

Role Models and Farm Development Options: A Comparison of seven Swiss farm families

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Abstract

In recent years, a high degree of flexibility has been required of farm families, because the framework of agricultural policy has changed dramatically since the 1990's with the introduction of direct payments and the enforcement of various agrarian reforms (Agricultural Policy 2002 and 2007). This study concentrates on illustrating the action orientations of farming families and farm development strategies by the method of case reconstruction (Hildenbrand 1999). Different role models on family farms were shown by analysing seven farm families (theoretical sampling). A new aspect here is that the study examines the role of women as well as of men and deals with the consequences for both the family and the family farm. One of the findings of the study is that rigid gender role allocation limits farm development options because it restricts freedom of action, whereas role models with flexible role sharing within the family are better able to exploit and implement existing development potential.

1. Introduction

In recent years, a high degree of flexibility has been required of farm families, because the framework of agricultural policy has changed dramatically since the 1990's with the introduction of direct payments and the enforcement of various agrarian reforms (Agricultural Policy 2002 and 2007). The previous price- and sales-supported policy has been replaced by a policy aiming at economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture. On the one hand, this means ensuring more market proximity and competition in the agricultural sector. On the other, it entails environmentally sound production techniques that are compensated by direct payments (without the complete compensation of price decreases). This new framework has altered the room for manoeuvre of farming families considerably, thereby creating new challenges for them. Farming families must increasingly consider their family farms to be agricultural enterprises that need to be managed according to the principles of economic efficiency. Furthermore, they must fulfil certain ecological criteria. Because of these changes, many farming families must reconsider their situation and farming practices and come up with a new orientation.

This study will concentrate on illustrating the action orientations of farming families and farm development strategies, in particular, on the basis of the social structures within the family that lead to certain decision-making patterns and action structures. Moreover, we will attempt to analyse the effects of these developments with regard to options for economic development. From an economic point of view, a farming family may have different options for development. However, these choices do not always prove to be compatible with the individual's concept of family life. Therefore, we will also be asking ourselves what "moral" laws, rules and values the farming families adhere to and how these can



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affect the long-term orientation and development of a farm. Basically, we wish to understand how farming families perceive and live their lives.

2. Methods

In order to illustrate the complex interrelation between families and farms, individual case studies were carried out. There are various scientific concepts on and approaches to individual case studies. Within the scope of this study, we chose a reconstructive approach based on the theory of social action, namely the method of case reconstruction (Hildenbrand 1999). The method of case reconstruction is based on the dialectic of the general and the particular. The general represents the objective possibilities for action of a case (a family). The particular comprises the choices the family makes with regard to these possibilities (Oevermann 1991, p. 280).

These choices are not random, but produce and reproduce the social order of the family, thereby forming a pattern specific to the individual case and the family's decision-making process. Such a pattern is also referred to as "case structure". Consequently, the main task of case reconstruction consists in identifying and describing case structures. The case structure is described in form of a hypothesis (= case structure hypothesis), because the reconstruction process of a case structure is based on the development and verification of hypotheses and because this process – just like social reality – is open (Hildenbrand 1999). Therefore, within the scope of this study, we will refrain from deriving issues and hypotheses from a theoretical model or supplying empirical proof. Instead, we will derive theories on the action orientation of farm families from empirical studies. In principle, it is possible to develop a theory on the basis of one single case, because case reconstruction takes into account the general as well as the particular. Nevertheless, the theory to be developed will be more significant if the cases used to develop the theory are systematically contrasted in minimum and maximum comparisons (Hildenbrand 1999, Strauss 1991). By means of contrasting (theoretical sampling), the theory is constantly checked and case structure hypotheses are formulated. Based on the structure hypotheses thus derived, the next contrast case is looked for each time. Case contrasting continues in this way until it is possible to develop types. This provides a distance from the theoretical starting position and enables theories to be formulated on the basis of own data (grounded theory). Consequently, research is not a linear process but a circular one, that only comes to an end when it appears that the data gathered will not yield any new knowledge.

In this study, contrasting primarily takes place at the social level (education, interests, activities and traditional and/or socialising backgrounds). Contrasts involving the farm structure (position, type and buildings) recede into the background and can be derived from the social contrasting.

The case reconstruction method can identify structural problems, but is not suitable to show the quantitative occurrence of the problems. To investigate the occurrence, it would be necessary to carry out a survey by means of a questionnaire.

The context in which the farming family acts forms an important basis for generalisation when defining structure hypotheses. According to Hildenbrand (1992a: 107), we must distinguish between four structural levels. First, we must take into account the action and decision-making of the farm families within the context of the general social structure and prevailing value systems as well as the economic and agricultural structures. Second, regional particularities, e.g. the natural environment and the economic area, the local social constitution and traditional patterns, must be taken into account when analysing the actions of farming families. Third, the decisions and actions taken must be brought into context with the structure of the farm. Fourth, they must also be brought into context with the subjective action orientations of the farming family as well as its biography. Only if all these factors are taken into

consideration will we be able to determine the actual room for action as well as the objective choices available. It is on the basis of the decisions made that we can determine whether a decision is to be considered the rule or whether it is a choice specific to the family examined. The comparison of possibilities and reality helps us to determine the particularities of a case. Especially, behaviour that is not the rule feeds the case structure and helps to define a case structure hypothesis that can be verified in interviews and differentiated prior to the formulation of a theory. Within the scope of this study, using the case reconstruction method, to date, we have been able to investigate the decision-making history of four farming families (figure 1). The data obtained are based on narrative interviews with the seven farming families. The objective data (e.g. genealogy, data on farm structure) are then compared to the family’s subjective perception of these data.

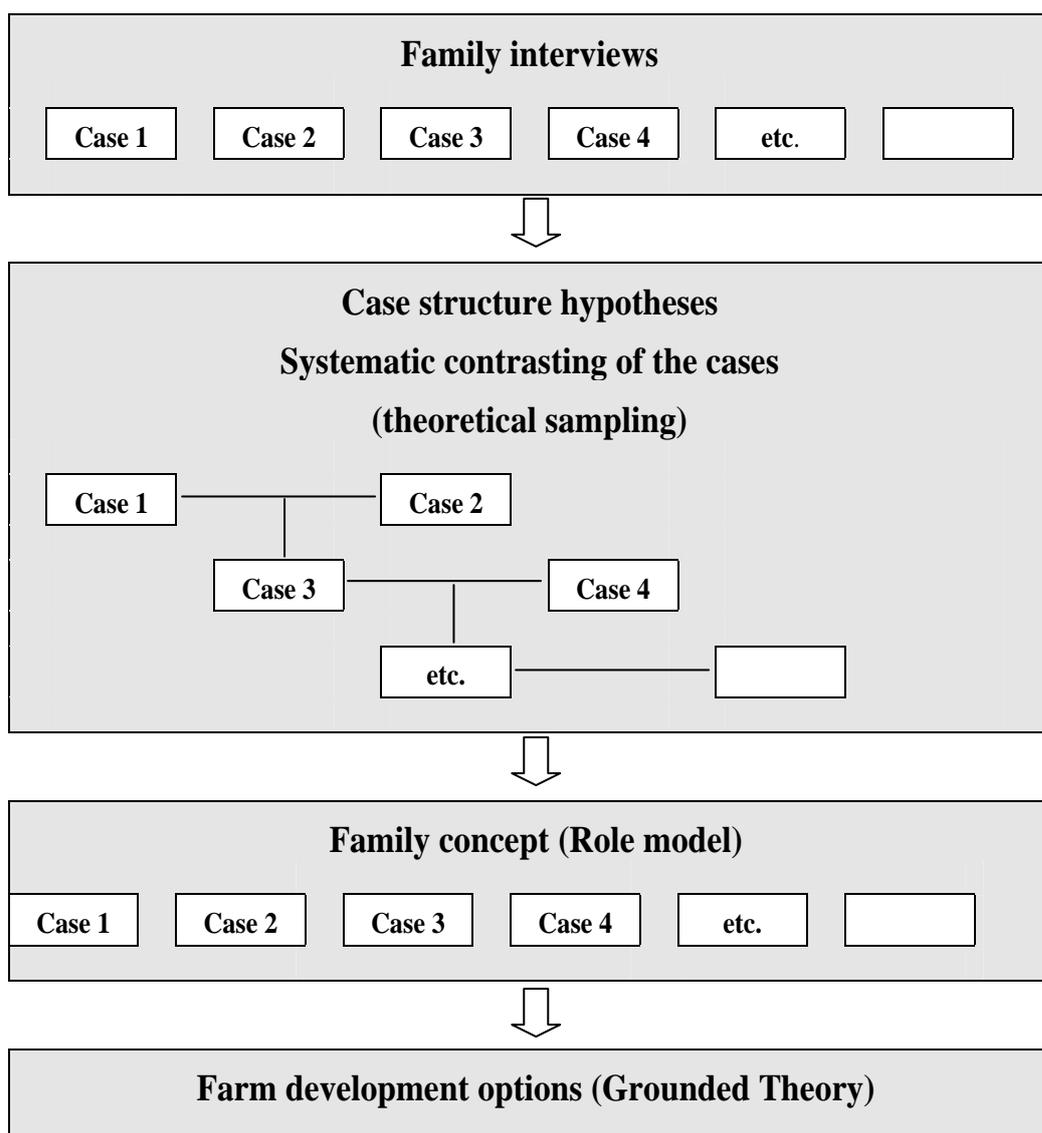


Figure 1: Research design

3. Role models and farm development options

The seven farm families were used to explain the different organisation patterns on family farms and their impact on farm development options. The order of the role models is determined by closeness to or distance from traditional rural role sharing, where the man, the farm manager, is in charge of the farm work and the woman is primarily responsible for housekeeping and child rearing, but helps out on the farm when “need be” (cases 1- 4). In families where only the man, not the woman, comes from a farming background, the woman’s flexible involvement in the farm is less usual. The question here is rather one of closeness to or distance from the traditional bourgeois role model, which reduces the woman’s role to housekeeping and child rearing (case 5). The couples who have also distanced themselves from the traditional bourgeois model have by mutual agreement developed their own role model to fit the individual needs and interests of man and wife (case 6 and 7).

3.1 *The Bieri family (case 1)*

Ownership/status on the family farm	Maria Bieri: farmer Franz Bieri: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Maria 39, Franz 50, married for 18 years
Education:	Maria: agricultural graduate (college of agriculture and domestic science) Franz: no vocational education
Children:	4 daughters, 1 son (aged 9 to 16)
Farm:	Mountain region, 12.5 ha (owned) Milk production and stock rearing (cattle, sheep, goats)
Farm labour:	Franz (100 %), Maria (50%), children as required, Franz’ brother (20 %)
Living arrangements:	Franz’ father (79) lives with the farming family

3.1.1 *Role model for the Bieri family*

The roles in the Bieri family are clearly fixed. The husband is in charge of running the farm, the wife of the household and family, helping on the farm as required. The woman’s farm work is not remunerated. This is the sort of role model that exists in family artisan or commercial firms. As for Mr Bieri’s part-time job, here again the family follows the traditional action pattern, since in farming it is mostly the husband and not the wife who does paid work outside agriculture (Rossier 1992: 92). The children find it difficult to see themselves as distinct from family and farm, and the four girls are being given a gender-specific education in typical female occupations to prepare them for their subsequent household roles as wives, mothers and possibly farmers’ wives. The weight of family expectation falls on the youngest and only son to carry on the farm.

3.1.2 *Development options for the Bieri family*

The Bieris seem to have virtually no development options. The family has low educational capital and moves solely in a farming milieu. The development options are also limited by the fact that for the family, the only son alone is considered as a potential farm successor. But this mountain farm family can keep its farm going thanks to direct payments and a modest lifestyle. It would probably only feel the need for action if underlying conditions were to worsen or if there were a family crisis such as death, illness etc. One possibility would be for the family to merge the farm with the brothers’ neighbouring farms. In view of the big age gap of eleven years between Mr and Mrs Bieri, though, Mr Bieri will probably lease his farm to Mrs Bieri on reaching the age of 65, to enable the family to continue receiving direct payments. This interim solution could postpone the decision about the unresolved succession

issue. Other development options are out of the question. This family's traditional action orientation excludes options such as extensification or specialisation, for example in suckler farming (if farm milk collections were to stop) or a switch to exclusive goat or sheep husbandry with direct sales. Mr Bieri is a passionate goat breeder, but has neither the interest nor the requisite economic or agricultural knowledge to hold his own professionally on the market, although with her farm training his wife has the home economics knowledge needed to process the products. A previous attempt at agrotourism failed. The option of converting to organic farming would not fit the traditional farm family concept. There is no question of Mrs Bieri taking paid non-agricultural work instead of Mr Bieri, because this would assume the redistribution of household and farming roles and would be inconsistent with Mr and Mrs Bieri's traditional understanding of their roles.

3.2 *The Eggimann Family (case 2)*

Ownership/status on the family farm:	Katharina Eggimann: farmer Arnold Eggimann: owner and farm manager
Age/ marital status:	Katharina 57, Arnold 56, married for 35 years
Education:	Katharina: cook + agricultural graduate (college of agriculture and domestic science) Arnold: farmer (agricultural college)
Children:	2 daughters, 2 sons (aged 24 to 32)
Farm:	Valley region, 33 ha (of which 18.5 ha leased) Arable farming, milk production, pig fattening
Farm labour:	Arnold (100 %), 2 sons (70 % each)
Living arrangements:	2 sons (28 and 30) and youngest daughter (24) live at home with their parents

3.2.1 *Role model for the Eggimann Family*

The Eggimann role model is traditional. Yet Mrs Eggimann has created her own political and honorary sphere of action outside the farm. Mr Eggimann and the two sons thus concentrate on the farm, while Mrs Eggimann is primarily responsible for the household and family. The training of apprentices in farm housekeeping underlines Mrs Eggimann's traditional role as a farmer's wife. Husband and wife therefore fulfil conventional farm role expectations. Their own daughters provide farm labour, but there is no question of them taking over the farm. Their claims to the farm are satisfied by their further education. Yet even the daughters are strongly rooted in the farm milieu. The Eggimanns' relatively high internal educational potential in the succeeding generation is limited almost exclusively to agriculture (one agronomist, two master diplomas and possibly a future farmer's wife). In this family there is also a certain amount of internal family rivalry over farm succession, firstly because there are two in line of succession and secondly because farm transfer traditionally takes place on marriage. Members of the Eggimann family have always married within the farming milieu, and the family's high expectations in this respect may have made it difficult for the sons to find wives. Living together in a multi-generational household also leaves little space for the children to develop their individual talents and see themselves as distinct from farming. The men's and women's role sharing within the family shows little flexibility.

3.2.2 *Development options for the Eggimann Family*

The Eggimanns have various development options, mainly in the field of agricultural production. A change in the production structure of the farm can be expected once the decision on farm succession has been made or when one of the potential successors to the farm finds a partner and marries. These changes will not, however, depart from the current traditional farm concept unless the future partners of the two potential successors introduce new elements to the farm family and bring about a reorientation, for the interests of both sons lie exclusively in the field of production technology, one being primarily interested in arable farming and working with machines, the other in milk production. In the present

generation the female family members' interests in the service field or in animal husbandry schemes have no place in the existing farm concept because succession is patrilinear. However, joint operation of the farm by the brothers is still an option in combination with an additional non-farming income. This farm certainly cannot provide a livelihood for two families. The family constellation and rivalry currently prevent farm development. One option, that of making the eldest daughter heir to the farm, is out of the question. Her education and interests would provide the requisite entrepreneurial know-how and innovative potential to make the farm competitive. She would be most eligible to inherit the farm, especially as her life partner also has an agricultural training. However, the traditional farming role model precludes such development options when sons stand to succeed to the farm. For example, in Norway the Eggimann daughter, as the eldest child, would automatically occupy the role of potential successor (Haugen and Brandth 1994).

3.3 The Schoch family (case 3)

Ownership/status on the family farm	Marianne Schoch: owner, farm manager and farmer Theo Schoch: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Susanne 40, Theo 52, married for 20 years
Education:	Susanne: 1 year apprentice housekeeper, no further education Theo: agricultural graduate (agricultural college)
Children:	1 son (19), 2 daughters (16 and 17)
Farm:	Hill region, 38 ha (of which 14 ha leased) Milk production, stock rearing, some arable and fruit farming
Farm labour:	Theo (100 %), Susanne (50 %), Susanne's father (25 %), daughters as required, son during school holidays
Living arrangements:	Family lives in a new home not on father's or mother's farm

3.3.1 Role model for the Schoch family

Role sharing in the Schoch family conforms to the traditional farming pattern, although the wife's family background would conceivably make for a more individual and flexible allocation of roles in the household and on the farm. Mrs Schoch comes from a family in which women are dominant and succession is matrilinear. As farm successor Mrs Schoch is continuing a family pattern and strengthening it, inasmuch as her mother, the successor to the farm, used to run the farm virtually without her husband, but left the role of official farm manager to him. Mrs Schoch herself did not enter the male domain completely after the farm was transferred, because work sharing followed the traditional pattern of farmer and farmer's wife. Female dominance is also less marked because of the managing couple's age difference and the fact that the family lives neither on the mother's nor the father's family farm (neo-locality). In addition, in all the years following her marriage Mrs Schoch never questioned her role as farmer's wife and accepted her brother as potential successor to the farm. In times of crisis Mr Schoch definitely has the necessary willingness and flexibility to do certain household tasks. Mrs Schoch may lack the agricultural knowledge for production decisions at farm level, but she certainly has decision-making skills for management tasks and financial interests.

The daughters have both adopted professions in male domains, although neither chose an agricultural training. The son is still at school. The farm succession has not yet been clarified, but the management couple do not exclude a daughter taking over. Role sharing within the family is rigidly established, but husband and wife are starting to show changed role understanding, possibly due in part to the competitive situation on the farm. Nevertheless in the educational sphere the children are given their own space, even if this is not fully compatible with the parents' farm role expectations. This is a traditional farming role model, but with an individual approach and a trend towards change and flexibility in the next generation.

3.3.2 Development options for the Schoch family

The farm concept and competitive family relationship severely limit the Schochs' farm development options. The farm, even though it has grown considerably, is still managed along small-farm lines. The livestock side is too much for the couple managing the farm, as evidenced, among other things, by the fact that a lot of money is regularly spent on outside help. The family is very reluctant to innovate, both in mechanising the farm (the last in the region to introduce milking machines) and in production (does not belong to a farm machinery cooperative, changed late to integrated production, only boards horses at customers' request). Options such as switching to organic farming or participating in animal welfare schemes are rejected out of risk considerations. There is a general absence of opt-out opportunities, as the education of the managing couple has been biased towards agriculture and home economics and is not refreshed. Nor are they adequately trained for farm specialisation. Here again, the family constellation and a certain internal family rivalry inhibit reorientation and development commensurate with the size of the farm. The nature of the family restricts development potential, so opportunities to develop the farm remain unexploited. There will probably be no reorientation until the next generation. The farm succession is open. In this family it is not out of the question that one day one of the daughters will take over the farm, as the son shows little interest and is developing his educational potential in other directions. In view of the big age gap of twelve years between Mr and Mrs Schoch, Mr Schoch will very possibly lease his farm to Mrs Schoch on reaching the age of 65, assuming the succession has not been decided by then and the family does not opt to do without direct payments. An improvement in the current competitive situation could bring about the formation of a simple company between spouses. It is not impossible that even a farm of this size could have no future because neither the role model nor the farm concept can keep up with the requirements of the time.

3.4 The Plüss family (case 4)

Ownership/status on the family farm:	Ruth Plüss: owner, farmer and branch manageress Wolfgang Plüss: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Ruth 55, Wolfgang 55, married for 30 years
Education:	Ruth: agricultural graduate (college of agriculture and domestic science) Wolfgang: electrician + master farmer (higher agricultural college)
Children:	2 sons, 2 daughters (aged 22 to 28)
Farm:	Valley region, 31 ha LN (of which 6 ha leased) Milk production, fruit and arable farming, agrotourism and direct marketing
Farm labour:	Ruth, Wolfgang, eldest son, all 100 %, youngest son occasionally, two students doing practical training and one domestic help
Living arrangements:	Sons, students and domestic help live with the parents; Wolfgang's mother has her own home on the farm

3.4.1 Role model for the Plüss family

The Plüss family role model is rooted in rural custom, but at the same time open to change in a business context. Role sharing within the family does not conform to the traditional farming role model inasmuch as the wife has not only introduced a new line of business but also assumed responsibility for it, and the men help out as necessary.

The early death of her mother when she was young gave Mrs Plüss a great sense of responsibility and autonomy of action. Unlike Mrs Schoch (case 3), Mrs Plüss does not aspire to the status and role of farm manageress, and her husband's primary role is as farm manager of the two combined businesses. The role of farmer's wife is extended by that of branch manageress. The business line introduced by Mrs Plüss meant that roles had to be renegotiated among family members. The men's willingness to alternate between the spheres of production and service provision is not the rule in farm families. There are continued expectations of farm continuity. At present the elder son is being groomed for succession. He

is employed full-time on the farm, but in view of his parents' age, farm transfer is not yet urgent. The younger son is receiving a technical training closely allied to agriculture. If need be he could also step in as successor to the farm. The daughters would not be considered as successors. Both daughters work in education, are married and live away from home.

3.4.2 Development options for the Plüss family

Family cooperation and flexible role sharing in agrotourism have opened up new development opportunities to family and farm, free from underlying political conditions. The woman has brought the family both a farm and innovative potential. However, traditional patterns still come into play in crisis situations. Family farm continuity was safeguarded by Mr Plüss filling the shoes of his deceased brother. Farm succession is also doubly ensured in the next generation. The family has a strong action rationality. In times of crisis it combines innovation and tradition and is good at making things work in practical life.

However, future farm development also depends on the designated successor finding the right partner with the necessary commitment to and interest in the customer-orientated sale of agricultural products and services. Nor is it so easy to pass agrotourism from one generation to the next, as it is often abandoned when the farm is transferred (Giraud 2001). The flexibility and action orientation which the family has shown thus far, however, would lead to the conclusion that they could even cope with this kind of family crisis, because the family's development potential does not lie solely in agricultural production and individuation potential is being used.

3.5 The Glauser family (case 5)

Ownership/status on the family farm	Marianne Glauser: housewife and mother Christoph Glauser: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Susanne 41, Christoph 47, married for 17 years
Education:	Susanne: hairdresser Christoph: agricultural graduate (agricultural college)
Children:	1 daughter, 4 sons (aged 16 to 9)
Farm:	Valley region, 24 ha (of which 1 ha leased) Milk production and arable farming
Farm labour:	Christoph (100 %), 4 sons (regularly) in addition to school and intensive sports training
Living arrangements:	Christoph's mother (78) lives in her own home on the farm

3.5.1 Role model for the Glauser family

Role sharing in the Glauser family is strictly divided between man and wife. Mr Glauser is responsible for agriculture and farm, Mrs Glauser has been nothing but a housewife and mother since the children were old enough to replace her on the farm. This allocation of roles within the family was deliberately fostered by Mrs Glauser. She sees herself as a "born housewife and mother". The wife's family had a business background largely identical to the farming milieu (wife and children help in the business, expectation of business takeover), yet Mrs Glauser's commitment to and interest in agriculture are defined solely by partnership and family. Sport is the family's joint enterprise. Both Mr and Mrs Glauser are involved. The parents support the fact that their sporting achievements distance the children from farming, even though this works against the interests of the farm. Farming is practised according to the "pleasure principle", hence the poor economic state of the farm, which takes second place to the non-farming interests of the current farm manager (in the father's case it used to be livestock dealing). The farm manager eschews business decisions and adopts a wait-and-see attitude. There is an expectation in the air that one of the four boys will take over the farm.

3.5.2 Development options for the Glauser family

The Glausers have little development potential, either inside or outside agriculture. The Glauser family is strongly family-orientated and places the family's sporting interests above those of the farm. Role sharing within the family is rigid. The woman distances herself from the farm family principle of role sharing, i.e. the woman helping on the farm, and restricts her field of activity to household and family. However, this action pattern is not compatible with farming requirements. To maintain this farm, two things are necessary: the farm manager's further business training and the wife's involvement in the farm. It would, if necessary, be conceivable for Mrs Glaser to bring in extra earnings to maintain the status quo. However, the family has virtually no chance of leaving agriculture as Mr Glauser is not qualified in any other field and Mrs Glauser has not practised her trade for so long.

Farm succession is open since none of the four sons has been declared successor. The family places family interests above those of the farm. Nor does the family action pattern match the farm labour requirement. If none of the sons wants to take over, the farm will probably be wound up when the farm manager reaches retirement age. The family's financial situation (farm debt) militates against the option of leaving agriculture early, as loan repayments and capital gains tax have to be taken into account.

3.6 The Burckhardt family (case 6)

Ownership/status on the family farm	Rita Burckhardt: professional woman outside agriculture Hansueli Burckhardt: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Rita 41, Hansueli 44, married for 20 years
Education:	Rita: cook Hansueli: agricultural graduate (agricultural college)
Children:	2 sons (19 and 15), 1 daughter (17)
Farm:	Mountain region, 17.5 ha (of which 10 ha leased) Milk production and calf fattening
Farm labour:	Hansueli (100 %), works with neighbour, Rita (occasionally in summer), children not very much
Living arrangements:	Hansueli's father left the farm following the transfer

3.6.1 Role model for the Burckhardt family

The Burckhardts have an individual role model with flexible role sharing. The socio-cultural gender roles are not simply assigned within the family, they are negotiated individually in line with interest and ability. The couple need a relationship of tolerance and mutual trust if work sharing is to function (husband 100 % on the farm, wife 60 % away from home and household). Although she has absolutely no interest in farming, Mrs Burckhardt is willing to help out with the hay harvest on the farm in summer, but draws the line at working with animals. She limits housework to essentials. Holidays and leisure play a relatively important role. Mrs Burckhardt has the necessary freedom within the family to do her paid job. She makes a substantial contribution to the family income, with the money initially being used on farm buildings and the farmhouse, whereas today it goes towards holidays and leisure or the children's education. Her job often requires Mrs Burckhardt to be away overnight and sometimes for several days. On such occasions Mr Burckhardt takes her place in the household and looks after the children. This role sharing means that both partners have their own spheres of activity consistent with their respective interests and abilities. The Burckhardt partnership is one of solidarity. The farm forms the basis of the family livelihood, but is not the sole focus of action orientation. The couple also make time for themselves and the children.

The women in the Burckhardt family are from other regions and in the last two generations have not come from farming circles. They bring individualisation potential and tend to leave agriculture. Farm continuity is not a priority for the Burckhardts and is not mandatory. It is up to the three children to

decide whether they want to work in farming at a later date. All the children are in secondary education, so they may wish to enter a non-agricultural profession. The Burckhardts live for the present generation and farm continuity is secondary.

3.6.2 Development options for the Burckhardt family

The Burckhardts do not have much agricultural development potential. For one thing, the husband's indifference to innovation and the wife's lack of interest in farming prevent farm specialisation. At present the farm is being supported by Mrs Burckhardt's day job, only made possible thanks to flexible role sharing. The family's manpower requirements on the farm, in the household and in paid non-agricultural work are offset by flexible role sharing within the family, thus preventing either of the partners being overburdened with work.

The next generation may possibly give up the Burckhardt family farm. Mr Burckhardt's education means that he does not have many escape options. His sole educational potential is in agriculture, as are his interests. On the other hand, the children's education is clearly designed to get out of farming. There are, therefore, prospects for development within the family. It would be conceivable for one son to carry on the farm part-time at a later date. Other options point to increasing cooperation with the neighbours (e.g. a joint business) or even merging the farm with this neighbouring farm.

3.7 The Meierhofer family (case 7)

Ownership/status on the family farm:	Monika Meierhofer: agricultural employee Rolf Meierhofer: owner and farm manager
Age/marital status:	Monika 40, Rolf 37, married for 4 years
Education:	Monika: physiotherapist Rolf: agronomist
Children:	1 daughter (aged 3)
Farm:	Hilly region, 22 ha LN (of which 9 ha leased) Milk production and pig fattening (organic farming)
Farm labour:	Monika (initially 100 %, following birth of her daughter 60 - 80 %), Rolf (initially 60 %, later 80 %), parents (occasionally)
Living arrangements:	Farming family lives in the new detached house, Rolf's parents live in the old home nearby

3.7.1 Role model for the Meierhofer family

The Meierhofers have an individual role model with flexible role sharing. Roles within the family are negotiated on an interest and ability basis. The role model is able to cover individual as well as family and business needs and adapts to new circumstances. A process of negotiation takes place within the family. After his marriage Mr Meierhofer expected that he would have to stop working away from home, although he valued his second job as a balance to the farm and a source of income, and that Mrs Meierhofer would continue in her profession. But Mrs Meierhofer gave up the work for which she was qualified and worked on the farm full time. She found a new professional challenge in agriculture, was paid for her work and did not have to lose her previous financial and social independence. Mr Meierhofer kept his second job and managed the farm, for which he is ideally qualified. He also works on the farm, but does not do much in the house. The couple could envisage employing someone to do the housework if Mrs Meierhofer were unable to cope with the workload. Under no circumstances will she give up working on the farm. Role sharing which involves the woman taking on the role of farm employee is certainly not the rule, but it opens up new possibilities for the farm and covers the couple's individual interests and abilities. The family lives and plans for its own generation. At present there are no expectations of farm continuity.

3.7.2 Development options for the Meierhofer family

In the Meierhofer family there are favourable development options for both farm and family, as Mr and Mrs Meierhofer have educational qualifications providing a safe way out of agriculture or educational capital for possible specialisation on the farm. There is environmental awareness, as manifested by the switch to organic farming. Farm continuity is not a major issue. Plans are made for the current farming generation. The interests of individual family members and the interests of the farm are well balanced. The family has many routes open because the role model is an individual one and role sharing is flexible. The farm development strategy is expansionary and innovative. One development option could be for the husband to give up his second job if the change to organic farming presents him with enough of a new challenge and he does not need his additional earnings for risk hedging or investment. However, this development option has to be examined from a role model aspect, because it would possibly destroy the balance between the requirements of individuals and farm.

4. Conclusion

The organisation of the family farm according to the principle of flexible role distribution between women and men is not yet a matter of course in farming. Role models in farming are often rigid, based on allocated roles for women and men. This rigid role distribution restricts the necessary flexibility of family farms and limits their options for development (Tab. 1). A “family structural change” of the type described in the case of the Plüss and Meierhofer families (cases 4 and 7) can help farming families more effectively to meet the increased demands made upon agriculture by society. These individual case studies do not provide any information on how widespread flexible role models are in agriculture. The interest of a study of this type is, however, that it allows theses on structural problems in agriculture to be proposed and extrapolated structurally into the future.

Table 1: Role models and development potential for farming families

Farming families	Role model		Development potential	Outlook for the next generation
	Rigid	Flexible		
Case 1: Bieri family	x		Very little	Give up or merge farm with brothers' farms Interim solution: lease farm to wife
Case 2: Eggimann family	x		Exists on the farm Not used by the family	Status quo until decision on succession
Case 3: Schoch family	x		Exists on the farm Not used by the family	Status quo until decision on succession Interim solution: lease farm to wife
Case 4: Plüss family		x	Good, especially in the service sector	Depends on the next generation's interests
Case 5: Glauser family	x		Low	Give up at retirement age unless a successor can be found
Case 6: Burckhardt family		x	Low	Give up or second occupation
Case 7: Meierhofer family		x	Good	Open

At individual level, far-reaching individualisation of lifestyles occurs as a result of processes of differentiation in the modern age, associated with mobility and role flexibility (Fliege 1998, 420). This leads to a change in cultural norms and social structures. Relations between the sexes take a different form. Farming families are not exempt from individualisation and social change. Many farming families

find it hard to find a direction in such circumstances, as they are no longer able to base their actions and decisions on the experiences of the past. Each farming family therefore has to work out its own role model. Rigid role models, in either the farming or the bourgeois milieu, cannot satisfy either the new challenges in agriculture or the social expectations of women and restrict individual and farm development options.

The changing role of women brings with it changes in the male role. Whether women leave farming or remain in it has consequences for the farm and its development options. Strategies in the service sector, such as direct marketing or agrotourism, are unlikely to succeed without the co-operation of the whole family. Then again, women (and men) who earn additional income from gainful employment outside farming help to hedge against risks at times of crisis and enable women to move into a professional woman's role, with their own social and financial independence.

The size of the farm alone cannot guarantee the family's livelihood or the continuity of the farm. Nor is education by itself a measure of the economic success of a business; today's farming family business has to be innovative and depends on the creativity and motivation of the individual family members. The family farm is a family team, made up of individuals with different traits of character, abilities and interests. The individual roles within the team therefore need to be negotiated as part of a process within the family and the appropriate responsibilities and skills assigned to each. New role models within the family can increase the flexibility of the farming family on the family farm and thus their prospects for the future.

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