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## **I Like to Work Alone: I Am a “Solonist”, Not a “Smallholder”**

*“Fool or a genius; I am whatever you name me. Words matter”*

In my last column, I introduced the Togetherness-Prosperity Principle—a framework that demonstrates how collaboration (Togetherness) and mission-driven goals drive prosperity. This principle explains what determines the difference between individuals and organizations that thrive and those that struggle to endure.

Now, consider this logical thread: if we truly want to help struggling farmers in developing countries, shouldn't the first step be to understand them? And if names are meant to reflect the essence of their subject, does the term "smallholders" truly capture the reality of these farmers? Or does it, like the ancient misconception about malaria, obscure the real problem?

For over 2,500 years, people believed that malaria was caused by the bad air of swamps—a misconception embedded in its name: "malaria," from the Italian *mal'aria*, meaning "spoiled air".

Could humanity have effectively fought malaria while misunderstanding its true cause? Similarly, can we address farmers' challenges if the names we use misrepresent their reality?

## The Misalignment of "Smallholders"

As I worked on placing smallholders within the Togetherness-Prosperity framework, a glaring inconsistency emerged. The term "smallholders," often defined as farmers managing plots under 10 hectares, fails to align with the defining characteristics of their lives. From my field experience and the insights provided by the framework, it became clear that smallholders are neither defined nor united by the size of their land but by their isolating behavior, lack of Togetherness, and absence of shared mission-driven goals.

The term "smallholders" focuses narrowly on land size. Yet organizations like the FAO, the World Economic Forum, and the UN acknowledge that these farmers face challenges far beyond plot size. These challenges include limited access to education, technology, markets, tools, and agricultural knowledge; low management skills and bargaining power; high production costs; and often, low-quality produce.

In developing economies, I have met farmers with vastly different land sizes—some with less than one hectare, others with more than ten—who share these struggles. Their common root issue is not the size of their land but their lack of collaboration and shared purpose. With higher levels of Togetherness and clearly defined mission-driven goals, these farmers could pool resources, access markets, negotiate effectively, and overcome these barriers with far greater ease.

Farmers in Israel's Moshav cooperatives provide a striking contrast. Starting with standardized 3.5-hectare plots in the 1940s and 50s, they thrived by leveraging cooperative frameworks, shared resources, and unified mission-driven goals. Their success demonstrates that prosperity depends not on plot size but on organizational structure and Togetherness.

This lesson is universal. Around the world, many professional farmers succeed on relatively small plots by intensively cultivating high-value crops. Meanwhile, farmers with much larger plots—often exceeding 100 hectares—can still face significant economic difficulties, including bankruptcy.

## Names Matter

To address this gap, I propose a new term: **Solonists**.

Derived from "solo," Solonists captures the defining characteristics of these farmers: isolation, disconnection, and often an unwillingness—or even fear—to cooperate and act in coordination

with others. More than just a name, "Solonists" reframes the narrative, shifting focus to systemic barriers that can be overcome through collaboration and shared goals.

If the terms Cooperative, Company, and Kibbutz convey shared purpose and collaboration—the foundations of their prosperity—then Solonists represents the opposite: isolation, resistance to cooperation, and the absence of shared goals, which lie at the root of their struggles and persistent poverty.



## To Change, We Must Measure

One critical step toward solving this problem is measuring farmers' connectivity level—their connection to one another and their integration within value chains. This "connectivity index" could include metrics such as:

- \*Membership in cooperatives or other unifying organizations.
- \*Collaboration with others in farming or marketing initiatives.
- \*Access to collective tools, knowledge, and infrastructure.
- \*Participation in integrated value chains that connect them to markets and technologies.

Thus, identifying farmers as "smallholders" relies on land size—a criterion that could mistakenly include farmers from developed countries with less than 10 hectares who make a decent living

and belong to the middle class. In contrast, defining farmers as "Solonists" focuses on connectivity levels, where impoverished farmers in developing countries stand out unmistakably. By emphasizing connectivity, this approach more accurately captures the core issues of isolation and Togetherness, offering a clearer distinction between different groups of farmers.

## Correlation versus Laws, Formulae, and Principles

The assumption that small plots inherently lead to poverty is a fallacy rooted in correlation, not causation. While many poor farmers have small plots, this does not mean small plots cause poverty—just as large plots do not guarantee prosperity.

Consider the United States and the EU, where the average farm sizes are 176 hectares and 20 hectares, respectively. Despite their scale, hundreds of farmers in both regions declare bankruptcy annually, and many farms are abandoned due to lack of profitability. Meanwhile, in developing economies, numerous landowners with large-scale holdings still face hardship and poverty.

In contrast, Moshav farmers in Israel, allocated just 3.5 hectares per family in the 1940s and 50s, thrived by leveraging cooperative frameworks, shared resources, and mission-driven goals. These examples demonstrate a clear truth: success depends on organizational structure—fostering Togetherness and providing a foundation for shared mission-driven goals—not plot size.

So why does this misconception persist? It stems from relying on correlation to predict outcomes—a method that observes patterns but often misrepresents cause and effect. To better understand this, consider the various ways we attempt to predict the future, ranked from least to most reliable.

### Nine methods of predicting the future:

- 1-Speculative:** Gut feelings or intuition, often disconnected from evidence.
- 2-Trend Analysis:** Assuming current patterns will persist indefinitely.
- 3-Correlation:** Observing relationships without proving causation.
- 4-Empirical Modeling:** Using statistical methods to identify patterns.
- 5-Scenario Analysis:** Exploring multiple potential futures to test outcomes.
- 6-Stochastic Modeling:** Simulating probabilities with variable factors.
- 7-Deterministic Models:** Predictions based on known mechanisms or rules.
- 8-Causal Models:** Explicitly identifying cause-and-effect relationships.
- 9-Universal Laws and Mathematical Models:** Grounded in natural laws, offering the highest reliability.

The term "smallholders" reflects reliance on correlation—the third method—which falsely links small land size to poverty without addressing the true drivers of success or failure.

In contrast, the Togetherness-Prosperity Principle is rooted in universal laws—the most reliable approach. It identifies Togetherness and mission-driven goals as the true drivers of prosperity, offering consistent and actionable insights into why some farmers succeed while others struggle.

By focusing on organizational structure and shared missions rather than land size, we can transform Solonists into prosperous communities. This universal approach applies equally well to farmers in developing and developed economies, proving that Togetherness and mission-driven goals transcend geographical and economic boundaries.

## From Solonists to Prosperity

The journey from Solonists to prosperity requires three key steps:

**Fostering Collaboration:** Establish cooperatives or other frameworks that enable farmers to act collectively, pool resources, share knowledge, and negotiate from a stronger position.

**Defining Shared Missions:** Align farmers around common goals and a unified purpose.

**Integrating Value Chains:** Connect farmers to markets, technologies, and supply chains, enabling them to benefit from the "industrialization" of the value chain, including specialization, economies of scale, and shared risks.

These steps, proven over decades by Kibbutzim and agricultural cooperatives worldwide, demonstrate how strong organizational frameworks can transform isolated farmers into prosperous communities.

## Forward: Togetherness Over Individualism

The conclusion is clear: if we want to help Solonists, we must focus on fostering Togetherness and shared mission-driven goals. Programs aimed at assisting them as isolated individuals will ultimately fail to achieve lasting impact. Prosperity stems from the collective power of collaboration, not the fragmented pursuit of individual short-term gain. By guiding Solonists toward working together with common purposes, we create the foundation for sustainable success and income growth—outcomes that Togetherness inherently delivers.

## A Call for Change

The Togetherness-Prosperity Principle taught me to see farmers not as "smallholders" but as **Solonists**—individuals trapped by isolation and disconnection. This reframing is more than a semantic change; it clarifies the real barriers to prosperity and directs attention to the solutions needed to overcome them.

It's time to retire the outdated and harmful negative term "smallholders", which misrepresents the realities of farmers in developing economies. Instead, I urge you to adopt "Solonists", a term that reflects their challenges and opportunities. By doing so, we can shift our focus to building Togetherness, fostering shared goals, and unlocking the transformative power of collaboration.

### **Are you ready to replace "smallholders" with "Solonists"?**

Please share this column with students, Solonist farmers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders in the agro sector—let's hear their thoughts!

If you believe in the concept behind "Solonists", spread the word and start using it—because words matter. The term "smallholders" does a profound injustice to 550 million farmers worldwide. Can we continue to accept this, knowing the harm it causes? It's time for a change.

**Solonist, cooperative, company, government, or other—let me know how I can help you achieve your goals. Reach out on WhatsApp at +972-54-2523425.**

## **Takeaway Messages**

» **Farmers' challenges** often stem from isolation and lack of Togetherness and shared goals, not land size.

» **"Smallholders" misrepresents farmers'** realities, while "Solonists" accurately highlights their struggles.

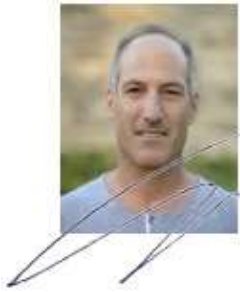
» **Prosperity** depends on Togetherness and mission-driven goals—the precise areas where we must help Solonists transform.

If you got to here, read this column, and enjoyed it, please be nice to your friends, share it with them, or help them [Subscribe](#).

*"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, "[The Togetherness-Prosperity Principle: A Blueprint for Sustainable Success](#)".

**P.P.S.**

Here are ways we can work together to help your agro sector and rural communities step forward and shift from poverty into ongoing prosperity:

- \* **Nova Kibbutz and consultancy** on rural communities' models.
- \* **Local & National programs related to agro-produce export models** - [Dream Valley](#) global vertical value and supply chain business model and concept connects (a) input suppliers with farmers in developing economies and (b) those farmers with consumers in premium markets.
- \* **Crop protection:** [Biofeed](#), an eco-friendly zero-spray control technology and protocol.

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\*This article addresses general phenomena. The mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.

