



# Thinking out of the plot

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Shafir Godel\*

Israeli farmers are facing a great challenge now days. Being a world class leader, in many aspects of farming and growing, seems not to be enough for their economic survival and wellbeing.

All over the world the Israeli farmers are well known for their innovative approach, technology adoption, hard work and creativity. Yet, many of them are struggling for the very existing of their farms.

Why is it not enough, being a great farmer or a great grower? What does it takes to succeed in the near future and to maintain the position Israeli farmers achieved? What farmers in other places can learn and do for better future for themselves?

The following is based on my consulting experience, both in Israel and abroad, working

with farmers to achieve better financial results from their hard work and commitment.

Many of the terms and ideas combined to this article were shaped during my mutual work with my colleague and friend **Eliron Toby**<sup>1</sup>.



A KHAN Market store in one of the luxuries areas of New Delhi



Shafir Godel is visiting a traditional farmer in Punjab India



## >>Think Out Of The Plot!

Some growers are "blooming" and their business scaled up. Most of the time, this is because they are **Thinking out Of the Plot**. These growers have added to their traditional tasks as growers some other business commitments. They understand that being a good traditional grower is not sufficient and they have to think business wise; to brand, to process their produce, to change their excellent product to something more attractive to the market, to scale up along the value chain in order to generate better income for them.

That is contrary to some of the traditional farmers that are very good at what they are doing but still thinking only about their plots. They think only in terms of bigger yield, pests and soil diseases' fighting, revenue, investments and technology, hard work and laboring.

They do not think in agro-business terms such as profit, brand, innovation, and value chain and business entrepreneurship. They do not *Think out Of the Plot!*

## >>Thinking Out of the Plot comes in many forms & shapes

*Out of the plot* way of thinking comes in many forms and shapes. Every farmer or farmers' group should develop and adjust the one that

suits them mostly. Thinking Out of the Plot can, but don't have to, come in the following forms:

1. Branding fresh produce in a way that will not be considered as commodities like its competitors, and can be identified by the customers.
2. Looking for deferent marketing channels in order to find the ones that pay more.
3. Processing of your own produce in order to sell food or other products and not only produce as commodities. It does not have to be a complex and expensive factory. Sometime a simple inexpensive facility will do.
4. Building your own marketing platform in order to gain the marketing margin.
5. Look for special varieties or niche crops with competitive advantage to the region you are growing in or to your privet and unique character.
6. Developing products out of what considered to be farm's waste or lowers quality produce.
7. Develop additional uses to your land such as rural and agro tourism, short leasing for non-agriculture uses out of season.
8. Reframe your business activities (cooperatives, joint ventures & partnership with farmers and others...).
9. Any other innovative, courageous and fruitful idea that matches the Out Of the Plot thinking criteria...



Market place at Coimbatore - state of Tamil Nadu





Same strawberries, different package - better price (Fruit logistica 2016)



Combined products creates a new and innovative proposal to the customer (Fruit Logistica 2016)

### >>How can I be sure I am Thinking out Of the Plot?

Thinking Out Of the Plot has to be in a new innovative, creative and fruitful way. In order to understand if one is Thinking Out Of the Plot he should ask himself several questions and answer most of them positively;

Is it innovative? Is it not what you have done so far? Do you see many of the same around you, in your markets? Do you have a lot of opponents and skepticisms to your new way? Is your thinking practical, can you take it into reality? Can you see the fruits of new direction clearly? Am I thinking agriculture or ago-business?

### >> Moving Out of the Plot is frightening and challenging

Out of the Plot thinking is frightening and challenging. Yet, it is of high relevancy to modern farming and to the economic strength and well-being of today's farmers. During my work with farmers I have heard many time the arguments like: That this is not our profession, we do not understand in it, we cannot, but .... We are not use to it, that is not the way we do it and so on and so on and on.

Different statistics around the globe shows that we have fewer farmers than in the past and that different land uses and climate changes are making it harder and harder to make a living out of farming.

Successful farming requires out of the plot thinking. It is one of the needed conditions for economic success and well-being. Other farmers cannot ignore the necessity of this change!

### >>Can farmers from other places learn from this experience?

Agro produce markets are global for many crops, the competition is also global and not domestic as it used to be, being good farmer with good agronomic results is a vital, but not sufficient condition for success. Farmers everywhere should Think out Of the Plot. •

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