



THE POWER OF EXISTING SOLUTIONS: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN FIGHTING SMALLHOLDERS' POVERTY

"Developing Economies need a field-proven model for shifting smallholders from poverty to prosperity."

INNOVATION IS THE LAST RESORT

For the past 40 years, I have been involved and active with and in innovation. I have several patents, trademarks, and trade secrets with my name on them.

Hence, it may surprise you that when I set on a mission to solve a problem, I first look for "**existing solutions.**" Then only if there are none do I think of investing in "innovation."

Why do I prefer using *existing solutions*?

Because no matter what the project is, my goal remains the same; to have a good enough solution for the problem I am facing as fast and with as little investment and risk as possible.

Using existing, tested solutions saves me plenty of time, money, and... headaches. In short, I considerably reduce the risk of failure. As a business person, I always look to reduce risks.

Product/service **improvement** is also easier to introduce and implement in marketing.

In contrast, "**innovation**" of any kind is, by definition, inherently uncertain of the time and budget it will require, plus success is never promised.

In summary, innovation equals higher risks of failure and missing the goal.

For this reason, I invest a lot of time in studying a topic's history before I conclude that there is no "existing alternative" and our only option forward is through "innovation."

If you will remember nothing else from this column, please remember this –

Innovation is costly, timely, unpredictable, and risky. If an "existing alternative" is acceptable and good enough for your needs (as is or with adjustment), avoid the "innovation" path.

Why do I tell you this?

Because when we are unaware of or forget this role, we may unintentionally cause the ineffective use of costly resources and bring unnecessary human suffering.

And this is precisely what happened in the case of smallholders in developing economies.

THE SAD CASE OF SMALLHOLDERS

Worldwide, most poor and hungry people are small-hold farmers.

Solving poverty is the UN's #1 SDG.

Yet, we have reached no significant achievement after decades of effort and \$ billions of investments.

Could we miss-frame the poverty challenge?

Today - we frame the problem of poverty among smallholders as unique and different than anything we know, something radical as climate change that can't be solved without *technological innovation*.

We frame poverty as "a technological failure," as we mean to say, "*If only we had better technologies for smallholders, they wouldn't suffer poverty.*"

From here to the point that we **must** have “innovative technologies,” the road is short and direct.

The next stage would be a technological-oriented program, such as the AGRA program, emphasizing technologies as the primary tool to solve smallholders' poverty problems.

“Innovation” is timely, costly, and risky; it is visible that -

after decades of repeated efforts to solve poverty using "innovative technologies" and \$ billions of investments, smallholders have little progress to show.

Remember this statement;

If an “existing alternative” is acceptable and good enough for your needs, avoid the “innovation” path.

It is time for us to reframe poverty not as a “technological” failure or challenge but as a leadership failure in detecting the problem and not viewing it as an “old problem,” one with “existing solutions.”

EXISTING ALTERNATIVES

Is there a "field-tested" alternative(s) to smallholders' poverty challenge, one with many years of successful results and repetitions?

Let's start by defining the minimum we expect from any “existing alternatives”:

- **Track record** of shifting farmers from poverty to prosperity.
- **Proven** over many years with "repetitions."
- **Unrestricted** to limited conditions, e.g., culture, continent, crop, and climate.
- **Based on** replicable principles.

Note that “technological innovation” doesn't have a positive track record in shifting poor farmers to prosperity, e.g., the AGRA program.

Looking into existing alternatives, we find three groups of farmers who became prosperous though they began life in poverty.

Furthermore, in their inception, they had no access to “advanced technologies,” and two groups oppose "advanced technologies" to this day.

I refer by this to:

- **Monks** - Europe, from the early Middle Ages.
- **Amish** - America, from the 17th century.
- **Kibbutz** - Asia/Israel, from the early 20th century.

Though they had rough beginnings, those groups quickly practiced thriving agriculture with high expertise.

Throughout successive generations, they do not suffer poverty and hunger. On the contrary, they prosper, thrive, and are referred to with respect as ones we can learn from.

Though they physically exist in different geographies and times, they share several critical characteristics, some of which we call "principles."

Could those represent field-tested and proven "existing solutions" for shifting farmers from poverty to prosperity!?

Let's view some of those "Successful Agrarian-Communities Principles":

- ⇒ **Livelihood:** Agriculture plays a significant role in their lives. They rely on farming and agricultural practices for sustenance and economic stability.
- ⇒ **Community:** Practice communal living, where members reside in close-knit rural communities, tie their future together, and support each other.
- ⇒ **Sharing:** Resources and responsibilities are often shared among the community members.
- ⇒ **Simple lifestyle:** These communities emphasize simplicity and reject many aspects of modern life. They prioritize a modest and frugal lifestyle, avoiding excessive material possessions and luxuries.
- ⇒ **Unifying idea:** Communities are driven by strong ethical or religious beliefs that guide their way of life. They adhere to specific codes of conduct, traditions, and principles that influence their daily practices and interactions with the world.
- ⇒ **Unity - Separation from the outside world:** Exhibit a certain degree of separation from mainstream society. They intentionally create boundaries to preserve their distinct identities and control outside influences.
- ⇒ **Work results are business-oriented:** Emphasis the value of hard work and productivity. Members are expected to contribute actively to the community's well-being through culture/religion, farm labor, or collective economic ventures.

In many ways, the above-shared characteristics of those successful agro-communities remind the socio-economic structure of a village centuries ago, where the goal was the well-being and the survival of the community, and individuals are integral parts of it.

Note – though those communities thrive and economically prosper, their goal and mission was never economic prosperity.

They strive to sustain themselves economically, focusing on achieving their community goals and keeping their lifestyle.

Yet, thanks to being successful, they achieve more for the community and fulfill more for individuals in terms of goals and life quality.

The Monks, Amish, and Kibbutz provide the principles to transform the agro sector in developing countries, one community at a time.

Yes, there is an *existing solution*; it is available, accessible, and designed for poor small-hold farmers.

This “*existing solution*” has defined fundamental lifestyle principles and a positive long track record of success in shifting farmers from poverty to prosperity.

Growing up on a Kibbutz, I know it inside out and how effective this lifestyle is.

Yet, we don't copy any lifestyle and principles, even successful ones, “as is.” Instead, we design and tailor a dedicated model considering specific limitations, demands, goals, etc.

In any case, the outcome would be the same – a transformation from poverty to prosperity.

Remember this statement; **If an “existing alternative solution” is acceptable and good enough for your needs, avoid “innovation.”**

We have found the “existing alternative” that answers the four pre-request requirements.

Furthermore, we have applicable principles,

- ✓ **Track record** of shifting farmers from poverty to prosperity – YES.
- ✓ **Proven** over many years with “repetitions” – YES.
- ✓ **Unrestricted** to limited conditions, e.g., culture, continent, crop, and climate – YES.
- ✓ **Based on** replicable principles – YES.

BOTTOM LINE

ONE

It is no coincidence that agro-communities that are well organized and led by a vision and a mission statement are successful. This is regardless of the geographic location, technology, or starting point.

TWO (most critical!)

Agro-communities that start with the **WHY**, Values, Vision, Mission, and **a common goal** hold a higher chance to thrive and prosper. This positively impacts their economy and practically changes their living standards.

Do you remember the three pillars of a thriving agro sector, which make the Agricultural Package?

- Ecosystems
- Business models
- Technology/services

Though we have yet to discuss it, Monks, Amish, and Kibbutz each operate under distinctive, specifically tailored Ecosystems and compatible Business Models.

At the same time, technology is never **THE** key “game changer” or predictor for their future economic, social, or other success. It is rather “a tool” they use to make their work more efficient and effective.

If we want to transform rural communities from poverty to prosperity, the last thing we should do is deal with technology.

Instead, start with the WHY, Values, Vision, and Mission. Then, continue to the community Ecosystems (e.g., structure) and Business Models.

You can make the community transformation journey by yourself or get the support of one of the three paths:

OPTION 1: Educate yourself by attending the 2024 [International Conference On Business Models In Agriculture](#) (IBMA 2024), where the theme is “**From Solitary Poor Individuals To Organized-Prosperous Communities.**”

OPTION 2: The Dream Valley Package concept contains parts of the cooperating community model and can be the first step in a long-term transition program.

OPTION 3: Implement an agrarian community transformation full-scale national model project (The Dream Valley program on steroids).

Write to me (reply mail or to nisraely@biofeed.co.il) and share briefly about your project/action and receive a PDF of “*From Poor Individuals To Thriving Cooperative Agro-Communities: Outline For A Transformation Plan.*”

TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

- **THERE ARE** *Existing Solutions* to enhance the shift of smallholders from poverty to prosperity.
- **EXISTING SOLUTIONS** to shift smallholders from poverty to prosperity are in the form of *Successful Agrarian-Communities Principles*.
- **THRIVING** agro-communities share a common WHY, Values, Vision, and Mission.
- **TECHNOLOGY** is never the “game-changing” factor in determining the success level of an agro-community.
- **THE AGRO-COMMUNITY** ecosystems (including its structure) and tailored business models are critical to economic success.

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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, [A Blueprint To Transform Communities of Impoverished Smallholders Into Thriving Agro-Communities](#).

Link to [recent columns](#).

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)

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