



SHOULD I BE A FARMER? DO WE NEED MORE FARMERS?

“Life gains meaning when we direct our passion doing things impacting others.”

We live once; how does one know their "correct" life profession and activity to leave a mark, impact, and matter?

The following statement may surprise you –

“We have plenty of farmers and too few experts capable, suitable, and ready to bring the change the global agro-industry desperately needs.”

BORN A FARMER

It was 1988 when I finished my army duty. I didn't think "global", and couldn't care less about "global problems."

Instead, at the age of 24 I had the rest of my life ahead of me, and no clue what to do next.

As the son of a professional farmer, I asked myself, "*Is agriculture a profession of the past? Should I pursue a career as a farmer?*"

Then I answered, "*I like to work in our orchards, but **agriculture has no future.***"

Did you ever hear this kind of statement from the sons and daughters of farmers?

In the modern world, most young people born into agricultural communities don't continue the farming tradition.

How do you view this state of mind and trend?

ESCAPING FARMING

I grew up in a family of farmers, deep-rooted in agriculture, and raised in a community where agriculture is central to its ethos and livelihood. My life path from birth prepared me to be a farmer like my parents were.

But when my military service ended and I returned to my Kibbutz (and farm), I knew one thing; **I didn't want to work in agriculture.**

Instead of doing what everybody expected and joining my father in the Kibbutz's orchards, I choose to work with children ages 4 to 6 in the Kibbutz kindergarten.

But that didn't last long. Soon I felt intense pressure to join the orchard's team to lead the crop protection activities.

After negotiation, I began working in the orchards, splitting my time between education and livelihood.

But that also did not last long. The long hours (often over 16) in the orchards dedicated to monitoring equipment maintenance, night spraying, etc., didn't leave time for anything else. Unwilling, I quit my work in kindergarten.

Still, I viewed agriculture as a temporary "job" until I studied something else in the academy.

EXCESSIVE TROUBLE

The following 18 months I spent in the orchards, managing the crop protection and harvest, and some smaller jobs here and there.

This period should have been easy and quiet, as I was a temporary worker. But the reality wasn't aware of it.

At the same time, my father, Ilan, the orchards manager, decided we should stop using the prophylactic crop protection approach (i.e., spray before there is a problem) with the IPM, Integrated Pest Management approach.

According to the IPM approach, you spray after seeing the problem and monitor for beneficial insects to see if they can do the job instead of spraying.

In reality, I was doing ten times more monitoring than before, while sprays kept on, but more target specific to some area of the orchard, etc. That led to double the working hours versus the “old way” of spray and pray.

Yet, this was the “easy” part.

Introducing the IPM approach, we tried to reduce sprays. But the natural enemies were not yet back, partially because we continued spraying and hence killing them, and the result was rapid reproduction of pests, with nothing to stop them. In short, repeated pest outbreaks.

Our orchards behaved like a junkie, quieting drags; reacting badly during the detox period. Every day brought an outbreak of different pests, including moths, mites, aphids, and fruit flies.

While this was no fun and often was more like pure suffering, it also pushed me to my limit, forcing me to learn, understand, and act fast.

Looking back, it was a necessary pill I had to swallow to open my eyes to what was accepted and seemed normal to others.

But there was one hidden bonus I wasn't aware of or expecting. This period in my professional career taught me how limited and narrow is experts' knowledge about crop protection.

I understood the experts' perspective, which is motivated out of fear of the farmer's reaction in case of infestation. Hence, they are quick to remove any potential risk to their reputation by recommending the addition of more sprays.

CHANGE OF MIND

As eighteen months passed, I waved bye-bye to my parents and friends, climbed on a boat, and sailed to Greece.

I took a year off to travel, see the world, and think. Before the year was over, I visited three continents and over 20 countries.

As I left the shores of Israel and sailed into the unknown and the freedom that accompanies complete irresponsibility, I had one task: deciding which primary profession I would study in academia upon my return.

There was no way I could forget that task, for every day, I met new people, and they would ask me the basic questions of introduction; “*What do you do?*”

To that, I would answer, “*I now travel, and upon my return, I am going to university.*”

Then came the obvious question, “*What will you study?*”

Here I was stuck, didn’t know what to answer.

PROS AND CONS

I traveled East and West Europe by hitchhiking, camping, and long walks in cities and nature. This left me with plenty of time to think.

I began running Pros and Cons comparison tables in my head against a list of questions and potential professions.

- How attractive is each profession I’m considering?
- How well do I know the profession and its opportunities?
- Is there a potential to bring any real impact?
- What is the potential magnitude of such impact?
- Who will be affected, and to what extent?
- What is the meaning of such impact?
- What are the professional development options?
- Etc.

When I summed up my answers, I was surprised to see that Agriculture studies beat all the other professions, with a big gap between them.

Regarding agriculture, I already knew I liked the fieldwork, farmers, nature, and complexity.

Thanks to the problems and failures in the period of introducing the IPM, I found out how enormous the challenges the agro sector faces and how much I enjoy solving "impossible challenges."

The target population of agriculture is... well, everybody.

Unfortunately, agriculture has a substantial negative impact on our health and the environment, e.g., chemical residues in the food, water, air, soil, impacting non-target organisms, etc. Hence, there is a unique opportunity for historical changes and a massive impact.

Then I thought to myself -

Say, I became a medical doctor. In this case, every day, I could help a few dozen of people. Those people would come to me when they are sick, e.g., with cancer, when chances of helping them are low and costly.

In contrast, by helping to improve the environment, and our food safety and quality, through improved agricultural practices, I can help prevent many people from getting sick in the first place. This would have a more significant social and financial impact, even if it is less glamorous than an MD.

When I repeated the same process with other professions, I found an even more significant gap between those and agriculture.

It became clear that although I thought agriculture study was not for me, it happened to be the one thing that I should study.

From this day, when people asked me about my plans, I said confidently, "*To study agriculture, specializing in crop protection.*"

When I felt complete with this answer, I wrote my parents to register me in the Faculty of Agriculture at the Hebrew University (one of the global top 100 universities).

John Lennon wrote, "*Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans.*"

I never planned to study agriculture or specialize in crop protection. It happened because it seemed like the right thing to do back then.

Yet, when 15 years later, I left the academy with a Ph.D. degree and plenty of knowledge; I looked with satisfaction at the moment when I decided to choose the field of agriculture as my main subject and life focus.

VIBRANT ECO-SYSTEM

In Israel, many sons and daughters of farmers decided not to practice farming and instead to study agriculture and related studies.

The percentage of farmers in the Israeli population is continuously dropping. It is now about 0.1%, yet they produce enough food to support the country's population and export a fair amount.

It is not a result of a miracle. When you look at Israel's ecosystem, you will find that researchers, experts, and workers in the academy, government and the private sector related to agriculture outnumber the 0.1% of farmers.

Agriculture is an industry, and as such, it is changing fast and taking new directions. To advance the agro sector in non-developed economies, we need a vibrant advanced, and developed ecosystem.

There is no one more knowledgeable and suitable to help farmers than the sons and daughters of farmers, who studied and became experts. After they studied and turned into scientists, entrepreneurs, business people, extension services, decision-makers, etc., they become part of the agro-ecosystem. They are then better situated and equipped to help farmers and, through it, the national economy.

HOPE

Global climate change, pandemics, and wars, e.g., heat waves, COVID-19, and Russia-Ukraine, will continue to jeopardize the food security of billions and are expected to increase in frequency and magnitude.

By properly using and improving agriculture, we can overcome those expected catastrophes and steadily bring solutions to many global sicknesses.

To achieve that, we already have more than enough farmers. What we miss the most are many more experts to develop more knowledge and technologies and then to transfer those to many farmers.

After studying and specializing, the sons and daughters of farmers are the fittest to carry that job after.

With many more scholars, experts, entrepreneurs, startups, and business people, we stand a chance to change the agro sector faster and bring the positive solution the world is waiting for.

Allow me to ask you now – do you understand and agree with my opening statements?
IF YES, why don't you join the forces.

JOIN THE FORCE

I love farming and enjoy the peace of mind it provides me by seeing my produce on the trees and in the markets. I am sure that as a farmer, I could have supplied good quality products to my clients; grown in a healthy environment. However, in this case, my life impact would be minimal.

“Crossing the lines” and thinking about how I can help farmers, consumers, the environment, economy, health, sustainability, livelihood, etc., repeatedly pushed me to unfamiliar spaces and domains.

Still, I hope my contribution and impact are more significant in what I am doing now versus the alternative of me being a farmer.

To have a better future, we must step out of our comfort zone into the unknown, for the known in the agro-industry was once sufficient but is not so anymore.

We now need people ready to deal with global macro challenges and do it by example.

I love dealing with significant challenges and hence I feel lucky doing what I am doing now, as the world and the agro sector challenges are immense and may be the most significant we ever knew.

This is an open invitation to you, your friends, and the young people around you to join the agro sector not as farmers but as those who can support farmers and facilitate the transformation they and we must take.

This is the way to IMPACT, do good, and save our planet from ourselves and our harmful activities.

I highly recommend you to choose one of the following professions or others related to agriculture:

Plant sciences (there are many), Plant protection, Biology, Soil sciences, Water Engineering, Business, Impact investor, Government policy maker, Import/Export, Extension Services, etc.

TAKEAWAYS

- **WE CAN DO** with fewer farmers and still produce enough food to feed the world.
- **WE NEED** many more experienced experts in the agricultural and adjacent domains.
- **AGRICULTURE**, if nurtured well, is not the problem but the solution to many global challenges.

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***** *Mental and Economic Freedom Are Interconnected* *****

See you soon,

Nimrod



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P.S.

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "[Why Are Mental Barriers Responsible For Global Poverty, And How Can We Change It.](#)"

Link to [recent articles](#).

P.P.S.

Please look at the video series, "[The Agricultural Gap](#)." With short videos, mostly 2 to 4 minutes long, I explain the historical roots of the agricultural gap between Africa and Western countries.

I see this video series as "uncompleted," as I am waiting to gain more confidence before completing the chapters with The Solution, as I perceive it.

If you like it, don't forget to **share** it with those who need to see it and **Subscribe**.

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