



## **IS THERE A ROOM FOR OPTIMISM FOR SMALLHOLDERS' FUTURE?**

*"Look at where you were; now look at where you are. Respect yourself for the distance you've made."*

## **THE END OF A CONCEPT IS THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER**

Until 1988, to control the Codling moth (*Cydia pomonella*), the #2 pest after fruit flies, we sprayed the Kibbutz apples orchards seven times a year with the highly toxic organo-phosphate, Azinphos-methyl (Guthion).

We did so because we were sure that pesticide sprays are part of advanced quality agriculture and part of being a leading farm. That pushed me to become an expert in pesticide sprays.

Then, from March to October 1989, we ran a unique experiment in our orchards; instead of toxic sprays to control the Codling moth, we applied harmless pheromones using a “male disruption” protocol.

A lot was at stake, to be more precise, 1,000 tons of top-quality apples worth \$1M and the annual income of a big team of growers.

I was under a lot of stress, doing my best to ensure everything will be as good as possible. But it was the first time, and first times are always surprising.

Finally, the harvest ended, and I could summarize: infestation remained low as it was while sprays decreased by 90%. The first times are always surprising.

When November came, after months of harvest and tension, I finally experienced a relief mixed with joy, disbelief, and astonishment.

The disbelief and astonishment appeared because we couldn't imagine agriculture without poisonous sprays, but now I realized it was possible!

Now that the season was over and I knew it was possible to control the Codling moth with nearly no sprays, it was as if someone took a big heavy rock off my chest, a rock I never knew was there.

This success went "viral," and today, all Israeli apple growers use pheromones to control the Codling moth.

**This event inspired me to think about the unthinkable: if I was able in one year to reduce 90% of the Codling moth sprays, why can't I do it with the #1 pest, fruit flies, and then with other pests?**

Years passed, I learned many more lessons and did a Ph.D. in agriculture (crop protection).

**Inspired** by earlier success in controlling pests without sprays, I founded Biofeed, which, based on my research, developed a spray-free solution for fruit flies, the #1 group of pests in tens of crops.

**The solution, named Freedom, reduced 100% of sprays and 99% of fruit damage versus "best practices."**

**Biofeed did what most people consider to this day as impossible, enabling farmers to grow fruits WITHOUT SPRAYS!**

***“HOW CAN YOU LEAD A MEANINGFUL CHANGE WITHOUT BELIEVING IN THE IMPOSSIBLE?”*** Nimrod Israely

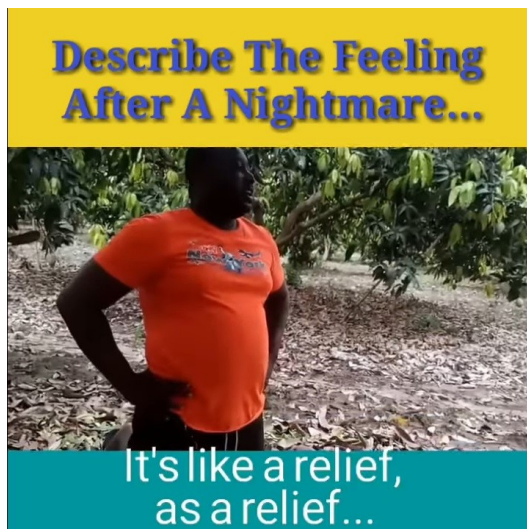
# PROBLEMS INSPIRE SOLUTIONS

The success of the Biofeed solution inspired me to think, *“If it is possible to have agriculture without sprays, why can’t we have farmers without poverty.”*

My life experience taught me that every positive change starts by detecting a problem.

The greater the problem is, the greater the happiness it would bring when removed (solved).

Problems and challenges motivate me; when I overcome those, I get the most excellent satisfaction. When I help others overcome their grand challenges, I get double pleasure, first from providing help and second from participating in such great moments of joy.



[A farmer's joy \(video\)](#). He just discovered that he would not lose 80% of his yield to fruit flies, but **99% less**, all without spray.

That is not all; as a next step toward the answer to the question *“Why can’t we have farmers without poverty,”* I established Dream Valley.

Dream Valley helps farmers grow high-quality produce and sell it in premium markets. Dream Valley does this, but it’s not who we are.

Dream Valley is about getting farmers to feel happiness and recharge them with plenty of hope, which we do by increasing their profits by tens of percent.

My work is in the "fixing department" - "fixing" crop protection, "fixing" farmers' poverty, "fixing" food quality, etc. Besides the apparent monetary reward, I get rewarded when seeing farmers' happiness.

In Dream Valley, we remember that there is no good without evil and no joy without problems; to get farmers' joy, we help fix their problems.

And that brings us to another point: **How do you “fix” a problem?**

Minor problems you can "fix" with some extra \$, but the big problems require a change. Start by changing how you think and only then how others think.

Yes, change is a process that always starts with a few, then comes the early adopters, then the “others” until it is accepted as “the new standard.”

## **Winston Churchill**

***"TO IMPROVE IS TO CHANGE; TO BE PERFECT IS TO CHANGE OFTEN."***

But it's not easy to change because people fear change, even if they are living in misery or poverty.

People resist change because they fear the risk that joins it, like I feared when experimenting with the pheromone control to replace sprays.

Yet, is there a way of improving things and life without changes, i.e., risks?

## **EVOLUTION**

From an evolutionary point of view, we are built to prefer the known and familiar over the unknown and unfamiliar hidden in "changes," which represents **risk**.

Hence, the power and importance we relate to tradition, culture, and habits.

Evolution has encoded (programmed) into our DNA to do our utmost to avoid risks.

Since "change" is automatically a synonym for “risk,” we make special efforts to avoid changes.

That worked well for us, *Homo sapiens*, for most of our 40K years of evolutionary history. During that period, people did the same as their parents, and their children did the same.

After all, behavioral and practice changes are uncommon in the animal kingdom; when did you hear of a lion suggesting to his friends, "Let's change the hunting strategy our parents taught us."

But our evolution has turned from mainly biological to cultural, technological, and behavioral for millennia.

The roles are the same as in "biological evolution"; you disappear if you don't evolve and improve. But now, with the tech, cultural, behavioral, etc., "evolution," things happen far faster.

In the age of technology and knowledge, you risk your present and future if you don't change fast.

We are born to fear change (risk), while modern lives demand rapid change, or one will be left behind and suffer the consequences, e.g., poverty and hunger.

Taking daily risks is what investors do for a living, saying, "*The higher the risk, the higher the gain.*"

But that is not all; evolution is more complex than fear of risk. Evolution gave us the gift of compassion, empathy, the ability to "feel" others, and the need to help those in pain to avoid it.

How do we help others to avoid risk and pain?

Today's solutions to "risks" and "pains" are through **innovation**, though "innovation" is a change that we identify as "risk."

**If we want to avoid the risks and pains of poverty, hunger, inequality, global warming, etc., we must innovate and apply that innovation. That means that we must accept that risk is part of success.**

There is no way other than innovation to achieve those goals.

This is a matter of things: we are programmed to avoid change, i.e., innovation, but nowadays, **TO AVOID RISKS, WE MUST USE INNOVATION.**

How do we balance the risk involved in not changing with that involved in changing?

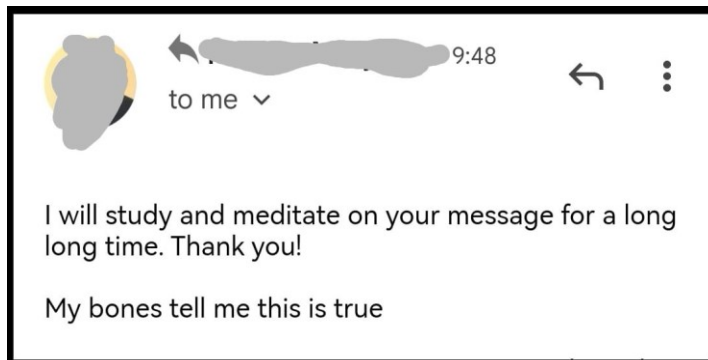
There is no perfect answer, but we know those who do not innovate, and change are left behind and suffer more than others.

**The agro sector, particularly in developing countries, is less prone to innovation and changes.**

Without innovation, we cannot correctly deal with global challenges such as smallholders' poverty and hunger.

Note that "innovation" is not limited to technologies but is as vast as the ocean and includes cultural, social, methods, protocols, practices, behavioral, etc.

Big or small, every change and innovation begins with one person ready to consider other options, thinking, "*Maybe things will be better if we do things differently.*"



A change starts with one person ready to consider other options.

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

When I think of change through innovation in developing economies, I remember the following:

- **Agriculture** is a conservative sector.
- **Over 50%** of the workforce is often involved in agriculture.
- **The recent** history of change through innovation for smallholders is primarily **negative**, e.g., AGRA and World Bank, which is why we established the [IBMA conference](#).
- **Many view** poverty and hunger among smallholders as a "*force majeure*," which always was and always will be.
- **I remember** how, for many years, I thought smallholders were to be blamed for their poverty.
- **I remember** the long and painful process I experienced **before** realizing that smallholders' poverty is not the fault of the farmers nor their government (If you ask, "Then who is responsible?" that is a good question for another column).

When I remember the above, I am more forgiving and understanding to others who keep believing that "*Just a little bit more of the same (i.e., tech and funds) and everything will be fine.*"

I understand why change is coming slowly.

I understand the disbelief and distrust.

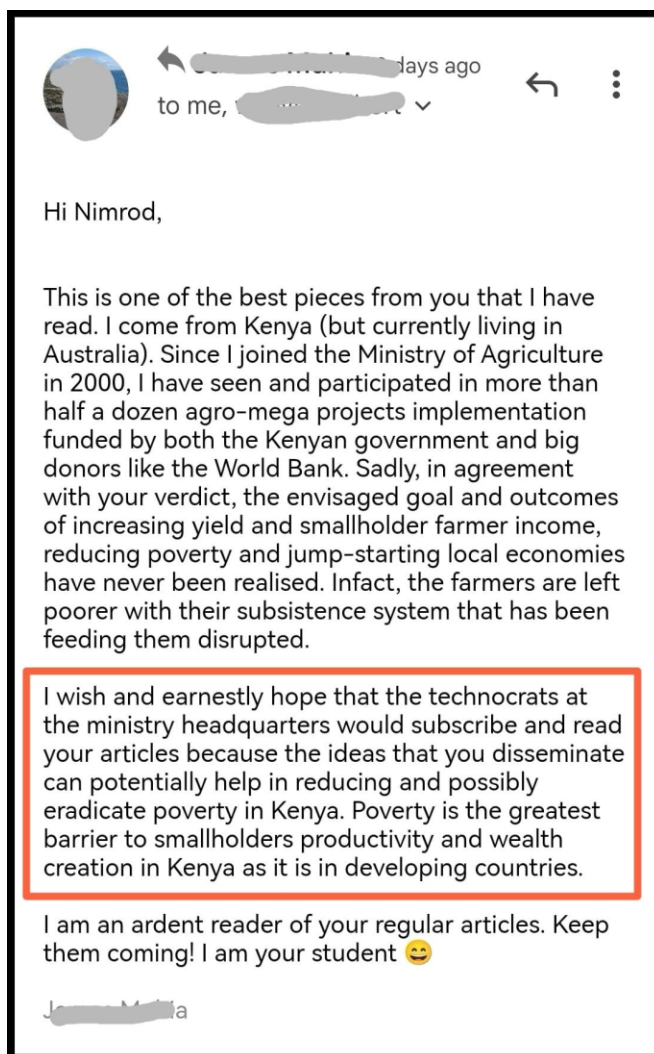
I am almost surprised when I get a message from someone thanking me and stating that they finally start seeing things differently or wishing they were younger so they wouldn't waste decades on worthless activities.

When I remember the above, I see myself lucky to have endured that mist of misconception before reaching critical insights.

I accept that I was lucky to be in the right place and time to notice specific problems and connect them to tested working solutions, which I was fortunate to know firsthand.

For example, I was lucky to be born on a Kibbutz, which gave me a fresh perspective on agriculture.

I was “lucky” to have parents who began life with nothing, one of whom was a holocaust survivor whose beginning was worse than anyone could imagine.



A change accelerates when one acknowledges and accepts the problem and solution and sees the main obstacle in public and decision awareness.

# WHY THINGS ARE BETTER THAN EVER?

Based on human evolution and history, I know the agro sector in developing economies has left little place for trust, and the fear of risking and losing their little is the primary motivation source.

I have no illusions or expectations for a fast change in the agro sector of developing economies, **mainly because the national level is not ready yet.**

My expectations are low from experts, stakeholders, decision-makers, investors, and businesspeople to swiftly adopt a novel concept different from the one they know and use.

Studies show that experts are the late adopters of new concepts utterly different from what they are experts in.

However, my expectations are high from the non-biased public and the non-experts. They are free of prejudice or conflict of interests; when something makes sense, they realize it.

## **Why things are better than ever?**

Things are always in their worst state when you are heading in the wrong direction, confident that the solution is over the corner.

Well, that is about to change.

**We are now at a turning point, understanding we went the wrong way realizing we have been wasting \$ billions for decades, achieving nothing other than increased mistrust and frustrated poorer farmers.**

**However, we are blessed for finding "the path to prosperity."**

Our situation was never better, for we finally acknowledged we were wrong, and it seems we have a safe path to prosperity.

# SUCCESS!?

If you are looking for hundreds of millions of smallholders that will overnight shift from poverty to become part of the middle class, this is not the "success" I refer to, though this would come too, in time.

In the case of the #1 UN SDG, poverty, "success" is more subtle.



“Success” resembles more the change of mind, the opening of eyes to a possibly different and better future, like I had when using pheromones and realizing sprays are not a necessity; we can do without them, and we can do better.

“Success” is when one is more open to hearing, learning, and implementing innovative concepts that are not more of the same, *“I will study and meditate on... My bones tell me this is true.”*

“Success” is when someone highly experienced says, *“I wish and earnestly hope that the technocrats at the ministry headquarters would subscribe and read your articles because the ideas that you disseminate can potentially help in reducing and possibly eradicating poverty in Kenya. Poverty is the greatest barrier to smallholders productivity and wealth creation in Kenya as it is in developing countries.”*

“Success” is when you establish a conference, like the IBMA, that defies the “accepted” approach that reduces the challenge of poverty among smallholders to technologies, funds, and capacity building (whatever that means), and now is celebrating its second event.

“Success” is those **little things, vibrations** that signal that things are not as always; something changes underneath the surface.

“Success” begins with one person who changes his attitude, and we now have thousands.

The boat began moving; peoples' minds are open, and the social and business environment was more positive and ready for novel concepts than ever.

When we detect those vibrations, we can be sure the earthquake will follow, though we can't know the exact time.

I am optimistic about the future of smallholders in developing economies because, for the first time –

- **We know** that smallholders' poverty is unrelated to – technologies and funds.
- **We understand** the foundation for a healthy agro sector is its three pillars: the Package - ecosystems, business models, and technologies/services.
- **We have** documented success stories when applying the three pillars correctly to the poor Israeli farmers (1900 – 2000) and recently with the mango small-hold growers of Senegal.
- **When the Package** is appropriately designed and applied, improvement (change) is immediate, enormous, and unmistakable.
- **We have** the trust of big organizations/governments that support the *International Conference on Business Models In Agriculture* (IBMA) and the belief of action people active in Africa.
- **There is** a tremendous public interest, as reflected on social networks, particularly LinkedIn (40K followers).
- **We have** experts who understand that the barrier to advancing smallholders is not in more tech or funds but the knowledge that decision-makers should acquire - *“I wish and*

*earnestly hope that the technocrats at the ministry headquarters would subscribe and read your articles...*"

- **As reflected** by big food chains/supermarkets, consumers are looking forward to this change.

We were blind, and now we see. We were deaf; now we hear. We were silent; now we talk. We were disabled, and we began walking.

At first, it looks as if there is no change, then you hear something, and then another something, and before you know it, everything is changed.

This was the case in the Amazon commerce revolution, the social networks revolution, the smartphone (iPhone) revolution, and the A.I. revolution led by Chat GPT.

**This will be the case with the small-hold farmers' prosperity revolution led by Dream Valley.**

Do you see the better future as clear as I do?

Be patient, act, and do the right things; you shall receive your return in time.

Take your time.

I once saw how smells, e.g., pheromones, which I couldn't see, replace toxic sprays in protecting our produce. It instilled in me the faith in the power of vision and the ability to reach what your vision desires.

What does your vision desire?

What do you do to achieve it?

Want to change the rural community's development trajectory in your country or elsewhere? Are you unsatisfied with a running rural project or want to plan a new one? Message me +972-54-2523425

Whether you agree or not, share your thoughts with me.

## TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

- **LOOK TO CHANGE** what others don't even consider as "changeable."
- **WE ARE** encouraged to avoid risk, e.g., change and innovation.
- **CHANGE THROUGH INNOVATION** is the only way to create prosperity among smallholders.
- **RESISTANCE TO INNOVATION** predicts that change to smallholders will come slowly.
- **THE GOOD NEWS:** Change through innovation is here to stay, and change has begun.

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

See you soon,

Nimrod



Dr. Nimrod Israely is the CEO and Founder of [Dream Valley](#) and [Biofeed](#) companies and the Chairman and Co-founder of the [IBMA conference](#). +972-54-2523425 (WhatsApp), or [email\\_nisraely@biofeed.co.il](mailto:email_nisraely@biofeed.co.il)

**P.S.**

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "[How The Attitude Of Israeli Farmers Can Help Create Prosperity Among Smallholders.](#)"

**P.P.S.**

[Dream Valley](#) is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli model.

To learn more and become a Dream Valley partner, contact me at [nisraely@biofeed.co.il](mailto:nisraely@biofeed.co.il), +972-542523425 (WhatsApp/Text)

If you like it, please **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***