



## **WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISRAELI-AFRICAN COLLABORATION AND THE AFRICAN AGRO SECTOR PROSPERITY?**

*“If you fear something or someone, get to know it better.”*

With great sadness, I say this;

Cooperation between Israel and Africa on agricultural issues is scarce and almost negligible.

The meaning?

Africans' annual economic losses are in the hundreds of \$ billion and Israel's in the billions \$.

That is reflected in everyday life, including the continuity of unnecessary human suffering associated with poverty, lack of food, climate change, slower scientific progress, education, equality, etc.

All that, while Israel holds solutions that can convert the above-described situation into prosperity.

Improving the Africa-Israel relationship and enhancing the cooperation is in the hands of the African-Israeli people and poses the most significant agricultural business opportunity for the parties.

## **A SENIOR AFRICAN BUSINESS DELEGATION**

Because of the very little business activity between Africa and Israel, I am glad to participate in any activity that can bring a positive change.

This week I took part in meetings with a senior African business delegation to Israel whose interest focused on finance, **technology, agriculture**, energy, and pharma.

The delegation tour was sponsored by AJC (American Jewish Committee) and well organized by the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, Israel's largest business organization.

It means that we have a perfect triangle of America-Africa-Israel. This triangle should and can be leveraged to increase business cooperation.

When I arrived at the welcome meeting for the delegation, I did not know what to expect, and I was more than a bit skeptical about the possible results. After all, I have good reasons to feel so after decades of business stagnation with little activity.

However, as I am ready to make any effort to advance the Israel-Africa relationship, I arrived prepared to give it a chance.

## **BIZ REFLECTION**

All skepticism vanished once we met and started to talk about each other's activities directly and exchange ideas.

I was impressed by the openness and self-criticism of the business delegation members, including during the EY (Ernst & Young) opening business seminar of the delegation visit.

**This came in addition to a natural expressed desire to change, change, and change. We all know that no change can take place unless you want it.**

**African business people want change, and they want it now!**

From my previous columns, you know that when I am in Africa, I don't get to spend much time with the business community, as I am primarily in the fields, with the farmers and the value chain partners.

For that reason, meeting and listening to African business people was exciting (especially given my initial skepticism).

When I summarize my impression and reflection from those meetings, I see extreme goodwill and positive energy to do and CHANGE the African agro sector.

However, this lacks a clear direction of HOW to execute the CHANGE and constructively use their passion to turn their expressed desire into reality.

They continuously talk about Africa's POTENTIAL, but potential alone is nothing without adequate plan and execution.

Many other issues arise, among others:

- \* A wish to focus on staple crops.
- \* Fear of government involvement.
- \* The view of Agriculture = Risk.
- \* Focus on marketing to the local market instead of exporting.
- \* But the saddest was to hear they don't expect to see a national change in their lifetime.

Although they were all businesspersons, they tended not to view agriculture as a valuable business to increase one's fortune. Many view agriculture as a food source for the hungry people in their countries.

The reality, however, shows that when you focus on the **business** aspects of agriculture, you grow and produce more, and it becomes abundant. The opposite happens when you approach agriculture with the one goal of feeding the hungry.



# REALIZATION

I had two or even three meetings with some delegation members one day apart. In between, they had a chance to see, hear, understand and experience the Israeli agriculture ecosystem better.

As a result, I could see how their perspective on Israel changed and their view of achieving the same business results back at home.

In general, in the first one-two days, the delegation members were overwhelmed by the great interest from Israeli entrepreneurs and companies. Perhaps they felt like a child in a candy store.

However, as they learned more about Israel, their perception of the easiness of transferring technology, which then turned into immediate improved income/profit, has moderated.

As it dawned on them that “buying technology” is not equal to “buying business success,” **they sink into deeper thinking of what it truly takes to bring the change they wish for.**



## THE MESSAGE

The delegation members may see themselves as "businesspeople," but in my eyes, they are "Africa's young leadership" who has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring the desired CHANGE.

As such, my message to them was simple and direct –

## **1) Leadership.**

- \*It is your responsibility to bring a better future. No one else will do it if you won't.
- \*Don't expect change to be fast, easy, and free of hurdles.
- \*Technology is one piece of the puzzle for becoming an agricultural superpower.
- \*Don't expect magic because there isn't any. It is mostly hard work!
- \*Do things differently. More of the same didn't work until now and is not the solution for the future.
- \*Africa, including your country, hardly captures 1% of its potential. Think of agriculture as a long-term, highly profitable business where everybody involved will benefit.

## **2) Turning poverty into prosperity** requires a combination of three components:

- \*BUSINESS MODEL
- \*ECOSYSTEM
- \*TECHNOLOGY/SERVICES

## **3) Agriculture is a diverse business** with millions of producers and billions of “hungry” consumers (buyers).

## **4) Agro-technology is abundant** and far more sophisticated than what most African farmers need.

## **5) Start a new venture/project** by ensuring you have the proper business models and ecosystem. Only then be concerned with choosing the appropriate advanced technologies.

## **6) Business models and ecosystems are not one size fits all; they require tailor-made per case.**

# BALANCE

Hearing the harsh words the businesspersons spoke of their governments left me uneasy.

Although I understand where this is coming from, I also know that we can't change and advance the agro sector of non-developed economies without government intervention.

It was Wednesday evening, 21:56, when my phone rang, and the screen showed Mr. Temesgen Admassu – Ethiopian Embassy.

Since Mr. Ezi Rapaport, the CEO of Empower Africa, introduced me to the Ethiopian Ambassador in Israel, H.E. Reta Alemu Nega, we have met quite a few times, and it is always Mr. Admassu that coordinates those meetings.

I hear the familiar voice of Admassu saying, *“Hello, Dr. Nimrod. I am sorry for the late hour. But the Ambassador would like you to meet a ministerial delegation tomorrow morning. Can you please make it?”*

I learned to respect the Ethiopian Ambassador and not to doubt his judgment. I immediately answered, *"Of course. If the Ambassador invites, I am coming."*

Then I get a message with the names and titles of the official delegation. I am impressed!

No	Name	Organization	Title
			Delegation 1- Official
1	H.E. Muferihat Kamil Ahmad	MoLS	Minister
2	H.E. Nigussu Tilahun G/Amanuel	MoLS	State Minister
3	H.E. Dr. Bayissa Badada Badasa	MINT	State Minister
4	Ms. Mekelya Bargicho Hussein	MoLS	Assistant to Minister
5	Mr. Selamyehun Adefrise Haile	MINT	Director General
6	Mrs. Alemtsehay Dersolign Legesse	MoLS	Director

I didn't have much preparation time, so I used every minute I had to go through the presentation.

Then, the schedule changes, and it seems we're going to have the meeting over lunch. I am impressed again, as I note that those "public servants" maximize the short time available by not stopping for lunch.

Minister H.E. Muferihat Kamil Ahmad and H.E. the Ambassador asked me to begin the presentation.

I see they are tired after hours of meetings, hungry, and have a short time available. I put aside the presentation as the meeting begins.

I listened to the Minister as she presented the delegation's goal on this trip and their strategic goals in Ethiopia.

I have heard it many times before, and yet, again, I am shocked when they share that 80% of the country's population's livelihood depends on agriculture.

The Minister points out the necessity of transforming the economy and agriculture.

I use this opportunity to share my view that no transformation is possible without applying and combining the three Pillars of The Israeli Model:

Business model,

Ecosystem, and

Technology/services.

The Minister and her team are attentive; they want to bring a change, no less than the businesspersons I met earlier this week, and work hard to achieve this.

The meeting ends with big smiles reflecting our understanding to continue the discussion, knowing that there is hope and the future will be as good as we will dream it and turn it to.



From left: Minister Muferihat Kamil Ahmad, Dr. Nimrod Israely, Ambassador Reta Alemu Nega, State Minister Nigussu Tilahun G/Amanuel, State Minister Dr. Bayissa Badada Badasa.

## THE CONNECTING THREAD

Every meeting I had this week, I began by saying -

*“Whether we will or will not have a business together is not relevant to the fact that you must participate in the [International Conference on Business Models In Agriculture \(IBMA\)](#), 27-29 2023, Rwanda.*

*If you are not there, you are giving up 99% of your potential future income in Africa and other non-developed economies.”*

We can't continue doing the same things and hope for the future to be different from the unsatisfying present.

Business models are the very foundation for an improved agri-business industry. There is no point in investing in agriculture unless you understand how farmers and value chain partners – ALL - will increase their income.

We also need to improve the trust and relationship between Governments, the Business community, and farmers, as their cooperation is the foundation of the ecosystem.

This week, in Israel and away from Africa, we stepped forward to ensure a better future for the African agro sector.

No country can afford to be left behind. Slow or fast, eventually, everyone will walk this path of change. If so, then why wait? Take the step now!

Legacy belongs to those who walk the talk. Start walking.

## TAKEAWAYS

- **BUSINESS PERSONS AND GOVERNMENTS** want to bring change and advance the African agro sector.
- **THERE IS A RECOGNITION** that technology alone is not sufficient to create the desired change.
- **THE THREE PILLARS** of the Israeli Model; business models, ecosystem, technology/services.
- **GREATER COOPERATION** between the agro-ecosystem parties is necessary to succeed.
- **IBMA CONFERENCE** is a kick-start place for the long-needed discussions on business models.

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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, "[How To Jump-Start The Agro Sector Without Crushing The National Economy, As Sri Lanka Did?](#)"

Link to [recent columns](#).

**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***