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Dear Reader,

Last month the 15th Karachi Literature Festival brought the sorry state of the world to the denizens of Karachi in both vivid and merciless fashion. The central theme of the three day extravaganza was sustainability, with the claim that words could change mindsets; a very tall claim indeed given the tsunami of words in our daily lives and the dire paucity of matching deeds and actions. Perhaps they will come, and society will transform for the better, but don't hold your breath.

Meanwhile, here are more words from us this issue, each one priceless in what it manifests. We start with **Jurriaan Kamer**, and he revisits that which has been an enduring thorn in the side of outliers and others operating way ahead of the curve. How a great idea gets stuck in endless meetings that analyze that great idea literally to death. Reduce analysis paralysis by making reversible decisions, he opines.

Alissa Orlando follows next and asks is billionaire a dirty word? Wealth in and of itself is not evil, but it matters how you make it, and it matters how you spend it, she says, citing Taylor Swift who made her money writing and performing songs that spoke to the human experience, and gave bonuses of more than \$55 million to those working on her Eras tour, many of which topped \$100,000 and all came with a handwritten note.

Jack Moses tackles a similar subject and talks about successful people who fail to identify their greater purpose, lose motivation and escape into pleasure, cheap dopamine, and block out reality. In "I made it!" he quotes Viktor Frankl "Any man without purpose distracts himself with pleasure. Self-actualization can only happen as a byproduct of self-transcendence."

Eddy Quan is "Back in the cash creator's seat again" and swears by travelling as one of the best things you can do to stimulate the creative brain and create fresh and engaging content. "The more varied your life experiences.... The more you'll have in the creative well to draw from."

Back-of-the-book, as usual, we have our reality check on the world, and this time it's food security, or the lack of it. Keep plugging away, and remember that even as man proposes that which is clearly ridiculous, even crazy, it is God who disposes and has the final say 😊

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*Articles curated from online content by JJ highlighting professional and expert knowledge on 'Managing People, Business and Yourself'

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How a great idea got stuck in meeting

Reduce analysis paralysis by making reversible decisions



By **Jurriaan Kamer** | 12 min read

Veronica manages Magajima Amsterdam, an Asian restaurant that is part of an international chain with over 50 locations across Europe. Her restaurant sits near the central train station. This location was typical for Migajima. Most restaurants are in high-traffic areas, like airports and rest stops along the highway. Because of this, guests usually don't want to spend more than an hour there. However, people pick Magajima because the experience is closer to a sit-down restaurant than a fast food chain.

The menu is the same across all restaurants and contains about 30 dishes, including different curries, dumplings, sushi, teppanyaki, and noodles. Every quarter, the team at headquarters sets and distributes the new menu. Veronica noticed many people were unfamiliar with the Asian dishes and often asked about what kind of food it was. For example, many people didn't understand the difference between "ramen," "soba," or "udon" noodles and often asked the waiters to explain. Many guests struggled to make their choice, which cost her serving staff time.

For years, Veronica wanted to go on holiday to Japan. She had heard great stories about the fantastic hospitality and cuisine and was eager to experience it firsthand. Last month, Veronica finally took the trip. One thing she immediately noticed was how restaurants presented their menu. Some places displayed mockups of actual dishes outside the restaurant. And almost everywhere, the menu contained numerous high-quality photos of the dishes. Even though Veronica couldn't read or speak a word of Japanese, she had no problem ordering her food because she saw exactly what she would be getting.

Many saw this as an opportunity for Magajima. If the menus were much more visual, surely people would have fewer problems ordering food. And it would decrease the time spent ordering and free servers from answering questions. She decided to bring this up as a topic in her next 1:1 meeting with Jill, the Head of Restaurant Operations.

Jill immediately liked the idea. She promised to bring this to Rob, the Head of Marketing, whose team is responsible for designing the menus. Three weeks later, Jill can get on the calendar with Rob. After Jill lays out the idea, Rob says: "I love it! However, it would radically increase the printing costs for all our restaurants. Since you and I don't have the budget, we'll need to bring this decision to the senior leadership meeting."

Jill and Rob are part of the senior leadership team, but they had to convince the other leaders to get the additional budget. They knew it would require them to bring a well-crafted, detailed proposal. Jill asked the operations manager to estimate the cost of a menu with more pages and full-color photos. Rob asked one of their graphic designers to make a few slides with examples of the new menu. He then had several meetings with the design team to improve the initial design.

A month later, Jill and Rob have another meeting to finalize their proposal. They discuss the design and cost estimations. They also think through what might happen at the senior leadership meeting. Jill said: "The group will surely be concerned by the return on investment of this decision. Let's add some calculations of how the higher printing cost will be gained back by increased serving capacity since people spend less time ordering."

Jill requests the secretary of the senior leadership team to find an available moment to discuss this topic. Six weeks later, they can fill an empty slot on the agenda.

At the meeting, they present their proposal. The first person to respond was the CFO: "I'm sorry, but the ROI calculation is weak. You have based the cost increase on facts, but the upside on the 'gut feel' of one restaurant manager. In our current process, we don't measure the time customers take to order their food or the number of questions they ask the waiters, so we can't know if the ROI is positive or negative." The CEO quickly agrees and asks: "Could you put some measurements in place and bring this back to us?" Jill hesitantly nods and sighs.

After the meeting, Jill immediately calls Veronica apologetically: "I'm sorry, Veronica. Rob and I think your idea is great, but the senior leadership team is not yet convinced it is the right thing to do. They first asked us to measure the current ordering time and waiter questions to calculate the ROI. Would you be willing to start measuring that in your restaurant?"

Veronica's response was not at all what Jill expected. She said, "Well, I have some data for you! It's been three months since I brought up the topic with you. And since I didn't hear back, I decided not to wait. I've let a local designer make a page with photos of all the noodle dishes we give our guests in addition to our normal menu. We've been

using it in the last month and have seen a 20% increase in people picking the food that is visually shown. The serving staff also noticed people were asking fewer questions. Next month, I will ask the designer to make a visual version of all of our dishes to see what that brings us.”

Risk avoidance is costly

What happened at Magajima is not uncommon. The decision quickly rose to the organization's top because of a lack of mandate lower down. Since time with the senior leaders is scarce and putting things in front of them can be ‘scary,’ there is a desire to ‘get it right the first time. More preparation is deemed necessary, more people get involved, and many meetings are planned to polish the proposal to perfection.

When decisions rise to the organization's top, they also tend to become bigger. We wouldn't want to bother the senior leaders with small stuff, would we? In the case of the story, the proposal was to change all menus of all restaurants at once, which bears a significant risk and cost. Therefore, the senior leadership team didn't want to make the wrong decision, so they logically asked for more data before they felt comfortable to act.

As a leader, when uncertainty is high, you try to remove as much uncertainty as possible — it is only human to not want to be wrong. We're taught to weigh all the options to find the perfect solution. However, risk avoidance comes at a cost. One cost type is the time and energy it takes to acquire the information to reduce uncertainty — meetings, measurements, data gathering, reporting about results, etc. Time that you can better spend on taking the first steps.

The other type is the cost of ‘dragging your feet.’ The opportunity costs of NOT making a decision. The costs of NOT innovating. If it takes six months to change the menu, you're

implicitly accepting the cost of six more months of unimproved performance.

So when should we act fast, take intelligent risks, and when should we act more slowly and deliberately? It helps to distinguish between reversible and irreversible decisions — an idea coined by Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos. (Note: Even though his management philosophy is inspiring, companies shouldn't follow his example of paying extremely low wages and providing terrible working conditions.)

In a letter to shareowners, he wrote: “Some decisions are consequential and irreversible or nearly irreversible — one-way doors — and these decisions must be made methodically, carefully, slowly, with great deliberation and consultation. If you walk through and don't like what you see on the other side, you can't get back to where you were before.” ... “But most decisions aren't like that — they are changeable, reversible — they're two-way doors.”

He proposes to decide quickly when the consequences are reversible. Because if you've made a suboptimal reversible decision, you don't have to live with the consequences for long. You can simply reopen the door and go back through.

How to handle different types of decisions

Imagine you go to the grocery store to buy milk. If your favorite brand is sold out, you have many alternatives to choose from. It wouldn't make sense to spend hours researching which would be the best option. You just pick one and go home. If you dislike what you bought, you will have lost some time and money, but you can easily go back and buy something else. You won't be stuck for long with the choice you make.

But now, imagine you're considering moving to another country. You'll have to quit your job, sell your house, leave your friends behind, and find new ones at your destination. Such a decision is one with a much higher impact. Strictly speaking, this is a reversible choice. But the cost of undoing the decision is much higher. So, compared to buying milk, you should spend more time researching the decision.

Decisions are never fully reversible or irreversible. It is a spectrum. Spend little effort deciding if a decision is cheap and easy to undo. If it is costly and difficult to undo, be more careful.

If the cost of doing it wrong is high and the time spent on deciding is worth it, then put in the effort to try to make the right choice. Slow down the decision-making process. Do research to explore possible scenarios, quantify risks, and reduce uncertainty. Then, think deeply and decide carefully.

But even if a decision is irreversible, consider the negative consequences of doing it wrong. If those are acceptable, you can still make the decision quickly.

After making a decision, set a reminder to check the outcome at a future date. Then, correct the course based on what you've learned from the result.

Moves to try with your team

To accelerate decision-making, we should become comfortable with making decisions with incomplete information. Jeff Bezos said, "Most decisions should probably be made with around 70% of the information you wish you had. If you wait for 90%, in most cases, you're probably being slow."

If your team feels uncomfortable making a decision when there is incomplete information, try one of these questions:

- This is a reversible decision, where we can return to the drawing board and try something else if it fails. Making the wrong decision seems manageable. So what can we decide now?
- Is spending time and money finding more information and delaying the decision worth it?
- We seem very passionate about making the right choice; what is the worst thing that can happen if we get it wrong?

It may also help to highlight that, in many cases, the chances of making the right choice without trying something first are low.

For example, launching a new app won't likely immediately drive the outcome you were initially looking for. You probably need to keep iterating, tweaking, and experimenting until you reach the desired result. In those cases, the only way to know what works is to put something out there, learn from what happens, and then course-correct it.

If iteration seems important, try these questions:

- Should we decide on all this, or can we try some of it first?
- What can we say yes to quickly that allows us to learn something if this is the right direction?
- How can we make the decision smaller to feel comfortable acting on it now?

When you've successfully accelerated the decision-making process for some decisions, ask the team to reflect on their progress in decision-making and estimate how much time they saved. Doing this will help solidify the behavior change ■

Source:

<https://jurriaankamer.medium.com/how-a-great-idea-got-stuck-in-meetings-dcc567f00816>

The “b” word

Is billionaire a dirty word?



Source: Harvard Business Review

By **Alissa Orlando** | 7 min read

When I turned 30, I set four goals for the decade, all centered on creation (compared to the goals of my 20s, which were all centered on exploration). I want to create an enduring brand (a company of consequence), a family (defined as getting married and raising, if not necessarily birthing, children), a published book, and financial independence.

I defined financial independence as four million dollars in the bank. I wanted to hit 30 countries by 30 (which I did, with a grace year for the pandemic), so it felt poetic to set the goal of a \$4M net worth by 40. The math was simple. With \$4M in cash, at a three percent interest rate, I could earn \$120,000 in interest a year. In other words, I was guaranteed a \$10,000 a month salary for the rest of my life. I never

had to work for money again.

I feel like I’ve had so many ideas for things, like worker-owned nail salons or new Broadway musicals, that I think should exist in the world, but are not going to pay my bills until years after inception, if at all, so separating how I invest my time from the requirement to earn an income feels like true freedom.

I was recently listening to *The Secret* on audiobook (thank you, New York Public Library!), and it mentioned that the universe knows no size. Manifesting \$1 is the same effort as manifesting \$1,000,000. It made me wonder — why was I setting my floor for financial independence as my goal? What if I wished for *gasp* a BILLION dollars?

I feel like the past few years have been a healing process with my relationship with wealth. In the wake of the pandemic, I saw greed literally rob people of their lives. While building a worker cooperative, I was in leftist spaces that demonized wealth accumulation and even my business education.

Yet, the fact remains that cooperatives and other social justice projects are often reliant on rich people or their foundations for donations and investments. [The New York Times](#) published a profile on Ownership Works last week. This non-profit is dedicated to advancing employee ownership through movement building and hands-on guidance among institutional investors, namely private equity firms. It was founded by Pete

Stavros, KKR Co-Head of Americas Private Equity, with \$10 million of his own money. That sounds amazing — being able to conceive an idea and bring it to life with your own investment, rather than having to kneel at the feet of foundation program officers.

I've since developed a more nuanced view of wealth, namely that wealth in and of itself is not evil, but it matters how you make it, and it matters how you spend it. So firstly, let's talk about how you make it. I personally love looking to billionaires in the arts, because it's wealth generated from creation and expression, rather than arbitrage and exploitation. On Instagram, I saw an account highlighting that Taylor Swift was now officially a billionaire with the caption, "normally it's eat the rich but sometimes...the rich ate." Taylor made her money writing and performing songs that spoke to the human experience. I'm all for her getting her bag.

Taylor is also a role model in how she spends her wealth. In August, [Forbes revealed](#) that Swift gave bonuses of more than \$55 million to those working on her Eras tour, including dancers, riggers, sound technicians, and truckers. Many of those bonuses topped \$100,000 (and all came with a handwritten note). Deepak Chopra in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* shares that,

"Money is like blood; it must flow. Because your body and your mind and the universe are in constant and dynamic exchange, stopping the circulation of energy is like stopping the flow of blood. Whenever blood stops flowing, it begins to clot, to coagulate, to stagnate. That is why you must give and receive in order to keep wealth and affluence—or anything you want in life—circulating in your life."

When wealth is stagnant in trusts or index funds or sunk into status assets like boats

and second homes, it loses its meaning. When it is reinvested into manifesting dreams for the world held by yourself and others, it assumes meaning.

Last year, my husband and I did a Southern road trip. My favorite stop was in Montgomery, Alabama. While there, we went to the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Both were stunning testaments to racial terrorism and a powerful call for social justice. The brainchild of one of my role models, Bryan Stevenson, the museum and memorial cost \$20 million to construct, raised from private foundations. Like Ownership Works, the museum and memorial are a testament to what money can give birth to when it is allowed to flow, to circulate into causes that change the conversation.

From Oprah to Sara Blakely of Spanx to Hamdi Ulukaya of Chobani to Yvon Chouinard of Patagonia, there are examples of billionaires who leverage the platform and independence afforded by that stratospheric amount of wealth to advance racial justice, women's empowerment, employee ownership, environmental conservation, and other worthy causes.

The path to becoming an ethical billionaire is not straightforward. Staying grounded in gratitude and generosity is essential. Perhaps the healthiest mindset is to release rigid attachment to any monetary figure and allow wealth to emerge organically as a byproduct of a realized vision. My point is more so maybe billionaire isn't necessarily a dirty word, and we should make efforts to not block our blessings ■

Source:

<https://medium.com/swlh/the-b-word-c5dcab07eb83>

I made it!

By **Jack Moses** | 7 min read

In March 2023, I'd "made it."

I'd left college.

Escaped the dreaded 9-5.

I was living abroad in Buenos Aires, making \$7k a month working 2 hours a day.

I could spend my days doing whatever I wanted whenever I wanted to.

I'd achieved the dream I set out after when I was DoorDashing around my college campus to make money, starting on Twitter in September 2022.

For a while, everything was perfect.

I'd spend my mornings writing and doing client work.

I'd hit the gym.

I'd spend the afternoons going to new coffee shops and reading.

I'd get \$8 steak dinners with my entrepreneurial brother, Matt Mic, who I moved with.

I even had a few Argentinian female friends I was hanging out with.

But after a month or two of this, the fire that motivated me to take massive action, grow an audience, build an online income, and escape the corporate grind died out.

I lost motivation.

I started staying up late, escaping into weed and junk food, and barely getting my client work in on time.

In other words, I burned out.

How could I possibly burn out?

I was working 2 hours a day.

Making decent money.

Living a life I could've only dreamed of.

It took me a long time and a lot of introspection to figure it out.

But now that I look back, I realize it wasn't overworking, loneliness, or lack of balance that burnt me out.

It was misalignment.

It was a lack of pursuing my next layer of purpose.

You see, purpose works like an onion.

It has layers.

My first layer of purpose was escaping the 9-5 before I ever got in, making online money, and traveling the world.

But after I burned through that layer of purpose, I failed to identify the next one.

And so I escaped into pleasure, cheap dopamine, and numbing myself to reality.

I was the living epitome of the Viktor Frankl quote "Any man without purpose distracts himself with pleasure."

To try to find my way out of this rut, I read Frankl's classic "Man's Search For Meaning."

In addition to the quote above, one line hit me like a ton of bricks:

"Self-actualization can only happen as a byproduct of self-transcendence."

In other words, a human being can only strive toward his potential when his purpose transcends

himself and shifts to serving others.

I knew that my next step.

I was a natural-born coach and quarterback.

I always thrived and felt most fulfilled in positions of leadership.

I needed to get back to that.

And so I came back home, whipped a free Calendly link, offered to coach creators for free on performance, productivity, and systems, and ended up doing over 50 free calls.

I didn't make a dime.

But it wasn't important.

I felt realigned.

I left the calls feeling like I'd done my best to serve and help someone else.

And so the next layer of my purpose became clear.

I was supposed to help others reach the same levels of freedom and autonomy I had.

The offer evolved:

- Performance coaching turned into hybrid brand advising/performance coaching.
- That turned into working with a group of 8 people and starting a "mini-community."
- Everything I learned about performance turned into a chapter, 4-hour long free video course - The Peak Performance Primer
- Off the backend of that, I launched my first cohort
- Now, I'm building the next iterations (;

Since I returned from Buenos Aires lost and without direction, I've found it again and reidentified my next layer of purpose.

Now, most days, I'm up before my alarm every morning, itching to write, build, create, and serve.

It's why you'll receive 3000+ word emails from me every Friday.

It doesn't feel like work to me.

It feels like play.

I'm f*cking obsessed.

Anyway, I wanted to paint this picture to show you - despite what 99% of creators display - external "success" often comes with a lot of internal struggle.

This entire game is about identifying your current layer of purpose, working as hard as possible to actualize it, and then moving on to the next.

If you're lost, it's normal.

I've been there many other times than just this Argentina story.

I'll probably tell you about it in another email (:

Until next time,

Jack

PS

I'm launching a 1v1 program in the month of March.

It's called The Creator Catalyst.

In 30 days, I'll work with you 1v1 to:

- Clarify your vision for the future
- Build the foundation of your brand
- Crystallize a content and growth strategy
- Build a profitable offer around your interests

Oh, and we'll also have 4 1v1 calls, 4 group calls, a guest lecture from Dan Koe, 24/7 access via a private telegram group, and lifelong access to the Sovereign Creator Community.

If you want to learn more about the program, check out the page below:

<https://creatorcatalyst.school/>

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out! ■

Jack Moses <jackmoses@jackmoses.co>

BACK IN THE CASH CREATOR'S SEAT AGAIN

By **Eddy Quan** | 5 min read

I'm back in the cash creator's seat again after a whirlwind trip which took me from South America and across the world to back to my humble abode of Australia.

On top of that, I did a couple of small domestic trips inside Colombia and swung by Melbourne to spend five nights with my brother who I hadn't seen for seven years.

Travelling is one of the best things you can do to stimulate the creative brain and create fresh, engaging and dare I say mind-blowing content.

Why?

Because you're getting thrown into the deep end and putting yourself in environments and situations you would never stumble upon in an ordinary day to day routine.

Best part:

Travelling is also something 99% of self proclaimed content creators never do because they're too preoccupied with living on social media 24/7 due to fear that the God-almighty algorithm will forget and dump them.

And since most of these creators spend most of their waking hours roaming the digital streets of social media.....

They're drowning their creative brain with the exact same generic content slop that every other creator i.e their competition is exposed do.

The result:

More generic slop.

But.... If you're a somewhat imaginative cash content creator like yours melony, then you understand that putting yourself in unfamiliar territory and "shocking the routine" by ungluing your eyes from that the black mirror might just be the best move you can do for your content.

Seriously....

Imagine how bad the material from great writers like John Steinbeck and Charles Bukowski would have been had they not traveled and engaged in the adventures that they did before they put pen to paper.

Now I'm not saying you need to be a literary legend to create good content.....

But the principles remain the same:

The more varied your life experiences.... The more you'll have in the creative well to draw from.

Anyway, it's great to be back in the saddle. As of tomorrow, I'll be back to my normal routine which means more content, more ideas and yes....

New offers.

More on that in the coming days.

Your man

Eddy "shock your system" Quan ■

Eddy Quan <eddy@eddyquan.com>

Nature Calling for Action Stations (NCfAS#24)

Sustainability — words changing mindsets?



Two years into this monthly column and Nature's call for action stations has turned into a strident, shrill scream of humanity in distress, inextricably caught up in the rat race to impress, addicted to fossil fuel and condemned to duel with tornadoes, hurricanes and typhoons that take on a deafening roar when they plunder and pillage both city and village, followed by wave after wave of heat unprecedented that shrivels the soul and leaves the body upended;

“There is lack of coordination, with institutions doing exactly the same kind of work and bemoaning the lack of budgets. There is waste, overlap and duplication”

– Dr. Ishrat Husain (former Governor SBP).

And then cometh the rain, mighty and untimely downpours that send the food crops crashing, flooding once fertile landscapes and unleashing disease that gives the poor a thrashing, further fracturing already fragile lives where only misery thrives; It's grim as grim can get, but let's not forget that it can get grimmer yet, for there is drought to contend with and parched throats and land that turns to sand and will no longer yield the green field of yore.... lest we fail to change our ways in how we live out our remaining days; Less is more is the mantra in vogue with conspicuous consumption and waste in our midst the rogue that needs shaming and taming, and brought to heel so the planet can have a chance to heal.

Seeking food security

The burning issue top-of-mind these days is food security. As the global population approaches the

10 billion mark, and global warming causes climate to change, agriculture is all set to take a potentially catastrophic hit, with water cited as the main cause for conflict and wars amongst nations in the 21st century.

In Pakistan proof of this was amply evident at the 15th Karachi Literature Festival when its session on “How Agriculture can save Pakistan?” played to a full house notwithstanding a concurrent session on Faiz Ahmad Faiz with a stellar cast of panelists.

The proposition before the house should really have been how Pakistan can save agriculture, and not the other way around, because during the one hour that the eminent panelists held sway it was amply evident that the fault lay not in our stars but in us. Muhammad Aurangzeb, Salim Raza, Dr. Miftah Ismail, Dr. Ishrat Husain and the moderator Ali Habib were all prominent finance people, and that in itself pointed to the road not taken. Money makes the mare go. So where is the money going, if not to agriculture? Most people know the answer to that one, but it can only be spoken in barely audible whispers and certainly not out loud.

How Agriculture can save Pakistan?

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Friday, 18 February 2024
Jasmine Hall

PANELLISTS
Muhammad Aurangzeb, Syed Salim Raza, Miftah Ismail, Ishrat Husain

MODERATOR
Ali Habib

Sponsored by **HBL**

Click to Watch: <https://youtu.be/Q6HBFqICEH0>

“India has developed drip and sprinkler irrigation and shuns flood irrigation, recognizing water as a scarce commodity”

– Dr. Ishrat Husain.

Dismal state of HRD

Dr. Ishrat Husain belled the cat, however, when he spoke of the dismal state of HRD. The human is the resource that has steadfastly defied development and compensated for the deficit through intent very short on integrity. Those are not his words but they do encapsulate the sum total of what I think he said.

“There are 260 research institutes with 3600 agricultural scientists researching crops, livestock, dairy and animal sciences. 156 are under the provincial government, 64 under federal, and 39 under universities. We have a very large canvas of research institutions that are primarily brick and mortar. Almost 90% of their entire budget allocation goes into salaries, wages, allowances and pensions. So how are they going to do any operational work in the remaining 10%?”

Waste, overlap and duplication

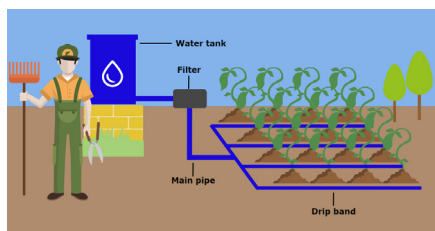
No attention has been paid to agriculture research either at the provincial or federal levels. Then there is the lack of coordination with institutions doing exactly the same kind of work and bemoaning the lack of budgets, says the good doctor. “There is waste, overlap and duplication. We don’t have any connection with the farmers because the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council and National Agriculture Research Cell say they are federal government institutions and the provinces don’t come to them whereas all the farmers are in the provinces.”

No rocket science

India has made crop specific centers of excellence with institutions affiliated to them. India has 50,000 dedicated agriculture scientists doing first rate research which is linked to the farmers’ demands. Farmers articulate their problems and the

“aaeighth of China”

– Muhammad Aurangzeb (President HBL)



“We have to give back to the farmer some of the very large margin that he loses to intermediaries”

– Salim Raza (former Governor SBP)

researchers find the solutions to them.

“The quality of our researchers has gone down. In 2010 almost half the staff at our research institutes were PhD holders with some of them from very good universities. Today that number has declined to one-third. So we don’t have coordination, we have overlap, we don’t have budget, and we don’t have human resources. That’s why we haven’t produced a single variety of wheat or cotton. In cotton we have slid from 14 to 7 million bales, and wheat is stagnating at 27 million tons. Only two crops have grown in yield. Maize yield has improved by 120% during the last decade and rice by 75% because private sector is leading with no government intervention.”

Water dynamics

India has only 45% irrigated area while we have 82% with only 12% rain fed, says Dr. Ishrat. “India has developed drip and sprinkler irrigation and shuns flood irrigation, recognizing water as a scarce commodity. When I was in the Sindh Finance department 50 years ago our Abiana tax recovered all the operational and maintenance costs. Today only 10% come from Abiana because we haven’t increased the tax rates. The water is going to the big landlords who resort to flood irrigation while the poor tail-enders do not get water for their crops. India has equitable distribution of water.”

There can be no denying the centrality of water in the coming years. “In water productivity we are one-third of India and one-eighth of China,” says Muhammad Aurangzeb, the president of HBL and chairman PBA.

Former finance minister Dr. Miftah Ismail concurred, and said we needed an equitable system of water distribution. “To produce 20% GDP from agriculture Pakistan uses 90% of its water. This needs to be made more efficient through drip irrigation.”

HBL’s Deyra initiative

Space constraint does not permit me to get into the wealth of knowledge that got mined at this session, with Muhammad Aurangzeb providing a sneak peak of the Deyra initiative that seeks to build capacity in the small farmers alongside providing inputs at their doorstep and help farmers sell their produce.

Dr. Miftah Ismail and former SBP governor Salim Raza pointed out the plethora of misdirected policies

“To produce 20% GDP from agriculture Pakistan uses 90% of its water. This needs to be made more efficient through drip irrigation”

– Dr. Miftah Ismail (former finance minister)

that were snarling up the works and needed sorting on a war footing, with the latter claiming that with the right focus things can turn around very fast.

Salim Raza said that we have to give back to the farmer some of the very large margin that he loses to intermediaries. “He doesn’t borrow at the policy rate but at rates that are three or times more. He pays the dealers and middleman’s commission. He buys inputs and pesticides.”

Dr. Miftah Ismail felt that the government should sell crop insurance and digitize landholding records so they can be used as collateral to obtain loans. “The interest rate on agriculture loans is very high because the risk of default is very high. The use of better harvesters can save 15% wheat that is wasted in the process, according to experts.”

Hope is mandatory, and on that positive note we look forward to a brighter future, Insha’Allah. For our readers wanting a fuller appreciation of Pakistan’s food security conundrum I would highly recommend a reading of Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri’s op-ed piece in The News International dated February 16, 2024 and titled “How to tackle food insecurity” (<https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=281488>)■

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