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## Perceptions on farming as a profession: teenagers under the spotlight in KwakyeKrom in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality, Ghana

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**Abstract.** Food demand will continue to be on the increase due to rapid urbanization and population growth, amongst others. Thus, building and strengthening the capacities of human resources, and creating the avenue for young people to develop a passion for agriculture and its related endeavors is expedient. The study was to find out young people's views and thoughts on farming and their willingness to take it up as a profession someday. A total of fifty-five (55) teenagers; 25 and 30 males and females, respectively were interviewed. With a majority, that is 35 (63.64%) in their middle adolescence, 47 (85.45 %) of the participants were at the Junior High School level. Investigating the association between some significant study variables, it was realized that there was a weak correlation ( $r < 1$ ) among variables. However, at  $p < .05$ , there was a significant relationship between variables such as 'gender' and 'willingness to be a farmer' ( $r=.386$ ,  $p=.004$ ), 'gender' and 'enjoy going to farm' ( $r=.357$ ,  $p=.009$ ), 'age' and 'enjoy going to farm' ( $r=.372$ ,  $p=.007$ ), 'ever want to be a farmer' and 'enjoy going to farm' ( $r=.686$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Although most (67.27 %) participants' parents/guardians were farmers, only 9 (16 %) participants ever wanted to be farmers. In ranking the perception of teenagers, "it is boring" was 1<sup>st</sup> followed by "it is for retirees". As we embrace a world of digital innovations, reflecting in curriculum development, positive perspectives of agriculture should be established among teenagers by incorporating agriculture classes in the educational curriculum.

**Keywords:** Farming, Perception, Teenagers

### Introduction

Since time immemorial, it is believed that agriculture is the backbone of the Ghanaian economy because it plays a crucial role in the nation's economic development. However, as the years pass, urbanization together with other factors tends to attack the robustness of the sector, notwithstanding the numerous interventions and initiatives (Okine & Remziye, 2018). Thus, its relevance has reduced since it lost its significant contribution to the GDP to the service and industry sectors, although it still employs a chunk of the populace (MoFA, 2016). Since the sector still has promising output in terms of socio-economic development of the country, it is expedient

transformational policies are formulated and rolled out for the betterment of the sector. This will aid in economic growth since Africa and Ghana specifically experience fast-growing markets at both continental and country levels (Diao *et al.*, 2019).

Farming, a subsidiary of agriculture, is the mainstream of food production. Whilst food demand will always be on the increase because of rapid urbanization and population growth, intra-regional trade policies, and many others, increased food and nutritional security through agrobiodiversity and Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) should be prioritized and embraced. Thus, Ghana and Africa will be close to zero hunger (SDG 2).

In a bid to help ensure that SDGs are realized by 2030, the capacities of human resources need to be built and strengthened. Until that, nothing significant as far as SDGs are concerned will be achieved by 2030. SDGs can only materialize when nations who form the United Nations Organization (hereafter UN) contribute their quota by formulating and implementing national-level development goals that are in line with the UN's agenda. For Abudu & Mensah (2016), education plays an instrumental role in national development goals, and if this postulate is true, then special attention should be given to educational reforms and undue curriculum restructuring.

Government educational programs and policies in [Sub-Saharan] Africa are generally ineffective because they are not suitably couched in the country's human contexts and socio-cultural realities (Dei, 1999); unsurprisingly, the basic education curriculum is frequently revised. Before the 2012 curriculum reform in Ghana, agricultural science was taught as a single subject at the basic level. This is necessary for teaching young people the fundamentals of agriculture, reforming their thoughts about agriculture, and providing opportunities for them to grow their talents to achieve long-term agricultural development as a nation (Osei, 2004). As a result, they will have more opportunities to develop their talents and change their views regarding agribusiness.

Agricultural education generally helps in the formation of positive disposition and passions, as well as the development of students' social awareness and ingenuity (Addo-Quaye *et al.*, 2007). The foundational level training of the younger generation in agriculture is critical for the growth of the next generation of agriculturists, extensions officers, farmers, and many related professions. Since Ghana's economy is dependent on agriculture, students will require fundamental technical, management, and entrepreneurial abilities to form firms that would assure agricultural growth and sustainability (ISSER, 2014). However, the 2012 curriculum reform saw the abolition of agricultural science as a single subject taught at the basic level. If young people will develop some interest and passion for farming as a profession, it should be cultivated right from the basic level. This is because at that level, young people pick up things faster and develop interest. Considering the current unemployment plight in Ghana, those who studied agricultural majors at the tertiary level end up practicing in different sectors since they will have to secure a job at all costs. Thus, most of the human resources with the technical know-how are practicing in different sectors. If this persists, coupled with the abolishment of agricultural science as a single subject taught at the basic level, the sector will be greatly affected, consequently affecting the GDP of the country. If agriculture is still taught as a single subject at the basic level, many people who are unable to continue with their

education can lean on the various agricultural skills they acquire during their basic school education and start some agro-based ventures. In this study, the perception of teenagers on farming as a profession was assessed in a suburb at the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality in Ghana, and recommendations have been proffered.

According to Prediger & Staples (1996), "preference" is a fundamental concept for describing interests and values. Some occupations require a lot of public interaction, while others require very little. Some jobs necessitate outdoor work and/or physical activity, whereas others do not (Prediger & Staples, 1996). Bakker *et al.* (2005) found that some people prefer a more informal and independent work atmosphere, while others prefer a more outgoing and warm setting.

It is worth remembering that the elements that drive people's occupational preferences are dependent on how compatible certain occupation features are with their own beliefs or values (Prediger & Staples, 1996). According to Kankam & Onivehu (2000), intrinsic, extrinsic, family, and interpersonal factors such as intellectual capacity, aptitudes, school, family, personality, self-esteem, values, and interests influence teenagers' occupational preferences. Parents, teachers, friends, the school environment, socioeconomic background, socializing, and the student themselves can all impact pupils' career goals. For Kerka (2000), factors such as personality, preferences, self-concept, culture and identity, globalization, social bonding, source of inspiration, support networks, and resources availability like information and finance influences a pupil's career preferences.

Parents and teachers likewise can have a significant impact on their children's accomplishment orientation. Relationships and esteem from peers and important others, meanwhile, are basic human wants, which impacts on pupils' career preferences (Lerdpornkulrat *et al.*, 2010). Hill *et al.* (1990) has said that science students generally are impacted by high school professors and guidance counselors when determining high school and college plans. Thus, it is important to recognize that people make occupational choices based on a variety of personal factors. As a result, people who enter different occupations have different perspectives on work as a part of life, as evidenced by the fact that students enrolled in different programs demonstrate stable occupation value differences (Osipow, 1983).

According to Bandura *et al.* (2001), everyone involved in the career choice process is influenced by a variety of variables, such as the environment in which they live, their propensities, social connections, and educational achievement. Mberia & Midigo (2018) reported that most individuals are affected by their parents' ideal career paths, whereas others pursue the career paths that their educational choice has opened for them. Several other people choose to follow their ambition

irrespective of how often or little it will pay them, whereas others choose high-paying career paths.

Students' involvement in agriculture has been a major focus of crucial programs in most nations (Sinyolo & Mudhara, 2018). As the world's population grows, food and nutritional security are becoming a generational issue, with agriculture being more linked with the aged. Farmers are presently, on average, in their late 50s to early 60s (Leavy & Colin, 2008). According to Johr (2012), the mean age of indigenous farmers in the United States is 58 years, whereas over one-third farmers in Europe are above 65 years. Youths, on the other hand, represent 20 % of the total population across many emerging and rising economies. Such economies are home to over half of the world's young people. Sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia alone account for over 50 % of the above presented statistics, according to ILO (2013). The answer to the issue may look simply: motivate the youth to venture into agriculture. It will provide opportunities for the unemployed and ensure that farming is handed to the upcoming generation by surge in youth engagement in agriculture. However, the general opinion on the problem of the youth and farming is that the agricultural sector is in peril owing to a lack of young people engagement. For this reason, initiatives to increase youth participation are required to keep the sector alive (Anyidoho et al., 2012). However, sector-driven initiatives usually target primarily agricultural productivity, whereas the off-farm sub-sector and agribusiness activities that comprise the agriculture sector are largely disregarded. Considering the need for sustainable food production, vis-à-vis the sector's ability to employ an ever-increasing youthful populace, young peoples' respond to opportunities are important for food and nutritional security and employment prospects (Proctor & Berdegué, 2020).

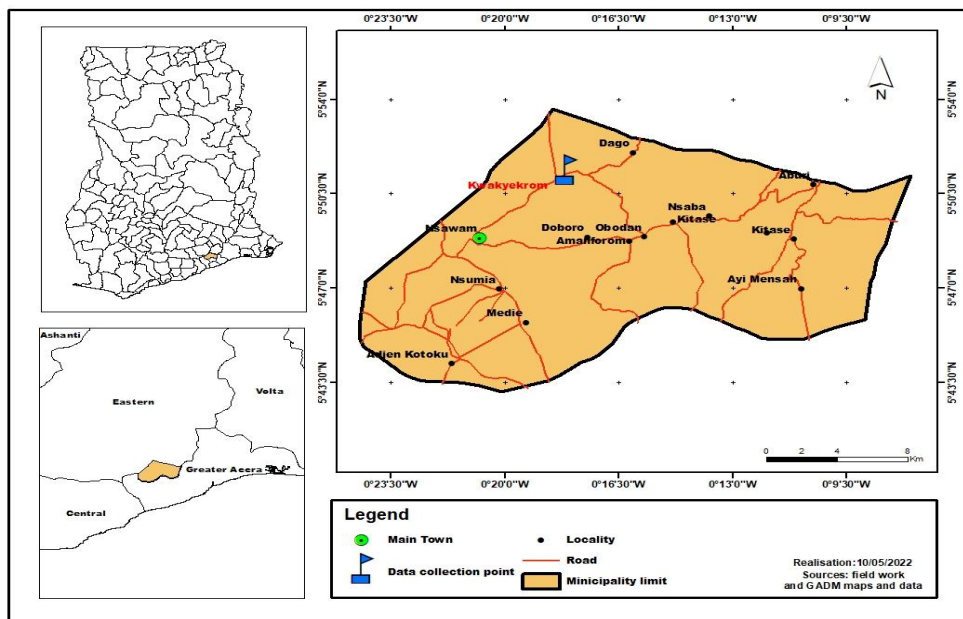
### Perception of young people on farming

Anyidoho et al. (2012) conducted a focus group to learn about young people's opinions and aspirations for cocoa farming in Ghana, as well as the circumstance under which they might consider it as primary or secondary employment. The authors reached the conclusion that there is a negative relationship between the two variables; the amount of education and the decision to work in agriculture as a profession. Those who wanted to be farmers have little or no formal education, whereas full-time students who want to continue their education to secondary or tertiary level openly state that a white-collar profession is the "best" option (Musa et al., 2019). They believe that formal education can help people get jobs in a variety of white-collar and professional fields. Young people consider farming to be their last option for a career, owing to the perceived non-importance they attach to agriculture farming (Musa et al., 2019).

### Methods

The study was conducted in March, 2022 in Kwakyeekrom, a suburb of the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipal, which is in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Located in the south-eastern part of the Eastern Region, the municipality is found between 0.07' W and 0.27' W, and 5'.45 N and 5'.58 N longitude and latitude respectively, and it is about 23 km from the Greater Accra Region; the capital of the nation. The area has an undulating relief, with isolated peaks. Generally, the topography is suitable for mechanized agricultural production. The area was selected for this study since it experiences a dual maxima rainfall every year, making it a suitable area for rainfed agriculture (GSS, 2014).

Figure 1. A map of the study area (Author's Construct, 2022)



An exploratory research approach was adopted to aid in having clarity on the perception on farming as a profession. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires were designed for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Simple random sampling technique was applied in the selection of 55 teenagers for data collection. This quantitative data was coded, entered and analyzed with STATA (version 14) whilst the qualitative data were analyzed and ranked according to themes. This is to help in generalization from statistical inferences made from analyzed data.

## Results and Discussion

The socio-demographic information of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Fifty-five (55) respondents were engaged in this study, out of which 25 representing 45.45 % were males whilst 30 (54.55 %) were females. With 9 males and 1 female, 10 males and 25 females, 6 males and 4 females in their early, middle and late adolescence respectively, 22 (88 %) and 25 (83.33 %) males and females respectively were in their Junior High School education, representing 47 (85.45 %) respondents of the sample size. The predominant household size was 4 or 5 (60 %) people in a household. Most respondents (29) revealed that both parents are farmers whilst 8 (14.55 %) had one of their parents involved in farming as a profession. This supports the assertion of authors who have established that farming is the mainstay of most rural inhabitants in Ghana (e.g. Anang & Yeboah, 2019; Yeboah et al., 2020 etc).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics and thoughts of respondents stratified by gender

Variables	Categories	Gender				Total N (%)
		Male		Female		
		n	%	n	%	
<i>Age: median (IQR)</i>		3.0 (2.0-5.0)				
<i>Age category</i>	Early Adolescence (13 yrs)	9	36.00	1	3.33	10 (18.18)
	Middle Adolescence (14-17 yrs)	10	40.00	25	83.33	35 (63.64)
	Late Adolescence (18 yrs)	6	24.00	4	13.33	10 (18.18)
<i>Educational level</i>	Not Schooling	2	8.00	0	0.00	2 (3.64)
	Primary	1	4.00	3	10.00	4 (7.27)
	Junior High School	22	88.00	25	83.33	47 (85.45)
	Senior High School	0	0.00	2	6.67	2 (3.64)
<i>Household size: median (IQR)</i>		5.0 (4.00-6.00)				
	<i>HH Size of 2-3</i>	2	8.00	4	13.33	6 (10.91)
	<i>HH Size of 4-5</i>	13	52.00	20	66.67	33 (60.00)
	<i>HH Size of 6-8</i>	10	40.00	6	20.00	16 (29.09)
<i>Parent Occupation</i>	<i>Farmers</i>	9	36.00	20	66.67	29 (52.73)
	<i>Traders</i>	3	12.00	3	10.00	6 (10.91)
	<i>Farmer and Trader</i>	4	16.00	4	13.33	8 (14.55)
	<i>Trader and Plumber</i>	5	20.00	0	0.00	5 (9.09)
	<i>Others</i>	4	16.00	3	10.00	7 (12.73)
<i>Enjoy going to farm?</i>	Yes	11	50.00	5	16.67	16 (29.09)
	No	11	50.00	25	83.33	36 (65.45)
<i>Ever want to be a farmer?</i>	Yes	8	32.00	1	3.33	9 (16.36)
	No	17	68.00	29	96.67	46 (83.64)

IQR: Interquartile Range

Source: Field data collection, 2021

### Participants desired occupation

Interestingly, none of the participants desired to be a farmer in such a rural farming community. However, most (67.27 %) of their parents/guardians were farmers. Most of them desired to be nurses (18 %), teachers (15 %), as well as (9 %) bankers, soldiers, and plumbers as shown in Figure 1.

The other occupations respondents expressed interest in were police, pastor, journalist, doctor, tiller, traders, dressmaker as well as a fashion designer. Factors such as gender disposition, unwillingness to become a farmer amongst others might have accounted for

respondents' occupational preferences. The findings agree with the assertion of early scholars such as Kankam & Onivehu (2000) and Kerka (2000).

The analysis revealed that the most cultivated crop among the rural area was Cassava (33 %), plantain (25 %) as well as maize (17 %). Other crops rarely cultivated were Beans, Pineapple, Cocoyam, Yam, Pepper, Rice, Cocoa, and Oil Palm.

The perception and views of people influence their decision (Pleger & Villringer, 2013). The various perception of teenagers on farming is ranked and presented in Table 2.

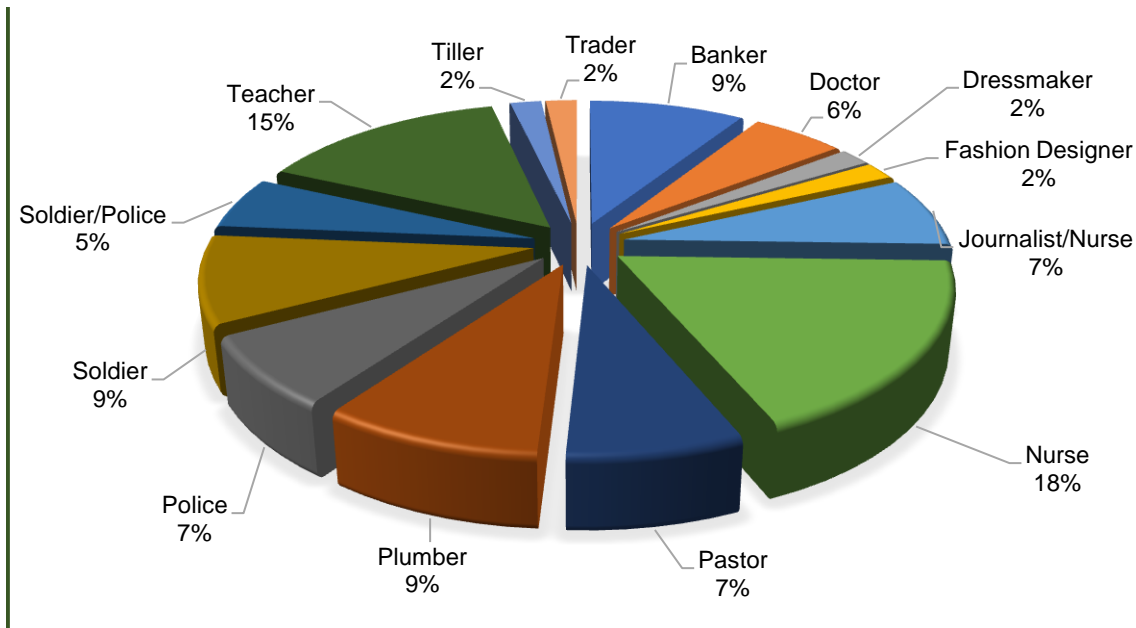


Figure 1. Distribution of Participants Desired Occupation

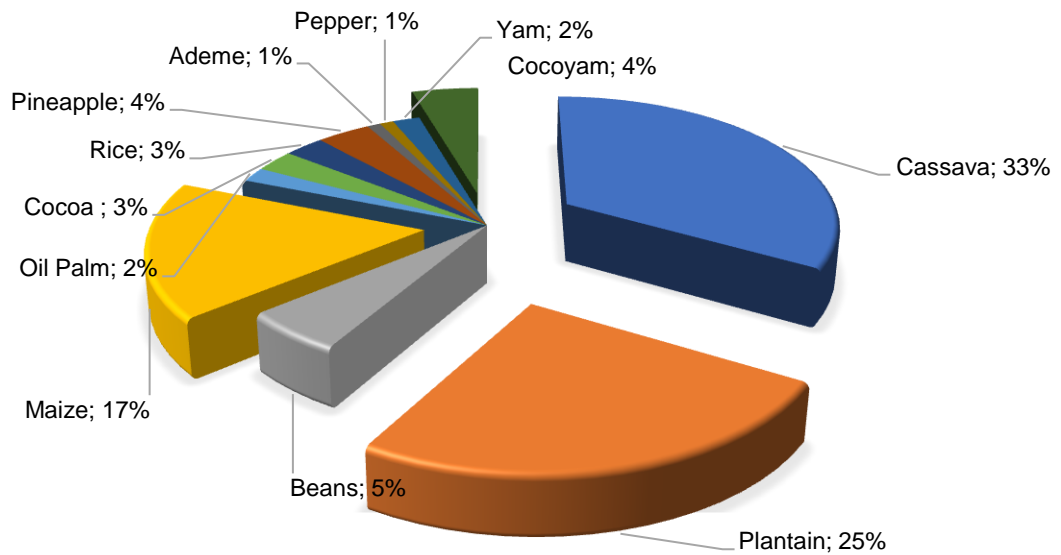


Figure 2. Distribution Crop Types Cultivated by Parents/Guardians

**Table 2.** Perceptions of Respondents about Farming

S/N	Rank scale factors	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	Rank
1	It is tedious	13	15	9	8	10	3.24	4 <sup>th</sup>
2	It is not lucrative	20	16	3	7	9	3.5636	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3	It can weaken one's strength	19	17	2	10	7	3.5636	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	It is for retirees	20	19	4	8	4	3.7818	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	It is boring	24	16	3	5	7	3.8182	1 <sup>st</sup>

1 – strongly agree, 2 – Agree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Disagree and 5 – Strongly Disagree. **Source:** Field data collection, 2021

Out of the five (5) factors, “it is boring” (having a mean score of 3.8182) was the major view teenagers interviewed have about farming. It is also believed that (farming) “it is for retirees” giving it the second place in the ranking scale. With “it is not lucrative” and it can weaken one’s strength” having the same mean score (3.5636), these factors are ranked third important perception of teenagers on farming. Lastly, teenagers are of the view that (farming) “it is tedious”, being ranked 4<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 3.24. The perceptions found are different from views of respondents in a study by Musah et al. (2019) who declared that white-collar jobs are the best. In effect, such people with this perception about profession will show negative attitude towards farming which they have weird views about. In the view of Prediger & Staples (1996), the compatibility of people’s views with the ethics of an occupation influences their preferences. Thus, those who have the wrong view about farming will consider farming to be their last option for a career as already shown in a study by (Musa et al., 2019).

*Association of thoughts and perceptions of participants among study variables*

The results from the correlation matrix in Table 3 depicts that there was a significantly weak positive association among participants' gender and enjoy going to the farm ( $r = 0.357, p = 0.009$ ) as well as ever wanting to be a farmer ( $r = 0.386, p = 0.004$ ).

A similar association exists among age and enjoy going to the farm ( $r = 0.372, p = 0.007$ ) as well as ever wanting to be a farmer ( $r = 0.489, p = 0.000$ ). The analysis also depicts a significant strong positive association between enjoying going to the farm and ever wanting to be a farmer ( $r = 0.686, p = 0.000$ ). There is a significant negative association among respondents' educational level and the number of times they have been to church ( $r = -0.580, p = 0.000$ ).

Lastly, a weak negative association exists among people who enjoy going to the farm and the number of times they have been to farm ( $r = -0.390, p = 0.012$ ). The remaining variables do not depict a significant association.

**Table 3.** Correlation Matrix of Significant Study Variables

Variables	Gender	Age	Educ. Level	Household Size	How many times	Have you ever been to a farm	Enjoy going to the farm
Gender	1						
Age	0.182	1					
	0.184						
Educational Level	0.168	-0.122	1				
	0.219	0.373					
Household Size	-0.208	-0.249	-0.177	1			
	0.127	0.067	0.195				
How many times	-0.181	0.025	-0.580**	-0.211	1		
	0.314	0.888	<b>0.000</b>	0.239			
Have you ever been to a farm	-0.197	0.201	0.051	0.032	-0.064	1	
	0.306	0.295	0.791	0.868	0.86		
Enjoy going to the farm	.357**	.372**	0.26	0.139	-.390*	0.183	1
	<b>0.009</b>	<b>0.007</b>	0.063	0.325	<b>0.025</b>	0.343	
Ever want to be a farmer	.386**	.489**	0.201	-0.192	-0.12	0.092	.686**
	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.000</b>	0.14	0.161	0.505	0.633	<b>0.000</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021. Significant at \* p-value<0.05 and \*\* p-value<0.01



## Conclusion

Parents' perceptions on agriculture are important because they have a significant impact on their children's long-term educational and occupational goals (Musa *et al.*, 2019). As a result, policies should be geared towards increasing parents' awareness and involvement in their children's long-term educational and occupational goals. Positive perspectives of agriculture can be established among youths if agriculture classes are included in the education curriculum, and how teachers and the school see agriculture has been demonstrated to have an impact on youth perceptions and, as a result, on agricultural perceptions (Musa *et al.*, 2019). As a result, it is critical for the educational system to encourage and steer young people's perceptions through curriculum development and a more positive picture of agriculture among young people. High perceptions and aspirations, on the other hand, are insufficient if they are not supported with possibilities and the ability to exploit those changes, as well as measures that enable the accomplishment of agricultural perceptions and aspirations.

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