

WHY THE WAY TO PROMOTE MANGO EXPORTS REQUIRES STRENGTHENING THE 'BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING'?



In my articles, I address general phenomena. Mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.

"A good solution should be effective, simple, and accessible."

DEVOTED WITH LOVE

This week's email is dedicated to my mother, Tsipora, who passed away on Friday, January 22. She was born 92 years ago in Hungary, the youngest daughter of a peasant family. In World War II, most of her family perished in the Nazi death camps, while she managed to flee the Nazis.

On her 16th birthday, she arrived in Israel. She fought for Israel's liberation from the British and was a soldier in Israel's 1948 Independence War.



Tsipora after the Independence War (1948), and in Kibbutz Tzova's vineyard, 1960 to 2018.

When the war ended, together with her brothers in arms, she established Kibbutz Tzova, where I was born. She first worked in agriculture and then in education, medicine, and alternative medicine. She gave birth to six children and unfortunately lost a son, my brother, in a war.

For me, she served as a source of inspiration and model to the human spirit and the limitless possibilities and achievements one can accomplish when having a dream, a collaboration, and a positive attitude to life. May her soul rest in peace. I hope to stand-up to her dream of brotherhood and leaving behind us a better world.

CARING

At first, this behavior seemed "strange" to me; I refer to a situation in which government officials conduct "mini-negotiations" with commercial companies regarding the future business offerings of goods by a company to its clients, the farmers.

I am not talking, God forbid, about bullying or delinquent behavior, but quite the opposite, the discussion ("negotiations") aimed to ensure that the product or service will be accessible to the broad farmers' population.

Let me make it clear; the officials ask **nothing** for themselves.

After overcoming this approach's initial surprise (in developed economies, there is a strict separation between the regulatory and business aspects), I learned to appreciate and respect this attitude and especially its intention.

Moreover, I learned that this is a great way to understand better the needs, fears, anxieties, dreams, and hopes of the farmers and government officials. Hence, to join forces and overcome them together, for the benefit of all.

THE MEETING

It has been a week since I arrived in that African country. I couldn't ask for this trip to go any better; everything was better than any of us have expected.

Now I was sitting in the office of the head of a department (unit) from the Ministry of Agriculture, together with his deputy.

Two days ago, the deputy and I collected field data from the *Fruit Fly Certified Trade Zone* (FFCTZ) model orchard. The results were outstanding, stunning both of us and marking a **historical** turning point.



Now we were both sitting in the office with the head of the department. On my side, I was expecting a summary of the visit, followed by praise, for the remarkable results and how it will positively affect the farmers' future, and followed with a few words about the next stage.

As expected, the deputy started by summarizing the results, while I took the time to enjoy hearing it once again. Hearing of the good results is never too much, after nearly 30 years of hard work.

But then the deputy added, "*This solution is absolutely great but too expensive for our farmers to use.*"

TOO EXPENSIVE

I wasn't expecting to discuss any business aspects, so I was quite surprised by this statement.

Does the deputy think that we are too greedy, and following the outstanding results, we intend to exploit the mango growers?

A few seconds passed before I said, "*Too expensive? What do you consider to be 'too expensive'?*"

The deputy was confused for a moment and didn't know what numbers to name.

I smiled and asked, "*How can it be 'too expensive' if we never named a price for the products or service?*"

The head of the unit and the deputy were embarrassed and were not sure what to say.

I then continued, saying what we all knew -

"The current cost of fruit fly control in Africa and Asia, including in this country, vary from 500 €/ha to 1,200 €/ha, and in some cases even soar to over 2,000 €/ha.

Unfortunately, this massive investment is not reflected in the results, and infestation by fruit flies keeps at the range of 30% to 80%.

It breaks my heart to see farmers who have no money exhausting their last pennies on worthless fruit fly control protocols that didn't work ten years ago, not five years ago, and not now. I keep asking myself, why do they do it?

Implementing those ineffective fruit fly protocols only brings disappointment, loss of trust and economic devastation that one faces is Export Ban or risk of an imminent Export Ban.

So I was wondering when you said that it is 'too expensive,' did you refer to the cost per unit, the cost per hectare, or the price relative to the results?"

The deputy responded, "*I referred to the cost of units. The cost of your units is much higher than any other trap.*"

Patently, I repeated my statement from before, "*But how can it be too expensive if we didn't name a price for the commercial product?*"

I then added, "*Please allow me to elaborate and clarify. The FreeDome technological solution is not a trap; it is based on a novel patented technology, named GCFR.*

Furthermore, traps are typically used 100 to 400 units per hectare, and a farmer needs to renew or replace them every few weeks. That is adding a lot to the product cost on labor (application), yet it is ineffective.

In contrast, the FreeDome is typically used at a density of 5 to 15 units per hectare. Once it is installed, there is no need to invest more labor, and it is continuously active for many months.

*Most notably **is the field results outcome.** When we use FreeDome, the results are Export Quality mangoes, less than 1% fruit damage. We received the same results during the rainy season.*

And this benefit development came to you free of ANY additional charge or investment or work.

No other company in the world would develop a fruit fly solution tailor-made for your country farmer's unique needs. But Biofeed did so, with ZERO cost to your government or your farmers.

Today, we know that even when using traps, plus sprays, plus sanitation, the infestation is tens of percent, and export is out of the question as soon as the rainy season begins."

I then asked, "Accordingly, is it even possible to compare on a "cost per unit" basis?"

It seemed as if the message went through.

But something very fundamental was missing, and if it wouldn't be mentioned, then it would damage the integrity of my professionalism.

So I asked the head of the unit and the deputy, "Do you remember that the Fruit Fly Certified Trade Zone (FFCTZ) protocol is part of the Green Valley?"

They nod with their heads for 'yes.'

I continued, "Do you remember that the European authorities are asking for a System Approach fruit fly solution?"

They nodded again for 'yes.'

It was time to remind what we already spoke about but was still not intuitive.

"If we want the EU regulators to accept your mangoes at all times, from all farms, we first need to earn the EU trust.

*We will earn their trust and remove Export Ban's threat only when we manage to put in place **a managed fruit fly protocol applied and enforced by a professional organization or company year around and accepted by the EU authorities.***

If we want to promise the continuation of mango export to any place and anytime, we need to apply a managed System Approach protocol.

This is why we developed the FFCTZ protocol. It is specially made for the mango growers, according to the EU and top regulators' demands.

To follow those demands, we must apply it as a holistic System Approach protocol. We need to be committed to full and perfect implementation of this protocol."

I looked at the head of the unit and the deputy to see their reaction. Was I too blunt?

None of what I have said was new to them. Yet, they seemed to be thankful for the exact, straightforward way I laid the bare facts before them.

At this stage, it seemed obvious and maybe even redundant to say what I had in mind. Yet, I decided to say it, once again, out loud,

"You see, if I want to give you what you asked for and what you want, which is to enable continuous export, selling the units alone would not do, since in that case, it would not be applied as a System Approach.

Hence, it would not satisfy the EU or any other regulators. This is why we don't offer it per se.

Furthermore, the regulators and importers would prefer having "objective data" on the fruit fly control quality and the produce. This can be supplied when applying a managed System Approach protocol, but not if the farmer is getting only traps or sprays.

*Due to lack of such information, any future interception may cause the EU to impose Export Ban on **all** the mango exporters from this country.*

There is only one way to avoid this unfortunate potential outcome, and that is by satisfying the regulators' demands by applying a full fruit fly management protocol.

By applying the FFCTZ protocol and confirming the results per farm, we would be able to dismiss the regulators' fears, hence satisfying their demands."

The deputy summarized it by saying, *"that's right, we do need a system approach managed protocol, and we do need to lower infestation, stop interceptions, extend the harvest season, and reduce the risk of chemical-residues by stop spraying fruit flies."*

Then she took a deep breath, as if she was going to dive, and burst with another question, or was it an accusation, saying?

"Yes, sure, what we need is a fully managed System Approach protocol, which includes its application and a year around management, which could easily cost 2, 3, or maybe even four times more than the current ineffective control.

We are talking of thousands of Euros per hectare! How can our mango growers afford it?!"

I felt like we were hitting a brick wall once again. Do they still think I have no idea as to the economic capacity of the mango growers? Or do they think I expect them to subsidize the FFCTZ protocol?

I looked at the deputy and smiled. Then I asked, *"What if the growers get the FFCTZ protocol for about **the same price per hectare** as what they pay today for the ineffective control?"*

The deputy smiled back to me, saying, "*That will be nice, even perfect,*" and then continuing to face me with an additional challenge, "*Is it even possible on your side? You know that we can't have subsidies for this project?*"

I smiled and said, "*I didn't think you have and wouldn't expect it. Suppose the farmers are now spending money on something worthless. Do you see a reason why they wouldn't invest a similar amount in a protocol that is highly effective and would enable them easier access to the export market, longer export period, and increase their marketable yield?*"

It seems that the head of the unit and the deputy were satisfied with the answer.

But no, I was going to surprise them. I said, "*What if we could help the farmers by financing part of their early-season investment in the FFCTZ?*"

I am not talking about financing 2%, 3%, or 5% of the cost of interest on the investment. No, I was thinking of funding 50% to 70% of the protocol's actual implementation. Will that be bad for the farmers?"

The look on their faces said it all. They liked it A LOT!

To make sure we are on the same page, I added, "*We could do this if we manage to attract more importers who would ask for the specific mangoes that we grow here. Are you ready to help your farmers and me with carrying this task?*"

There was no need to wait for the answer; I already knew it.

SO FAR

When we began that conversation two hours ago, they judged things based on the current results, and hence made the comparison based on price per unit, which led to their conclusion that the price is high.

When we clarified the base for comparison, they understood that the right unit for economic comparison is the price per **hectare** and not per **trap**.

What matters to the farmer are the final results, mainly comparing the **total investments and the total income per hectare**.

Then we spoke about the need for Protocol versus Traps/Sprays, which led them to understand that for justified reasons, the cost per hectare should rightly be higher than the current price of traps/sprays/sanitation per hectare.

When they already understood the need for protocol application and year-round management, meaning higher cost, I told them that:

(1) We could do it for about the **same price per hectare** as farmers are currently investing.

(2) We may also offer an option to finance a big part of the farmer's investment.

Now that they have exhausted those 'unclear issues,' they were more relaxed and contained, and so was I.

COSTLY PROTOCOL?

The smiling faces kept on for only a short moment, then the deputy through to the air yet another 'protecting question.'

"What will be about our exporters?" she said.

Surprised by the unexpected question, I said, *"Excuse me, I am not sure I understand what you mean to say. Can you elaborate?"*

The deputy extended, *"If many foreign importers would come here, what would be about our local traders/exporters?"*

I was confused for a moment. Every country would love to have as many as possible importers asking for its farmers' produce, and yet the deputy is unhappy if that would take place!?

Is the deputy thinking that I would go through the difficulties of bringing EU importers to get rid of the local ones? Is it possible that the deputy thinks I have something personal against the local exporters?

The answer was unclear; I had to understand better what is standing behind that question.

I asked, *"Do we want the best for the mango growers or the best for the exporters? In other words, wouldn't you like the farmers to get the best possible business offers?"*

The deputy reacted, *"Sure, the farmers are my main concern, but I also want to make sure that our traders and exporters are not left aside."*

Good, now that I understand the concern, I can address it directly. I then said, *"If we agree that the mango growers' business results are our primary focus, then I promise you that there will be no sort of "discrimination" of importers/exporters.*

*Green Valley will accept any exporter/importer, regardless of their origin and surly the local ones. **We will advise the farmers to work with those who will come with the best business offer. Ultimately, it is a business decision that the farmer will take.***"

I then asked, *"Does that sounds reasonable for you?"*

They both replied simultaneously, *"that's right, that is exactly what we like to hear, and we appreciate your attitude on that matter."*

I was happy to see we managed to improve our mutual understanding.

After all, my goal is to work in harmony and cooperation with all stakeholders, including farmers and governmental officials.

WHAT ABOUT SMALL HOLDERS?

The meeting extended more than I expected, but at the same time, I felt how important it is for me to understand better the people whom I wish to serve and help in improving their livelihood.

I feel fortunate to meet and work with so many good people in so many countries. Right now, I was facing two of them, and the deputy had one last concern, or was it a question or a demand? I wasn't sure.

Anyhow, by the tone of voice, it was visible that the deputy was profoundly and emotionally concerned about this issue.

The deputy said, *"Green Valley is focused only on the big farmers, which are anyhow doing relatively well. Why Green Valley will not focus on the smallholders, as most of the farmers are smallholders?"*

The deputy raised issue wasn't new to me. I was continuously asking myself, where is the best place to focus on having the most significant impact, and am I doing the right things when focusing on the challenging small group of exporters?

I finally answered, *"When we first met, three years ago, wasn't it you who told me that the mango export industry is crucial to the nation's economy and agro-industry?"*

Wasn't it you who mentioned that there is no proper solution and hence the country is risking an Export Ban by the EU, which may be devastating for those farmers and that fragile industry?

Wasn't it you who asked me to focus my best efforts on keeping the mango export open by removing the fruit fly threat?

Well, here we are today. I'm always listening to you carefully. Now, after you saw how successful are the results of the FFCTZ, you suddenly ask for something completely different?! Am I missing something?

We just finished a critical stage in which, for the first time, you have a built proof – export assuring - the solution against fruit flies, the FFCTZ.

To leverage a success, we need to focus. To focus, we are required to prioritize the needs. There is no way we can do everything together, at the same time, no matter how much we want or invest.

When we focus and prioritize, we see that keeping export open is the highest strategic goal. This is why you presented it as your top priority.

I am saying that we do remember the smallholders. The general plan of action is as follows. (1) The first target is NOT letting export fade away. (2) The second target is to increase the exports' value, and (3) The third target is to increase the smallholders' income.

If we don't give a proper solution for the mango exporters, and if the country will become under the export ban, you will lose tens of millions of euros.

That may lead to a colossal industry crisis, including a drop in prices in the domestic market and for sure an economic collapse of many smallholders.

If exports cease, then the smallholders will have no role model and no one to follow.

Without mango growers that export, no importers will come, and no one will be ready to invest in the local farms and farmers.

Don't you need and want foreign investments in local agriculture?

If we start with the smallholders, the cost of applying the protocol, which is related to the size of the farm, will immediately jump. The smallholders will need significant subsidies, which you just said that you don't have.

More importantly, if for any reason something will go wrong and the importers will not get the premium quality mangoes, which I promised them, then we will lose our chance for a positive "first impression."

There may not be a second chance to make a good impression, and the importers may choose to stay away from us and from this country. This is the beginning, and there is too much at stake.

We must make sure everything will be as perfect as possible. For this, we need to have the elite mango growers, top mango farms, leading exporters, and importers that will take our produce to the premium supermarket chains and sell our branded mangoes for a premium price.

We have only one chance to make a "first good impression."

*Once this is done and we secure a safe export for all exporters, we can start working on a **new Green Valley protocol, tailor-made for smallholders.***

The smallholders need a role model to see, learn, copy, and follow. That will accelerate their learning curve.

Last but not least, Green Valley is not here to replace the role of the government. Green Valley must be profitable, or it will not survive.

While it is the government's responsibility to take care of the smallholders, Green Valley would cooperate to create a business model to enable those farmers to improve and become successful.

The most important task we are facing now is to assure and secure the uninterrupted export of mangoes and keeping all exporters and the country safe from Export Ban.

We will achieve it by keeping focus. Later, we can discuss the best way to approach smallholders. I will be here to support, and if needed, to lead the next step too."

I then asked. "Are you against the suggested priority and focus?"

Looking at their eyes, I understood that we share a broad understanding and agreement about the next steps.

My two partners to the meeting nod with their heads for Yes.

Then we started discussing the schedule for setting the *Green Valley* plan in motion and getting it running well before the coming season.

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If you find this article interesting, share it with someone who should see it and benefit from it!

Join and receive future articles directly to your inbox - [press here](#).

*For a greener world
Free of sprays
Full of joy*

See you soon,
Nimrod



P.S.

Recently I started a new video series where I share the story of how I got to be active in Africa (as well as other places). A new chapter is posted almost every day, so make sure to *Subscribe* to get early alerts. Here is a link in case you find it interesting [[>><<](#)].

P.P.S.

Note that I plan a trip to Africa within the next few weeks, visiting Senegal and Ghana. The date is not yet final, so keep following.

P.P.P.S.

COVID-19 changes people's eating habits and raises awareness of health, chemical usage, and quarantine pests. *Green Valley* Package is here to support your effort to overcome those challenges and take advantage of the new and promising open opportunities for those who seize the moment and wish to utilize the situation to improve their future [[>><<](#)].

P.P.P.P.S.

Green Valley Package is adaptive and enabling customization and further content development [[>><<](#)].

The key elements of *Green Valley* are:

- 1) **FreeDome** – the **core technology** for fruit fly control, which enables export quality. It is used as part of the FFCTZ (see below).
- 2) **Fruit Fly Certified Trade Zone (FFCTZ)** is a protocol and action model to enable regulators, exporters, importers, and farmers to confirm with premium markets export requirements.

3) *Green Valley National Export Project* – this **protocol** is based on an Israeli model. It is designed for governments interested in adapting their country's agriculture to the 21st Century.

4) *Green Valley Fruits* – designated fruit certification label of **quality assurance**.

P.P.P.P.S.

Who is qualified to use the FFCTZ?

It can be a proper local partner with a particular focus on mangoes, e.g., fruit growers' organizations, fruit traders, exporters/importers, governments, businesspersons, food chains, etc.

IMPORTANT NOTE!

Our investment in each project is enormous. Thus, we must carefully select the most likely projects to bring about the desired results for all involved.

***Change Begins With A Decision
That The Existing Reality Is A Choice
And Not A Decree Of Fate***