

HUNGARIAN FARMERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHALLENGES OF GENERATION CHANGE

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One of the key challenges in the European Union is the ageing farmers population. In 2016, over half of European farmers were above 55, while those under 40 made up only 10%. In Hungary, by 2023, 36.9% of farmers were over 65, whereas only 4.9% were under 35. My previous research explored factors that either hinder or support generational change in agriculture. This study examines how these factors affect farmers and the difficulties they create. I conducted in-depth interviews with 19 farmers, one from each county, ranging in age from 21 to 62. The sample included 6 women and 13 men from various agricultural sectors, such as livestock, arable crops, vegetable cultivation, forestry, and fruit growing. Participants rated both their personal situation and their perception of the national agricultural landscape on a scale of 1 to 5. Key challenges identified were labour shortages, administrative burdens, climate change, and economic impacts. However, support mechanisms like reducing bureaucracy, support digitalization, subsidized loans, and targeted aid for young farmers proved beneficial. Interestingly, some younger farmers did not perceive administrative burdens as a challenge, having grown up with them. Expert interviews further validated these findings, reinforcing the challenges and support systems shaping the future of agriculture.