



SHOULD MORAL CONSIDERATIONS BE PART OF AGRO-BUSINESS?

[AND WHY I DON'T SELL TECHNOLOGIES]

"Business without morals is immoral and deceiving."

Business moves the wheels of the global economy. The modern economy cannot be sustained without business!

If everything is about business, is there a place for moral values in business, particularly in the agro-business?

THE DRUG DEALERS

Like it or not, drug dealers are "business" people. They offer their products without asking the customers

- What is the problem?
- What are your goals and dreams?
- What do you want to achieve?
- Why do you need it?
- What are your skills?
- What are your income and profitability?
- How will the product help you?
- Do you know how to maximize the benefits of the product?
- Do you have the financial ability to purchase the product?

Furthermore, a drug dealer does not care about the future of his clients and therefore does not advise on

- Their health
- Their mental strength
- Meaning of continued use of the product
- The feasibility of the investment
- Their payment ability
- Expected ROI
- Alternatives
- Pros and cons analysis
- Long-term impact

The only goal of drug dealers is – to maximize their income (by having more clients and selling more to each).

Drug dealers must sell as many drugs as possible to reach “their goal,” where any drug will suffice.

If it means that to make money, their customers will suffer, be poor, hungry, sick, homeless, or turn into thieves and robbers with no foreseen future, then so let it be; they couldn’t care less.

THE AGRO-BUSINESS

Three agro-business stories.

The salesman - During the years I served as the crop protection officer, I purchased pesticides from many agrochemical companies. One of the companies had a field service person, exceptionally dedicated.

Once a week, on Monday morning, he would call me and ask how much I had purchased of his company's pesticides in the previous week. He then would continue, asking for this week's planned orders, offering a "special price" for those.

This guy was never interested in my professional or business results or problems; he was only interested in maximizing his sales.

The expert - A month ago, I spoke with an expert working on an African agricultural demonstration farm.

The expert explicitly said that when the project runs out of support budget, it will immediately collapse and perish. According to him, the project is economically unsustainable, and the locals don't have the professional know-how to sustain it.

The expert cared only about getting done what was needed to ensure the funds kept steaming in; he cared nothing about the project and farmers' success and future.

Programs - There are multi-billion \$ national/continental support agro programs. Those programs provide small-hold farmers subsidies and funds to purchase advanced technologies and chemicals, mainly from big, influential, multi-national agrochemical companies.

During all those years, farmers remained poor, with hardly any improvement, while \$ billions kept coming into the bank accounts of those agrochemical companies.

Question: If the agrochemical companies (and others) would work with small-hold farmers without caring about their situation and regardless of the results (which are as poor as the farmers), then what is the difference between their business approach to that of drug dealers?

Is it moral to provide technologies or services **you know** will not get your buyers closer to their goals? Is it moral they purchase as a result of pressure?

“VALUES AND MORALITY ARE NOT A BURDEN TO THE BUSINESS; THEY ARE THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH A BUSINESS EXISTS. OTHERWISE, WE ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM DRUG DEALERS.”

MORALITY IS THE DIFFERENCE

Some think that integrating ethics and moral considerations into business harms business results. The truth couldn't be further from that.

Meanwhile, the reality is that by incorporating moral values in businesses, more often than not, we improve our business results. For example, according to the Corruption Index, countries with a low level of corruption are more successful from an economic business point of view (see Corruption Index).

Hence, running a business where decisions are "free" from moral values or the employees' and company's stated values differ could be a fatal business mistake.

Below are two examples of events in which I had to make a critical decision that included business and moral components.

Example 1

In 2000, Israeli fruit growers sprayed pesticides for fruit fly control once a week.

The agrochemical companies delivered the message that only pesticide sprays could effectively control fruit flies, and no other alternative was likely effective enough.

Like the agrochemical companies, the experts and farmers were sure controlling fruit flies without pesticide sprays was impossible.

Some optimists dared to dream of reducing 30% of fruit fly sprays by using traps.

Farmers' optimistic dream was to purchase their (poisonous) pesticides for a lower price.

I had in mind something else, a dream of a technology that would allow adequate crop protection without pesticide sprays. This would benefit farmers, public health, and the future of agriculture in Israel and elsewhere.

I began developing a technology and protocol for fruit fly control to meet my goals and plans for the agro-industry. I set the expectation high (!) and established a company named Biofeed to fulfill my dream, desire, and vision.

Developing the technology and protocol took years and a lot of effort. It took even longer to change farmers' and experts' mental attitudes toward non-spray alternatives.

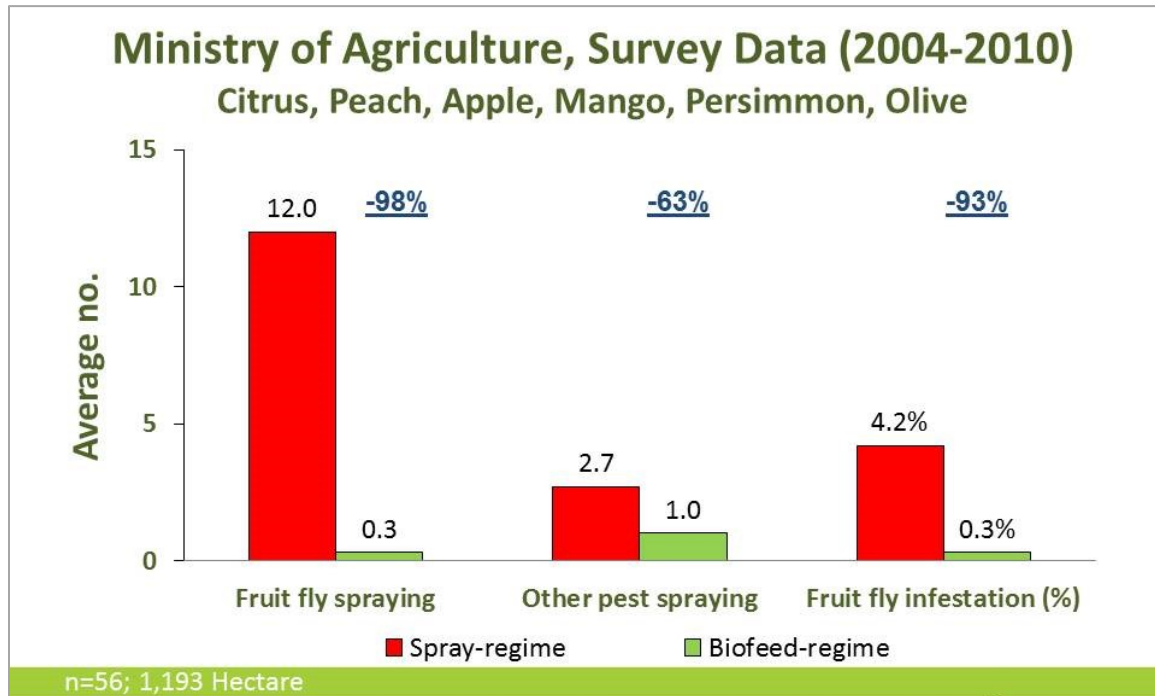
Ten years later, the survey results presented:

- A) 98% decrease in sprays for fruit fly control,**
- B) 63% decrease of sprays for other pests** (thanks to improved bio-control), and
- C) 93% less infestation.**

Remember, we were working with some of the best fruit growers in the world and still managed to reduce, **without sprays (!)**, fruit infestation by 93%!

These results are not only positive from a professional perspective but from a business perspective as well.

Biofeed has created a sustainable and significant business advantage and brought considerable benefits to its clients/farmers (no more spray of poisonous chemicals).



Example 2

In 2017, in the frame of the *Grand Challenges Israel* competition, Biofeed concluded the development of the *Freedome* - a crop protection solution for the #1 global fruit pest, *Bactrocera dorsalis*.

At this point, if Biofeed were like other agro-service and supplier companies, it would start selling its product over the shelf.

The Biofeed team noticed that when small-hold mango growers used the *Freedome*, they reduced infestation by 99% and sprays by 100%.

But that was not all; the "side effect" of that reduced infestation was an income increase of "only" 200% (typically from 500\$ to 1,000\$ per hectare).

This sounds too good to be true. But the reality is that when we compare small-hold mango growers' income (\$500/Ha) to that of Israeli growers (\$50,000/Ha), we realize that the small-hold farmers' income increase was from 1% to 2% vs. Israeli growers.

The growers were happy with the results, and so did I. But at this moment, I knew something the small-hold farmers didn't; I knew they increased their income by only 1% versus Israeli growers,

and I was sure that with a bit more help, those small-hold farmers could continue and increase their income to 3%, 4%, 5%... 10%, and possibly more.

I was facing a dilemma where I had two options.

Low-risk Option 1: Immediately start selling the Freedom and monetize Biofeed's recent technological success while enabling farmers to double (X2) their income.

High-risk Option 2: Postpone the Freedom sales while developing an uncharted path enabling farmers to increase their income by X10 to X15 folds and escape poverty for good.

No one but me knew about the second option, so no one would criticize me if I took Option 1, as everyone expected, while taking Option 2 may expose me to harsh criticism and blames.

I was the only one aware of the options. If I took Option one, everybody would be happy, and no one would criticize me.

While if I choose Option 2, the risk is high (it still requires a lot of development and investments), and monetization is again postponed.

However, only in Option 2 do farmers have an excellent chance to escape poverty and see substantially increased income and long-term success.

Is this a business or a moral decision, or a mixed one?

Which of the Options should I choose (which would you choose)?

The process took me many months before I reached a final decision: Option 2.

I choose to create the most significant long-term economic impact for small-hold farmers' benefit.

The decision was business-oriented, but I wouldn't reach this conclusion if I had not used moral values in the decision-making process.

This decision resulted in developing the Dream Valley business model and later founding a company with the same name.

Dream Valley company had a clear vision and mission statement from the start that reflected its values and moral attitude.

"To improve farmers' livelihood by increasing quality production, free of bio and chemical hazards, grown in a safe, eco-friendly environment, to enable the consumers to enjoy better and healthier food and life."

Dream Valley Vision and Mission statement.

Dream Valley's novel approach model contains the three pillars of the Israeli agro model; Ecosystem, Business Model, and Technologies / Services.

It enables any farmer, even the very poor ones, accessibility and affordability to the Freedom technology (and protocol) and later other technologies.

What is the cost?

Annual low subscription fees. That's it!

The cost of technologies and services is deducted from the future income.

This way, farmers don't pay out-of-pocket expenses, which they usually can't afford.

What are the results?

In 2021 hundreds of small-hold Senegalese mango growers participating in a national pilot **doubled their income**, and Senegal **doubled** its mango export. All this in just one year!

That's it?

Mangos exported from the Dream Valley project were free of sprays or chemicals.

That's it?

There were no interceptions of infested fruits in shipments to Europe (no interception, no export ban).

That's it?

After long years of stagnation, Senegal's export to the EU grew from €12M to €24M.

That's it?

Should the program continue, farmers can keep increasing their income.

And that's it!?

Dream Valley can now be available in many more countries (based on business considerations).

In both examples, it was easier to stop at an earlier stage of the technology/business development and monetize our achievements had the goal been making money.

However, whenever I reached a challenging critical business decision, I looked for the answer in our moral values, as reflected in our vision and mission statement.

With moral support, the decision became easier and later helped me push my team and myself to cross yet another "impossible limit."

In retrospect, our moral values always heavily impacted our business decisions.

Somehow those moral-based business decisions always took into consideration farmers' points of view and always proved to be the right ones, even now when looking back from a distance.

MORALITY, VALUES, AND BUSINESS

Reality proved over and over again that technology alone is insufficient in getting small-hold farmers out of poverty into a life of prosperity.

I realized this after decades of working in agriculture and the agrotech industries.

Once I realized this, I decided we would sell technologies only to those we are sure could exploit the business benefits inherent in them.

In other cases (i.e., most cases), we will find ways to work with the client to ensure that the added value is maximized for their benefit.

This is why when you email me and ask for technologies (i.e., the Freedom units), you get a polite refusal with a short answer that it is provided only as part of the Dream Valley program.

The fact that we can sell a product or service to someone, even if he asks, doesn't mean we should or that it is moral.

Businesses without morals and values are like a body without a soul, something we don't want.

Integrating moral values into business decisions is good for business and necessary for a prosperous society.

In whatever position we are in, we have duties and obligations to ourselves, our company or organization, clients, customers, and society.

Does this make decisions more challenging and multidimensional?

Yes! But it also enables personal expression and creating a unique legacy, even in a world energized and motivated by money.

What comes first in your priorities, money or morals and values?

If Dream Valley's direction aligns with your moral values and business/investment interest, I invite you to contact us.

TAKEAWAYS

- **DON'T BECOME** "a drug dealer"; make moral decisions part of your business process.
- **DO GOOD** business without abusing the ignorance of others.
- **MORAL & HUMAN VALUES** will strengthen your business foundations.

* If you enjoyed the column, share it with friends/colleagues and share your insights with me.

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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, "[Is India Changing Its Attitude Toward Agriculture and Economic Development?](#)"

Link to [recent columns](#).

P.P.S.

[Start-Up Nation Central welcomes delegation of UN ambassadors for Israeli innovation](#)
(The Jerusalem Post)

P.P.P.S.

[The IBMA](#) conference provides the stage to share your experience with agriculture business models and learn from others.

P.P.P.P.S.

[Dream Valley](#) is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli model. Contact me if you view yourself as a potential investor, business partner, or client. [Email](#), +972-542523425 (WhatsApp/Text)

P.P.P.P.P.S.

Please look at the video series "[The Agricultural Gap](#)." I explain the historical roots of the agricultural gap between African and Western countries with short videos.

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, **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***