the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## **4.2 Social norms**

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The respondents were also asked about their thoughts concerning the social norms they did or did not experience, to find out what role these social norms played in their intention to agricultural farm succession. The received answers provide different feelings.

Most of the respondents, and especially the younger ones, did not feel any pressure from their parents to take over the family farm. Amber said the following about her experience concerning the pressure received from her parents:

*“He had not taken into account that this was coming. He was of course also happy with it later, because then he could say that he did not do everything for nothing all his life. But I have not been pressured by that, no, not at all. My parents never wanted that either. My brother may have thought that my father pushed him, but we also saw from early days that it was not going to work with him.”*

As can be read in the statement, Amber stated that she not felt pushed by her parents to take over the agricultural farm. She is saying that her father never even saw it coming that she would succeed with the family farm. However, an interesting sentence is the one saying that it was probably different for her brother. This seems to indicate that the role of gender comes into play with regard to the issue of social norms. Her being a daughter and him being a son seems to have made a difference in the opinion of her father. Later on in the conversation, she confirms this more or less by suggesting that her father would have probably stimulated her more if she would have been a boy.

The assumption that gender comes into play regarding the social norms became also evident in other conversations. For some of the older respondents social norms, and especially family pressure, seemed to have an impact on the intention to agricultural farm succession. Because the farm has survived multiple generations, some respondents felt the expectations from their parents to continue the business. Especially for the oldest son, it could be experienced that way. Jan, which is the oldest son out of his siblings, expresses his thoughts in the following statement:

*“Yes, my dad took over the farm from his parents and the expectations of your parents is that you... actually the oldest son it was then which should just succeed. That actually went quite automatically, so that is how it also went with us.”*

In the statement, Jan expresses that the family farm is being held over several generations. His parents highly valued the continuation of the farm over the next generation. This becomes evident by him saying that he felt expectations of his parents to take over the agricultural business. Because Jan did not really know better than the farm being passed on to the next generation, the process went quite automatically. Especially him being the oldest son in his family made him the one that was put most pressure on. Roughly the same situation was true for Piet. He also felt some pressure towards taking over the family farm. He experienced being pushed a bit towards doing an agricultural education and later on by promising him to build a new shed. That gender seems to impact these social norms appears from the fact that

Jan has an older sister. This could have made her the first intended successor, but Jan clearly expressed during the conversation that he, as the oldest son, was the intended successor in the eyes of his parents.

Another case that stood out with regard to family pressure, was the one of Leo. The following quote illustrates his situation:

*‘No, because maybe they would rather not have wanted it, because my brother already became a farmer too. So then they just had to enlarge and expand the farm a lot, so they only had more work with it. But afterwards they think it is wonderful. They have found it very wonderful. But there was no such pressure, because there already was a successor.’*

The statement by Leo indicates that he did not feel any pressure from his parents to take over the family farm. This is because there already was one sibling that expressed the desire to be the family farm successor. His parents had in mind to pass on the agricultural business to only one child rather than to multiple, because with two successors they would feel like they had to enlarge the company. Because his brother is several years older than him and already decided to enter the family business, there was no longer the need to find a successor. However, this appeared to have never impacted Leo’s intention to agricultural farm succession. During the conversation, it became known that after all his parents did support him fully.

Moreover, Remco expressed that he did not experience any pressure. An interesting part of the interview was him talking about the situation if he would have experienced much pressure from his parents:

*‘If I had experienced pressure, than I think it might have gone the opposite direction. Then perhaps I would have rejected it sooner.’*

What Remco is saying is that he did not experience any pressure from the side of his parents, but suggests that if he would have been put under pressure to take over the family farm it would not have had a positive influence on his intention to family farm succession. He proposes that it probably would have made him reject taking over the agricultural business. It therefore indicates that if it was merely for his parents, he would less likely have the intention to take over the family farm. The more they would force him, the more it would have hold him back. Amber adds to this discussion point by stating that she would not be willing to push herself to the limit just to please her dad.

Next, in a conversation with Monique, it seems that the extended family was also involved in the continued existence of the family farm. She said the following about this:

*‘‘And of course it is nice. I have noticed that the rest of the family enjoyed that the company kept existing. But that has never been something that has to go on. (...) They immediately called me when I left the notary. They thought it was great that the family farm would continue to exist. (...)’’*

Monique expresses that her extended family really valued the continuation of the family farm and that they explicitly stated this. As can be read from the statement, within the family, the farm survival was a major thing. They were very happy and relieved that someone decided to succeed. However, Monique made clear during the interview that this never affected her own intention for agricultural farm succession. She regards it as nice that her family appreciates the continuation of the family business, but she purely did it because she wanted it herself. During the conversation it could also be noticed that she always talked about being allowed to take over the farm and not just that she took it over. It became evident that she is thankful for her parents granting her to succeed the agricultural business. Many research participants appear to join this proposition, because they all acknowledge that there is a goodwill factor involved. This is also in line with the support many respondents received from their parents.

Next to the parents and extended family, the respondents were also asked about the pressure or expectations from their personal environment, such as friends and neighbours. No one really appeared to receive or care about these reactions. However, more than half of the women did receive some notable reactions. Monique provided the following example:

*‘‘(...) and that they say that it is not a profession for women. (...)’’*

The quote of Monique shows that the environment looks like to respond differently to her on taking over the family farm, due to her gender. Janneke also experienced this by not being seen as the decision maker of the company and was asked if her husband was present. Both women said that this did not hold them back from entering the agricultural sector and thought it just was a bit funny. Next to the sometimes condescending reactions, they also received positive reactions saying that they are doing a great job. However, the topic of gender does seem to be present because women receive different reactions from their personal environment, because most people are used to male farm manager. Though, it does not give the impression that these reactions influence the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Altogether, it seems that social norms have the ability to play a crucial role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Some respondents felt some sort of family pressure, but this was not the case for everyone. It looks like the older generation was more susceptible to this pressure by their parents, while the younger generation has increasingly less to deal with traditional expectations regarding the continuation of the family farm. Two persons even stated that the more pressure the parents would have put on them, the more it would have negatively affected their intention to agricultural farm succession. Though, all respondents appeared to receive some kind of support by their parents, either by physically helping them out at the farm or in another role, for example as an advisor.

Besides, the results show that gender seems to come into play regarding the social norms. Jan, Piet and Sjoerd felt pressured, because they were the oldest or only son and therefore were regarded as intended successors to keep the farm in the family for another generation. None of the women were regarded as the intended successor from a young age and never felt any pressure to succeed. Therefore gender appears to be of influence, due to the more traditional expectations. Next to this, women also received different reactions from their male counterparts, for example by saying that it is not a profession for women. However, all women stated to not be withheld or influenced by this regarding their intention to agricultural farm succession.

### **4.3 Perceived feasibility**

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A quite unified image could be concluded from all collected data regarding the perceived feasibility. It looks like almost all respondents not really considered the competences that are necessary to take over the agricultural farm. Jaap said the following about this matter:

*“That actually did not play that much of a role. (...) Yes, it comes gradually. That is a process. You develop that.”*

From the statement it appears that the perceived feasibility had not been an important factor in the consideration to take over the agricultural business. During the conversation, it became clear that he never doubted his competences and skills at that point in time. The self-efficacy appeared to be reasonably high and he also had the belief that his skills would be developed further over time. His quote expresses that it is a process and that a lack of competences beforehand would not hold him back in his intention to farm succession. According to him,

the perceived feasibility therefore is not crucial and appears to not have an impact on the intention to take over the agricultural business. This point of view is shared by almost all respondents. Many did not seem to even dwell on it in their intention to agricultural farm succession, had no doubts about their self-efficacy and were confident about the level of skills they possessed. Sjoerd adds to this:

*“Your skills often go along with your interest. If you are not good at something or when you think you are not good at it, then you often do not feel like it. (...) And that is the way it is with farmers, it often goes together. If you are good at something then you also enjoy doing it.”*

What Sjoerd is saying is that interest and skills often look to go together. If you are drawn to run the family farm, you are agitated to make it work and develop skills. He states that it works also the other way around. When you are good at something, you are enjoying it more and are more motivated to do it. This seems to indicate that interest and skills are very related. Because almost all interviewees do have interest in a farm, the confidence about the skills could also naturally be there.

Sjoerd also mentioned that the influence one can exert before the takeover plays a role regarding the feasibility of a future successor. The following statement illustrates this:

*“If you must constantly listen to the old gentlemen or your parents and you are not allowed to do anything, and that is not good either, it is not healthy. Because at a certain point that young boy will be faced with it himself and if you do not yet know how to sell a calf, for example, you do not have that commercial spirit. or you have never been knocked back in it. Because everyone has to bump their heads once, that is good. And if that did not happen, then you get thrown in at the deep end.”*

The quote nicely illustrates that, in the eyes of Sjoerd, the level of influence one can exert before taking over the family farm appears to be crucial to the feasibility and self-efficacy. If you did not get the chance to practice these skills and develop them, you run the chance of missing out this experience which throws you at the deep end at the moment of succession. He himself did receive the possibility to exert a considerable amount of influence during his eleven years within the partnership. During the conversation he talks about him already been given a free hand in taking decisions and determining strategies. Because of that he developed many skills and much confidence to eventually run the farm by himself.

When discussing the subject of perceived feasibility, Paul stated the following:

*“You must see it as all-round, you must see it as very broadly. You have to be able to do the administrative work and you have to be able to do all the practical work, you have to be able to do everything with the cows, you have to be a bit technical if possible. It is very broad. I think that there are few sectors in which you have to be as broad as in the agricultural sector regarding the total professional knowledge.”*

Paul is saying that being an agricultural entrepreneur requires a wide range of skills. In his opinion, there is no other sector in which you are in need of that wide variety of knowledge and competences. When asking further about this matter, he acknowledges several aspects that contribute to being confident about the perceived feasibility. First of all, growing up at the farm and gradually flowing into the company supported the level of experience. Secondly, he had an agricultural education focusing on becoming an agricultural entrepreneur, which made him feel like he learned the basic capacities and theoretical background. Both these aspects seemed to stimulate the intention to agricultural farm succession. Many respondents join this reasoning, which made them feel taking over the farm was a natural step.

During the interviews, the respondents were asked if they experienced any barriers as a man/woman and if they think barriers exist with regard to the issue of gender. One of the most striking results appeared to be related to the feasibility. Especially a lot of men suggested that women are having a physical disadvantage when compared to men. Because many consider running an agricultural farm as a heavy job, they argue that the work is harder for women. Some women acknowledged this and some did not. The following statement addressing this issue, is from Amber:

*“As a man you just..., I think you are able to do a little more work in the end. You are stronger, you work faster.”*

Amber admits that she sometimes feels like she has physical disadvantages when compared to men. However, she does not elaborate on it that much, because she did not regard this as a barrier stopping her from taking over an agricultural farm. This was also the case for the other women. As these physical barriers were experienced by more respondents, that they seem to be apparent. However, this factor does not appear to negatively influence the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Altogether, it appears from all the collected data that almost no one considered the perceived feasibility regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession. Most of the respondents viewed it as something natural, because they have grown into it. Therefore this topic seems not to play a great role regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Two persons, Ilse and Amber, admitted to be a little bit unsure about the competences and skills at the beginning of the acquisition process. Both respondents were women. Amber suggested herself that being more insecure than men, could be a feminine trait. None of the male interviewees really brought up to have doubted their feasibility. Physical barriers were acknowledged to exist for women by both men and women, but appeared to be having no (negative) influence. However, because such a portion of the women expressed being a little insecure about their feasibility at start, in contrast to the male respondents, it can be noticed from this data set that gender does seem to have a light impact on the way the perceived feasibility influences the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## 4.4 Viability

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Next to the factors part of the Theory of planned behaviour, additional topics were suggested in literature to be of substantial influence. Overall it appeared that the viability of the farm was indeed something the successors did consider. An example of this situation is elaborated on by Remco, saying:

*“Yes of course [I considered the viability]. If I had doubt about that, I had never become a farmer. (...) But it was a healthy company so hence the decision was made.”*

In this quote, the importance attached to the viability of the firm by Remco becomes evident. What he says is that if the viability was not secure for the future, he would not have taken over the family business. It therefore definitely seemed to affect his intention to agricultural farm succession. When asking more questions about this subject, Remco argues that he assessed different elements. First of all Remco argues that the farm size is important. Secondly, it must yield returns. His answers during the interview indicated that the overall healthiness of the company was a very important factor in his intention to agricultural farm succession. More respondents shared roughly the same vision. In the following statement, Janneke expresses her point of view about the role that viability plays in the intention to agricultural farm succession:

*‘‘The moment the company does not make it economically, you are not going to sustain . (...) You still have to account to the bank and when you are not running, the bank also says ‘goodbye’, we stop the loan or we do not want to continue financing.’’’*

Janneke explicitly indicates that when taking over such a company, you are financially dependent of the bank. So, when running the farm, it is important that you are economically profitable, because you have that obligation. When considering such succession, it is therefore crucial to take into account this pressure. From the wording Janneke uses, it appears to have influenced her intention to agricultural farm succession. In her case, the land around the company provided a secure basis to make the decision to take over the firm. Many respondents join this opinion by emphasising that the farm should yield returns and have a good prospect to make these in the future too.

In the next quote, Cindy talks about some other element that she attaches importance to with regard to the viability of the farm:

*‘‘No, I do not want to make this my only income, because I want a little more variation in my work, a little bit of spreading risk. (...) I thought well, I will see how I can market the product in a different way. (...) Then I came up with the idea of producing rhubarb beer.’’’*

In this statement, Cindy indicates the importance she attaches to diversification. Next to her wanting to add some variation in her work, she also has the intention to diversify for the sake of spreading risk. During the interview, she elaborates further on this by saying that this could be happening by for example extending her cultivation with another crop. Besides, she was also inspired to market her own product in a different way. Therefore, she started producing rhubarb beer with the aid of her own rhubarb harvest. It became clear that she values the element of diversification which belongs to the viability of the agricultural business. No other respondents indicated the need or desire for diversification.

Not all respondents, however, shared the same vision concerning the role viability played with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession. An example of this different point of view becomes apparent by the following statement:

*‘‘If there had been no possibilities, no, my parents would have said we will not do it, we do not want that for you. Then you are young and naive, you think for yourself just do it and we will bite our tongue.’’’*

Amber is saying that the viability was not a major factor influencing her own intention to agricultural farm succession. She indicates that she would also have the intention if the viability did not have the best future-proof state. However, what is interesting about this statement, is that it suggests that the parents would intervene if the situation would be like this. If there were no good prospects with the farm, the parents would not have let her complete the succession. So, for Amber herself, the viability did not affect her intention to agricultural farm succession, but the takeover still would not have happened because her parents would not have let her.

Also, in other interviews the role of the parents and it being a family business became evident. All respondents acknowledged that the situation of agricultural farm succession was only seen as achievable because of the fiscal advantages belonging to a family takeover. This is also confirmed by the following quote of Jaap:

*‘‘Hmm... [for people without parents owning an agricultural farm] it will not be very easy. Maybe in other countries, but not in the Netherlands. (...) Financially that is not possible. You have to inherit it from your parents or it will not work. The return in the agricultural sector is not high. (...) [I took over] at lease value and a loan from the parents. That is how it goes. And then pay off once. Technically as cheap as possible.’’*

It appears to be crucial to be part of a family owning an agricultural farm when taking over such a company. It seems that most of the time the parents appreciate that a son or daughter wants to succeed with the farm and therefore the factor of granting comes into play. As can be read from the statement of Jaap, his parents provided him the opportunity to take over the farm at lease value and gave out a loan. Especially the last sentence speaks volumes, stating that it technically has been done as cheap as possible. This indicates the major influence the fiscal advantages seem to have on the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Overall, the viability looks to be of crucial value regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession. Respondents considered the farm size and prospects for return in ensuring a secure foundation for the future. Being economically healthy seems to be a major pressure because of the accountability to the bank. By means of diversification and other potential growth sources, a more sustainable foundation could be created for the future, which increases the viability. But, possible most importantly, the impression is given that without parents who own an agricultural farm, the ability to take over a viable company is substantially decreased.

Gender did not seem to influence the way viability impacts the intention to agricultural farm succession. Based on the current data set, no striking differences between men and women appeared to exist for this relationship.

## 4.5 Farm family factors

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It seems to stand out from all the interviews that growing up at the family farm plays a huge role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Most of the respondents already started helping out from a young age. As a result, they developed a passion for the farm and the accompanying work. Some even stated to not have considered other career options. Jaap describes this nicely by saying:

*“Yes purely inherited from home. (...) from an early age. Born between the cows actually. You grew up with it, so you just do not know anything else either. This was good, so you did not have to look further.”*

The aforementioned statement shows that, as long as Jaap can remember, he has been around the family farm. By spending time at the farm, he developed a strong interest for it. He also mentioned that he did not really tried to pursue something else. Being a part of the farm was the most easy choice because it was a family business. Because he loved it so much, it was clear for him that he wanted to do this in life and therefore did not explore other possibilities. The intention for agricultural farm succession looks therefore considerably affected by the fact that it is a family company. It being a family farm seems to cause one to be exposed to and to develop a major interest for it. This is recognized by many respondents. Monique says the following about it:

*“When I was little, I always walked around at the farm and always thought it was all very nice and interesting. I think that this has a lot of influence on later choices. Look, if I grew up in the middle of the city, what would it be like? That I do not know.”*

The statement of Monique indicates that she considers it as possible that the environment played a role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Because she did get exposed to the farm, it triggered her intention to also run such business. If she did not grow up in this farming environment, she strongly doubts whether or not she would have followed the same path. All respondents mentioned at different moments during the interview the importance of growing up in this environment and helping around, which lead to developing a passion for it.

Thus, supported by both previous quotes, the influence of growing up and following and learning from the predecessors at the family farm appears to have a very high impact on the intention to agricultural farm succession.

For Leo, the farm being a family company appeared to weight very heavily in his intention to take over the farm. This is demonstrated by the following statement:

*‘‘Well, if my dad had a car garage than I would have become a car seller, though. Now it is a cattle farm so now I take over a cattle farm.’’*

The foregoing quote illustrates that if his dad would have a car garage, he also would have wanted to take over that business. It appears that it did not really matter that much what kind of business his predecessor owned. But, the fact that it is the family company that caught his interest seems to be a more powerful element influencing the intention for takeover. The environment in which the person grows up once again appears to play a magnificent role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Richard joins this reasoning by saying:

Besides the farm being a family home, the relationship between the predecessor and the successor also appeared to be a factor of influence. Related to this relationship is the level of freedom and influence the predecessor gives to the intended successor. Janneke expresses her experience by the following statement:

*‘‘Yes, they let me free to choose. But I can imagine that if they had thwarted on all sides, it would have been harder or I just would not have succeeded. In first instance they did discuss important things, so I did had my vote in that. (...) [If I did not have that much influence] I think I still would have put it through in the end.’’*

Janneke explains that she received a lot of freedom and that her parents were very open in their communication. The motivation to eventually take over the business seemed to be strengthened, because the intergenerational bond was experienced as fine by all respondents and they had a say in the business operations. The statement of Janneke shows, though, that if she, hypothetically speaking, would have had less influence, she would have still insisted to take over the family farm. Many respondents join this point of view that it would definitely be a harder situation, but it would not be an argument to reject the takeover. The intergenerational relationship and the influence one can exert therefore seems to be positively influencing in the intention to agricultural farm succession. However, it does not appear to be a deal breaker, because they still would have the intention to take over the family farm.

Next to the intergenerational relationship, more relationships seem to be involved in the process of a family farm takeover. Piet talked about his experiences with his siblings:

*[My siblings,] they supported me and had no problems with it. There is never... when we talked about the takeover the other sisters and brother never said I got it too cheap. (...)* *[If they would have problems with it] I still would have continued anyway.*

It appears from the statement that Piet did not experience any rivalry between his siblings and himself. They have supported the occurrence of the farm being passed on to him and did not claim that they were withheld from any financial share. None of the respondents really admitted to have experienced any big difficulties with their brothers and sisters. Most of the siblings did not have interest in the family farm and could appreciate the continuation of the family business. What is interesting about the statement of Piet is that he claims that no issue would have stopped him from taking over the agricultural company. He admits that the situation of sibling accommodation does make the process easier, but his intention to agricultural farm succession did not seem to be affected by it in anyway.

Concluding, the element of farm family factors seems to play a major role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Being exposed by and growing up at the family farm environment positively appeared to impact this intention. Next to this, because the farm is a family business, some respondents stated that this carries some emotional value. Besides, different relationships, such as the intergenerational relationship and the accommodation between the siblings, looked like having a positive influence on the intention to agricultural farm succession when these factors were positively experienced.

Regarding the topic of family farm factors, no striking results between men and women became evident. Gender, therefore, does not appear to impact the way farm family factors affect the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## **4.6 Personal idealism**

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The last topic identified in the conceptual model as possibly influencing the intention to agricultural farm succession, is the personal idealism. Much data has been collected about this factor, ranging from educational choices to life experience.

When looking at the role the education played in the intention, the following can be noted. All respondents followed an education related to the agricultural sector. Academic literature suggested that when the study of an individual is related to agricultural business, one would be more intended to take over the agricultural farm. However, Jaap said the following about the choice for an agricultural education:

*“You do not follow that agricultural education and as a result have the choice to take over a business. It rather is the other way around. You are going to follow that course because you have the intention to take over the family farm in the agricultural sector.”*

What Jaap says is that he already had the intention to agricultural farm succession and therefore chose the agricultural education. Most of the respondents join this reasoning of deliberately choosing this education, because the intention to agricultural farm succession already existed. They therefore view the education as a good step forwards towards the takeover. Many respondents learned some new knowledge and found themselves in a pleasant environment with people sharing the same passion.

However, not all respondents were determined from a young age to take over the agricultural business. Most men were determined, but not all women were. An example of such woman that realised her intention to agricultural farm succession at a relatively old age becomes apparent from the following statement:

*“But then my father at a certain point said I am selling [milk] quota, because it was very expensive then. Then it got a bit too tricky for me (...) and then I went farming.*

The aforementioned quote indicates that before the moment her father announced that he would sell milk quota and at some point sell the farm, Amber did not explicitly have the intention to agricultural farm succession. During the interview, she told that only from that period in time she really made the decision to enter the family business. Having the intention to take over the family farm at a relatively old age was also the case with Janneke. In conversation with her, she discussed her life and told that she studied veterinary medicine. Her plan therefore was to become a veterinarian. After graduating, she started as a full-time veterinarian, but during this career she discovered that her vision in life changed. She said she experienced things which made her want to do something for herself, a bit of her entrepreneurial urge came up. Only finding out at a relatively older age that you have the intention to agricultural farm succession, was something shared among almost all women.

This seems to indicate that gender does influence the way the personal idealism impacts the intention to agricultural farm succession. Monique adds to this:

*“(…) you have to think carefully, especially as a woman. You sometimes have to explain yourself more about why [you are taking over a farm]. (…) I consciously thought about it, because you are entering a man’s world, thereby even think more consciously; do I really want this?”*

This quote of Monique illustrates that due to the fact that she is a woman, her personal idealism appears to be affected. By her answers it becomes evident that she always wanted to be a farmer and the intention to agricultural farm succession has always been on her mind. However, because she felt like it is a man’s world which she would enter, she thought about it more consciously. However, in the end, it appeared to have not hold her back, because her desire was more dominant than the barriers related to her gender. Though, the impact that gender appears to have on the way the personal idealism influences the intention to agricultural farm succession again becomes evident, because as a women she felt like considering this substantial decision twice.

Other elements that appear to play a role in the intention to agricultural farm succession is the stage in life or life experience. Remco elaborates on this by stating:

*“We had a turbulent period with the pigs. I experienced the swine fever. At the age of 20, I had not thought of what I have now, that I would experience all of that.”*

The quote of Remco indicates that his experiences before taking over the agricultural business seems to have made quite large impact on him. He talks about the swine fever and also puts forward the strict regulations together with a lot of requirements. Remco elaborates that as a result of his life experience, he learned that it is also possible that things will not go well, because you do not know and cannot predict the future. However, other factors like his passion for the sector and the ability to be self-employed dominated the experience of difficult times in his intention to agricultural farm succession. Janneke also mentioned that she experienced the swine fever, but it also did not stop her from making the decision to take over the family farm. She thinks that her decision to eventually decide to take over the farm, related to her life stage. As mentioned earlier, she was one of the women who made the choice to succeed at a relatively older age. She believes that, due to her life experience, she could better cope with the issues, like the swine fever, pig rights and other regulations.

Besides the life experience, Sjoerd talked about the effect the stage of life has on the intention to agricultural farm succession:

*‘‘When you are 25, 30 then you feel like you can handle the whole world. (...) At age 25, you are in a different position, very different. Then you are still young and uninhibited and you are like come on, I can do everything.’’*

This quote illustrates that at a younger age, Sjoerd experienced a different attitude and had different needs. He expresses that position by speaking about him being very confident. In the present, he feels like he is in another stage of life in which it is more about stabilisation. With today’s knowledge, he acknowledged that he would have made other choices during the earlier years. Though, he still thinks he made the right decision to take over the agricultural business. Overall, the stage of life seems to influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. Respondents that started the process of succession in earlier life stages felt like they could handle the world and thought big, while respondents who took over the firm in a later stage in life were more thoughtful during their decision process and often had broader life experiences.

Altogether, it appears that the personal idealism does play a minor role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Though, the influence of this issue looks to not be determining. Many respondents viewed the education as a step forwards towards the succession, but most of these individuals already had the intention to agricultural farm succession and did not appear to be affected by their choice of education. The stage in life and life experience does seem to be of more substantial influence. Respondents taking over the family farm in different life stages followed some different paths towards the succession, but this did not appear to act as a deal maker or breaker in the intention to agricultural farm succession.

A striking result seems to be that much of the women only were intended to take over the farm at a later stage in their lives and did not plan to do this at an earlier stage in their lives. This is in contrast to almost all male respondents. For these men, it was more like a childhood dream to be able to run the family farm. It looks like some women thought about it more consciously, because they enter a mainly world mainly dominated by men. Some even felt the need to prove themselves more because of their gender. Gender therefore appears to be of major influence on the way the personal idealism impacts the intention to agricultural farm succession.

## 5. Discussion

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In this research, the intention to agricultural farm succession has been investigated via a qualitative research approach. The research objective was to give insight into what role attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession, in order to contribute knowledge to the scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. In order to reach this goal, the following research question has been formulated; *“What role do attitude and gender play among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession?”*

The results of the current study indicate that the attitude-toward-the-act seems to play a major role in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Many respondents emphasise this aspect as being most dominant. The passion for the animals and to take care of them, enjoying the work, being self-employed, the attractiveness of the lifestyle and the interest in the sector appear to be the factors that have the most impact regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession. Additionally, the topic of farm family factors seems to have a very big impact on the intention to agricultural farm succession, because many respondents emphasise the importance of growing up in the farming environment and the farm being a family business. Next to the aforementioned influences, the viability of the farm also seems to act as a crucial factor. Comparing the viability to the two aforementioned concepts, it gives the impression that the attitude-toward-the-act and the farm family factors play a more substantial role with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession. In a lot of cases, the viability appears to be a determining factor, but without the more emotional aspects accompanied with taking over an agricultural business, such as the passion for animals and growing up at the family farm, none of the respondents seem to have been intended to agricultural farm succession. Next, the perceived feasibility and the social norms become evident to not play a considerable role. The perceived feasibility was often not considered by the successors and the social norms were only seen as a stimulating factor. A lot of, mainly male, respondents had the dream to take over the family farm from an early age, which indicates that the personal idealism seems to have an impact on the intention to agricultural farm succession. Though, the personal idealism appears to only play a minor role, because overall it seems to not have a determining effect.

Gender appears to influence the way several topics affect the intention to agricultural farm succession. First of all, gender seems to affect the way attitude-toward-the-act impacts the intention to agricultural farm succession. From the current data set, it appears to be very important for several women to have the right husband by their side, who shares the same passion and wants to run the farm together. Without having such a partner, they would not have the intention to agricultural farm succession. This result only seems to be of influence on the attitude of some female successors. Next, the topic of gender gives the impression to impact the way social norms influence the intention to agricultural farm succession. A couple of male respondents felt pressure from their parents to take over the farm, because they were the oldest son and were therefore seen as the intended successor. Besides, the influence of the factors gender seems to become evident by the reactions from the personal environment. Almost all women received specific reactions because they are female farm managers, such as that it is not a profession for women. With regard to the perceived feasibility, the results indicate that a couple of women seem to have been more insecure regarding their competences and skills. It therefore can be concluded from the data set of the current study that the phenomenon gender appears to affect the way the perceived feasibility influences the intention to agricultural farm succession. Besides, women seem to be regarded as experiencing physical barriers, but it appears that this did not withhold them from taking over the agricultural farm. Lastly, the role of gender becomes evident in the way the personal idealism affects the intention to agricultural farm succession. A lot of male respondents had the dream from an early age to take over the family farm, which was not the case for many of their female counterparts. Gender appears to not play a role with regard to the way the viability and farm family factors influences the intention to agricultural farm succession. Altogether, men and women did seem to have different experiences and visions regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession, which makes up the conclusion that gender appears to play a substantial role in the intention to agricultural farm succession.

Concluding, attitude and gender seem to play major roles among other determining factors with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession. From the current data set,, attitude-toward-the-act appears to be the antecedent that has the greatest influence on the intention to agricultural farm succession. However, the concept farm family factors seems to not follow far behind. Several striking differences seem to exist with regard to the intention to agricultural farm succession between men and women and therefore it can be concluded that gender appears to play a substantial role also.

The results of this research seem to confirm to the idea of Gilad & Levine (1986) that the pull theory is dominant compared to the push theory with regard to the attitude-toward-the-act concerning the entrepreneurial intention. In line with this is the finding that rewards like self-actualisation and enjoying the work appear to be viewed as more important than financial reasons. These insights are in agreement with the proposition of Deci & Ryan (1985) that extrinsic rewards like money are viewed inferior to intrinsic rewards influencing behaviour. Besides, the results of this study seem to be in accordance with Whatmore (2016) who suggested that the agricultural sector is traditionally viewed as a men's world. The data obtained in the current study indicate that women seem to receive different reactions when taking over a business in the agricultural sector in contrast to male successors. Moreover, the results confirm to the study of Duma (1989), which stated that daughters sometimes are not even considered as potential successors for the family farm. This becomes also evident in the current study, which emphasizes that gender seems to be of considerable influence. Next, the results of this research appear to be consistent with those of previous studies such as that of Fischer & Burton (2014), indicating the importance attached to the farm size and the prospects for the future, with regard to the viability. The insights of the current study therefore look like corroborating the ideas of Barbic (1993), who suggested that individuals pay much attention to the economic strength and would be less intended to succession when perceived as weak.

However, the results of the current study also appear to be contrary to the findings of some previous studies. One interesting difference is that the element of farm survival was suggested by Carr & Sequeira (2007) as part of the attitude-toward-the-act. However, the results of this research seem to show it to be more related to family pressure, which belongs to the topic of social norms. Secondly, Douglas and Shepherd (2002) derive their entrepreneurial intention from an utility function and regard monetary gains as the most important factor in the intention for entrepreneurship. As the results of this thesis indicate, these financial reasons indeed appear to play a role, but definitely not seem to be the first priority in the intention to agricultural farm succession. Next, Handler (1992) showed that the influence one can exert plays a role regarding the family farm factors. This thesis seems to be able to demonstrate this but, it also appeared to be apparent in the concept of perceived feasibility. Without the possibility to exert influence, one could be perceived as less feasible. Fourthly, it has been suggested by Calus (2009) that an agricultural education would lead individuals to be motivated to agricultural farm succession. This does not appear to be a finding of the current

study, because most respondents already had the intention to take over an agricultural business and this was not a consequence from the agricultural education. They only perceived it as a natural step towards the succession. Next, in contrast to previous research on the intention to entrepreneurship, this study has been unable to demonstrate the substantial influence of the concepts social norms and perceived feasibility. In contrast to The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), these factors did not appear to play a major role in the intention for agricultural farm succession. Moreover, it was not concluded that women are to a greater extent affected by the perception of subjective norms, which was suggested by Welter, Smallbone, Isakova & Aculai (2007). Concluding, it can be suggested that context influences the intention to entrepreneurship, because in the agricultural sector and especially in the intention to agricultural farm succession, some variations seem to be found compared to the findings of other studies.

## 6. Conclusion

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To conclude this research, several theoretical implications will be discussed, which demonstrate the added scientific value of the current study. Next, the meaning of the results will be discussed in the light of its societal contribution by discussing the practical implications. These theoretical and practical implications will be followed by a reflection on the conducted research. Thereafter, several limitations of the current study will be examined. To finish the chapter, multiple ideas for future research will be provided.

### 6.1 Theoretical implications

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This thesis provides several theoretical implications by adding new scientific insights and literature about farm succession and entrepreneurial intention. In particular, the findings of this research contribute to the existing literature regarding the specific context of the agricultural sector. Fitz-Koch et al. (2017) stated in their study that mainstream entrepreneurship literature has largely overlooked this agricultural sector. The findings of this study therefore contribute to filling this gap. Besides, the specific context of the agricultural sector has a distinct characteristic of successions happening mostly within a family itself. In contrast to most other sectors, this provides a unique element in both the total theoretical body of knowledge regarding company succession and the existing theoretical body of knowledge about the intention to entrepreneurship. Next, this research has specifically taken into account the topic of gender when studying the intention to agricultural farm succession. As a result, the impact of gender seemed to become evident, because noticeable differences between male and female successors were observed. In addition, this research included respondents from different ages, which resulted in interesting findings amongst older and younger generations, such as the insight that older successors appear to be more susceptible to family pressure. This indicates that the impact of especially one concept, social norms, seems to be noticeably different when older and younger generations are compared with each other. This finding adds the element of age to theory about family pressure. Also, because the factors of social norms and perceived feasibility does not appear to play a considerable role in the intention to agricultural farm succession, in contrast to Ajzen's Theory of planned behaviour (1991), new theoretical insights are provided with respect to this theory. Because the scope of this research is the agricultural sector, care should be taken to generalise the findings to other contexts.

## **6.2 Practical implications**

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The results of this research provide for several practical recommendations. An agricultural business association could gain understanding from this study about the intention to farm succession. Therewith, they get an overview of the takeover process and the aspects that play a major and/or a minor role in the intention this agricultural farm succession. These insights can in turn encourage and promote agricultural entrepreneurship. Besides, because most of the agricultural entrepreneurs, that are part of this study, stated that they did not really think about why they choose to take over the farm in detail, it could also be interesting for them to gain deeper insights. In this way, they are given the opportunity to gain an understanding of the factors that do and do not play a major role regarding the intention to agricultural farm succession and to reflect on their own situation.

## **6.3 Reflection**

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During this research, several theoretical, methodological and empirical choices have been made. Interviews have been conducted with the aid of an interview guide, which provided space to ask additional questions and to dig deeper into particular subjects. This in turn enhanced the reliability of the research as the selection of pre-structured questions causes all participants to receive the same questions. The interviews, except for one, have been recorded and all of them have been transcribed. The results are based on the analysis of the data that was provided by fourteen respondents. A deliberate distribution between male and female research participants has been made to cover the topic of gender in a careful way. Several quotes of the respondents have been used to strengthen the results with evidence, which contributes to the criteria of credibility. Occasionally, an additional viewpoint could be used to understand and interpret the experiences of the participants, as the researcher itself has a family background in the agricultural sector. The researcher aimed to include female agricultural entrepreneurs, because, in general, most farm owners are men. Though, the researcher does not feel like a female perspective is dominating the male perspective regarding the research. Additionally, the researcher believes that there was minor influence of possible biases on the process and outcome of this thesis, such as being familiar with a few respondents. The researcher paid attention to this while conducting the study, thereby meeting the requirement of dependability.

## **6.4 Limitations**

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Several limitations can be identified with regard to the conducted research. First of all, the sample of this research only consisted out of individuals that eventually did take over the agricultural farm. Therefore the study runs the risk of only considering the ‘success stories’. This master thesis does not engage with persons that had the intention to agricultural farm succession, but because of some factor(s) eventually did not. However, the reader should bear in mind that this is beyond the scope of this study. Next to the selection of the respondents, the reader should also be aware of the possibility that respondents did not tell the whole story concerning their experiences and feelings. None of the research participants admitted to have experienced substantial problems with their parents or siblings. It could be the case that they experienced these subjects as being too sensitive and therefore did not want to tell the complete story. As a consequence, respondents could have alternatively decided to provide the answers that they thought were most desired.

## **6.5 Future research**

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Several recommendations for future research ideas exist. Firstly, because this study is entirely based on the successors itself, future research might be undertaken which also includes the personal environment of these successors such as parents, siblings and friends. By doing this, an even broader understanding could be gained concerning the intention to agricultural farm succession. In addition, several respondents acknowledged that it increasingly gets harder to find successors for their agricultural farm. In this field, it could be of great help to explore the barriers that stops children of agricultural entrepreneurs to take over the family farm. Further research might also investigate why these individuals that do have the intention to agricultural farm succession are hold back to actually do so. Moreover, it could be carried out with people that do not have parents that own such an agricultural farm, but still have the intention to take over such firm. Such research can explore why they want to do this and what their biggest barriers are. Besides, because the current study only includes respondents that already have taken over the agricultural farm, further research could focus on individuals who are still in the (early) stages of a takeover and research the driving factors behind their intention at that specific moment in time.

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# Appendix 1: List of research participants

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Table 1: *List of research participants*

#	Pseudonym	Gender	Age
1	Jan	Male	58
2	Paul	Male	52
3	Cindy	Female	21
4	Piet	Male	67
5	Amber	Female	37
6	Remco	Male	43
7	Jaap	Male	49
8	Leo	Male	52
9	Sjoerd	Male	52
10	Miranda	Female	52
11	Richard	Male	51
12	Monique	Female	53
13	Janneke	Female	39
14	Ilse	Female	40

Table 2: Operationalisation scheme

## Appendix 2: Operationalisation

<p><b>Attitude toward-the-act</b></p> <p><i>“The perceptions of the personal desirability of performing the behaviour”</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What did you think you could get out of the agricultural farm succession?</li> <li>- What was your feeling/attitude towards the farm succession?</li> <li>- Why did you not choose another career in another sector or organisation?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social norms</b></p> <p><i>“The perception of social support or disapproval of the behaviour by significant others, like expectations from family, friends or other role models”</i></p>	<p>Expectations from personal environment (like friends or role models)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In what way were there any expectations from your personal environment that you perceived? From whom?</li> <li>- To what extent did you experience support or disapproval in your decision to enter agricultural entrepreneurship? From who did you receive this support and/or disapproval?</li> </ul>
	<p>Family pressure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you perceive any pressure from your family to take over the company?</li> <li>- In what way do you think this did (not) influence your decision and why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Perceived feasibility</b></p> <p><i>“The self-evaluation of a person’s own competences with regard to the given behaviour”</i></p>	<p>Competences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To what extent did you consider your competences regarding agricultural entrepreneurial activities beforehand?</li> <li>- What influence did the possession (or absence) of these competences have on your decision to become an agricultural entrepreneur?</li> </ul>
	<p>Self-efficacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you feel confident about your competences with regard to agricultural entrepreneurship?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Viability</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you consider viability of the farm on beforehand?</li> <li>- What was your feeling about this and to what extent did you consider viability in your intention to take over the agricultural family business?</li> <li>- What aspects were important with regard to the viability of the farm?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Farm family factors</b></p>	<p>Intergenerational relationship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How was your relationship with your predecessor before taking over the farm?</li> <li>- How did this relationship influence your intention?</li> </ul>
	<p>Sibling accommodation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have siblings? Brothers and sisters?</li> <li>- What was their role in the process of farm succession?</li> </ul>
	<p>Interest in family farm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you develop an interest for the family farm?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal idealism</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What was your personal vision with regard to the succession of the family farm?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender</b></p> <p><i>“The patterned, socially produced, distinctions between female and male, feminine and masculine”</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you experience any barriers/advantages as a men/women in entering agricultural entrepreneurship?</li> <li>- If experienced any barriers/advantages; why do you think this was/is the case?</li> <li>- If experienced any barriers/advantages; how did this influence your agricultural entrepreneurial intention?</li> <li>- If experienced any barriers; how did you overcome these?</li> <li>- If not experienced any barriers; why do you think this was/is the case?</li> <li>- Do you think that when you had a different gender this would be different?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3: Interview guide

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- Vindt u het goed als het interview wordt opgenomen?
- Er zal vertrouwelijk met uw gegevens om worden gegaan
- Wenst u anoniem te blijven?
- *Mezelf introduceren en onderzoeksdoel toelichten:*
  
- Kunt u iets over uzelf vertellen? Hoe oud bent u?
- Wat voor soort agrarisch bedrijf heeft u?
- Van wie heeft u het bedrijf overgenomen?
- Wat is uw relatie met deze persoon/personen?
- Wanneer heeft u het bedrijf overgenomen?
- Kunt u iets meer vertellen over het proces naar de overname toe. Heeft u zelf aangegeven dat u het bedrijf wilde overnemen of werd u dat gevraagd?

### Attitude toward the act

- Wat dacht u voor uzelf uit de bedrijfsovername te kunnen halen? Bijvoorbeeld financiële uitkomsten of zelfvoldoening? Wat trok u zoal aan tot deze beslissing?
- In hoeverre speelde het aspect van bedrijfsvoortbestaan mee in uw houding tot intentie voor bedrijfsovername?
- In hoeverre beïnvloedde de perceptie en wens voor persoonlijke bereiking of zelfvoldoening uw houding?
- In hoeverre speelde de levensstijl geassocieerd met agrarisch ondernemerschap een rol?
- In hoeverre beïnvloedde financiële redenen, zoals inkomsten, uw houding tot de keuze tot agrarische bedrijfsovername?
- In hoeverre speelden fiscale faciliteit uitkomsten, vaak deel van een familie overname, in contrast met externe overnames, een rol bij uw houding?
- Waarom heeft u niet voor een andere carrière gekozen in een andere sector of andere organisatie?
- Wat dacht u dan specifiek te kunnen halen uit het overnemen van het agrarische bedrijf wat u met een andere carrière wellicht niet had kunnen halen?
- Wat was uw gevoel/houding ten opzichte van het overnemen van de boerderij?
- In hoeverre was u positief of negatief?

## Social norms

- Expectations from family, friends or other role models
  - Op welke manier waren er verwachtingen uit uw persoonlijke omgeving die u ervaarde ten opzichte van de beslissing om het agrarisch bedrijf over te nemen?
  - Van wie nam u deze verwachtingen waar?
  - In welke mate ervaarde u steun of afkeuring in uw beslissing om het agrarisch bedrijf over te nemen?
  - Zo ja, van wie ontving u steun en/of afkeuring?
- Family pressure
  - In hoeverre ervaarde u enige druk van uw familie met betrekking tot het overnemen van het agrarisch bedrijf?
  - Waarom?
  - Hoe uitte zich dat?
  - Hoe ervaarde u dat en hoe reageerde u hierop?
  - Op welke manier beïnvloedde dit uw beslissing tot agrarische bedrijfsovername?
  - Waarom denkt u dat dit wel of niet een rol speelde?

## Perceived feasibility

- Competences
  - In welke mate overwoog u, in relatie tot de beslissing tot bedrijfsovername, uw competenties/vaardigheden met betrekking tot agrarisch ondernemerschap?
  - Welke competenties dient een agrarisch ondernemer volgens u te hebben?
  - Welke competenties vond u dat u in bezit had voor de bedrijfsovername?
  - Welke invloed had het bezit of afwezigheid van bepaalde competenties op de beslissing tot agrarische bedrijfsovername?
  - Heeft u nog vaardigheden moeten bijspijkeren?
- Self-efficacy
  - In hoeverre voelde u zich zelfverzekerd over uw competenties met betrekking tot agrarisch ondernemerschap?
  - Heeft u een agrarische opleiding gehad?
  - In hoeverre speelde deze opleiding een rol in uw keuze?

## Viability

- In hoeverre speelde de ingeschatte levensvatbaarheid van het bedrijf een beslissing van overname?
- Wat was uw gevoel hierover en in welke mate beïnvloedde dit uw intentie tot overname van het bedrijf?
- Welke levensvatbaarheid aspecten waren voor u belangrijk m.b.t. het bedrijf?
- Waarom waren deze aspecten belangrijk voor u?
- Hoe heeft u dit uitgezocht?

## Farm family factors

- Intergenerational relationships
  - Hoe was uw relatie met uw voorganger voor het overnemen van het bedrijf?
  - In welke mate en hoe beïnvloedde deze relatie de intentie tot overname?
  - Kunt u iets meer vertellen hoe de communicatie was tussen u en uw voorganger?
  - In hoeverre kon u voor de overname al invloed uitoefenen en in hoeverre had dit invloed op uw intentie tot bedrijfsovername?
- Sibling accommodation
  - Heeft u broers/zussen?
  - Wat was hun rol in het proces van bedrijfsovername?
  - Hadden zij ook interesse?
  - En waarom zij niet en u wel uiteindelijk het bedrijf overgenomen?
  - Hoe ging dat tussen jullie? (rivaliteit of steun)
- Interest in family farm
  - Hoe is uw interesse in het familie bedrijf ontstaan?
  - Wanneer ontstond het?

## Personal idealism

- Wat was uw persoonlijke visie met betrekking tot het overnemen van het agrarisch bedrijf?
- Wat wilde u anders doen als uw voorganger?
- Waarom vond u dit de juiste keuze om te doen?

## Gender

- In hoeverre ervaarde u enige barrières als man/vrouw bij het toetreden van agrarisch ondernemerschap? Of denkt u dat uw geslacht in het voordeel werkte?
  - Indien ervaren enige barrières/voordelen; waarom denkt u dat dit het geval is?
  - Hoe beïnvloedde dit uw intentie tot agrarische bedrijfsovername?
  - Indien ervaren enige barrières; hoe overkwam u deze?
  - Indien niet ervaren enige barrières; waarom denkt u dat dit het geval was?
  - En hoe gebruikte u dit in uw voordeel bij de overname en acceptatie wellicht van uw omgeving als agrarisch ondernemer?
  - In hoeverre denkt u dat de situatie anders zou zijn als u het andere geslacht had?
- 
- In hoeverre denkt u dat het mogelijk is voor mensen zonder ouders met een agrarisch bedrijf om zo'n bedrijf over te kunnen nemen?
  - Zou u een agrarisch bedrijf hebben overgenomen als uw ouders zelf geen agrarisch bedrijf hadden?
- 
- Wat heeft u zelf ervaren als meest dominante bepaler tot de intentie voor agrarische ondernemerschap door bedrijfsovername?
- 
- Is er iets dat u wilt toevoegen?
  - Heeft u nog vragen?

Dit is het einde van het interview.

Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!

## Appendix 4: Coding table

Table 3: Code scheme

Attractiveness of lifestyle	Attitude-toward-the-act			
Enjoy the work				
Farm survival				
Financial reasons				
inding a spouse				
Fiscal facility outcomes				
Interest in sector				
Regulation				
Right partner				
Self actualisation				
Self employed				
Environmental support			Social norms	
Expectations from personal environment				
Family pressure				
Family support				
Farm survival				
Men's world				
Own situation other gender				
Prove to urge				
Traditional expectations				
Advantages	Perceived feasibility			
Barriers				
Competences				
Personality				
Physical barriers				
Self-efficacy				
Accountability	Viability			
Combination of business activities				
Diversification				
Ease of succession				
Farm equipment				
Farm size				
Location to operate				
Potential to grow				
Regulation				
Rendability				
Security				
Value				
Work intensity				
Communication			Farm family factors	
Family composition				
Fiscal facility outcomes				
Influence				
Interest in family farm				
Intergenerational relationship				
Predecessor				
Sibling accommodation				
Urge to prove				
Education	Personal idealism			
Life experience				
Life stage				
Opinion about sector				
Personal vision				

