

Main factors driving the decline of generational succession in the agricultural farming in Tolima, Colombia.

Alexander Blandon Lopez,

Janeth Gonzalez Rubio

John Alexander Blandon Castano.

Theme: G09 Migration, Forced Displacement, Mobility Patterns and Impacts Across Space

Key words: Generational replacement, rural areas, migration, Job opportunities, quality of life

JEL Codes: R23 Regional Migration • Regional Labor Markets • Population • Neighborhood Characteristics. J61 Geographic Labor Mobility • Immigrant Workers. J62 Job, Occupational, and Intergenerational Mobility.

The migration of young people from the countryside of the state of Tolima (Colombia) to urban areas, in a context of lack of productive linkages in agriculture, low profitability, and weak state support in rural areas, is a gradual trend responsible for the loss of generational succession, in agricultural farming, particularly among coffee and cocoa producers. Tolima has 1,387,000 inhabitants, its capital is Ibagué, and it is a leading agricultural producer of coffee, cocoa, rice, avocado, mango, and lemon.

According to Córdoba et al (2025) family succession in Colombia presents a significant challenge: despite 66% of current coffee farmers intending to transfer their farms, only 28,5% of newcomers enter agriculture through this route. In 2023, 1.77 million people lived in coffee households; producers averaged 54.5 years of age, 36% were older adults, and about 76% resided in rural areas.

Once, youths move to study at the university in urban areas they have the tendency of not returning to their family farms for different reasons such as: few job opportunities and prevalence of informal employment in the rural areas, low quality of life and lack of basic services, grim perception of the future and personal growth and the lack of infrastructure and communications in the rural areas amongst others. A study found that population in coffee households in Colombia will drop 20% by 2050 (Leibovich et al 2022)

The main purpose of this research is to determine the key factors driving the decline of generational succession in agricultural farming in Tolima (Colombia). The theoretical framework of the research is based on literature on internal migration (Rérat, 2016) and social capital theory (Putnam, 1993; Coleman, 1988).

In regards to the methodology, the type of research is quantitative, the scope is descriptive, correlational, and analytical, the method is deductive, and the design is non-experimental. The study is based on a convenience sample of 50 students from the University of Tolima who are enrolled in both face-to-face and distance learning programs and are originally from the rural areas of the region. The main instrument to collect the primary information is a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale in which the participants of the survey are asked to state their level of agreement with each statement about factors that influence their decision to return to the countryside and take on the generational transition after graduating. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with key informants.