

TODAY'S MANAGER

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Is India the Next Gold Mine?



Trade Tech Talk \ Seizing Business Opportunities Beyond Asia

Rapid Growth Zone \ Organisational Development? Forget all You Know!

Choosing Change Mastery \ Can We Have Two Golds?



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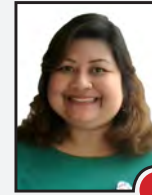
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Dear Readers,

Is India the next gold mine? There have been discussions surrounding this topic for a while now however, though India started off as a slow burn and during the pandemic, that flame has been fanned and they are stepping up even more than before.

We all know that there are many multinational companies who transferred their production hubs over to China, but there were many who set up shop in terms of customer service call centres and the like in India. When the pandemic hit, many re-routed their production hubs over to India, helping the already thriving economy. An article published by the BBC in March 2020 and the PWC's *The World in 2050 Report* projects that India's enroute to be a close second, following China as a Top 10 Economy in 2050. This is strengthened by India's booming high-tech sector and its constant growth in terms of rapid digitalisation.

For our cover story, I speak with Ms Deepshikha Kumar, Founder and Managing Partner of Speak-In and discuss her views about whether India is the next gold mine, as well as get her insights on leadership and management.

As always, we have various articles that look at leadership, empowerment, and companies that thrive on food sustainability methods.

I would like to thank our various contributors who have contributed to *Today's Manager* throughout the years. We will be going on a hiatus as we relook at revamping our approach to thought-leadership and how to align it to SIM's new vision and mission.

While we determine what to do next, I would like to thank you dear readers for your support since 1995. Watch this space as we will be back!

Till then, do take care, stay resilient, and healthy always.

Merry Christmas in advance and here's to a fabulous 2022!

Excelsior!

Dr Sadie-Jane Nunis
Editor

Consumer Empowerment in Agroec

The author discusses the consumer empowerment in agroecosystems management as means to sustainable consumption and quality living.

by Cheryl Marie Cordeiro

Singapore first introduced its National Recycling Programme in 2001. In the years leading up to a greater national awareness on waste management and environmental consciousness, many young consumers (college students and early career individuals) wondered what difference it would make if they actively chose to use less plastic bags, or buy from hawkers that did not pack their food in styrofoam boxes. Would they be willing to give up buying from their favourite *char kway teow* stall because the seller used foam takeaway boxes? The use of plastic was closely intertwined with the food value chain. In the late 1990s, there were many questions from consumers whose answers seemed too complex for any individual to manage. The solution was either to “go green” alone, or to give up until system changes were made through technological breakthroughs or governmental legislations. For many young consumers, time was expensive, and home-cooked meals were not an option, and they were not about to give up their favourite local fare.

In 2021, the principle of “recycle and reuse” has become an innate societal value. What young consumers in the early 1990s worried about seems to also pale in comparison to current global challenges. The globe is facing several concurrent global challenges and shocks.

Impactful climate changes, loss in biodiversity, and the Holocene extinction, overconsumption, overpopulation, and food security are top management priorities to address for many countries.

While the Nordic countries might seem to be in a better position to manage some global challenges due to a combination of several factors that includes their geo-location, and that their lands are less densely populated than countries located in the southern hemisphere, a common realisation is the need for a systems management approach to ecological processes and agricultural production.

The concept of “recycle and reuse” from 30 years ago is now superseded with studying and applying the principles of agrosystems management in everyday living.

In this article, the following questions are addressed: (i) what exactly is agroecology management? And (ii) how can individual consumers be empowered to engage in its principles as a means towards sustainable consumption and quality living?

Agroecology

Agroecology has been identified in scientific literature since the 1920s, finding expression in family farm practices, with roots in regenerative farming. Described as an integration of science, a movement and a practice in 2009 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the field of agroecology comprises the ecological management of agroecosystems.¹ It is an applied science that combines the study of ecological processes and agricultural production systems. What makes agroecology distinct and different to other approaches in current global sustainability discourses is its focus on the bot-

osystems Management



tom-up, territorial processes that help deliver local and contextualised solutions. An agroecological approach is a customised ecological management strategy that is strategically formulated to provide local solutions by combining vanguard technologies with traditional, practical, and local knowledge of producers. In this context, apart from government legislation frameworks and actions from formal institutions, the key agents of change include producers, business owners, and consumers.

Due to its localised approach, agroecology management encompasses a large diversity of approaches and definitions as different countries have different historical traditions and applications of agroecological principles. There are however, some interlinking and interdependent foundational elements that the FAO has outlined and grouped into three broad categories that include the ²

- i. Foundational practices and innovation approaches of *diversity, synergies, efficiency, resilience, recycling, co-creation and knowledge sharing*
- ii. Local contextual features of human and social values, culture and food traditions and
- iii. Enabling environment of responsible governance, circular and solidarity economy

Operationalising agroecosystems management takes an interested multistakeholder approach and involvement. The foundational elements in the categories above can be used as both a framework and analytical

tool in identifying key areas of innovation action to be planned and executed by various societal actors.

Agroecology management strategies are integrative and inclusive of entire food systems, from design to management and consumption. While scholars have debated and critiqued its highly diverse applications and adoption, ³⁻⁵ there is a general consensus that its strength in application is found in its diversity of approaches towards ensuring food security, quality nutrition, environmental conservation and environmental regeneration.

Consume Diversely

Consumers can be active stakeholders in agroecosystems management by driving market demand through their food purchases. At the global level, only three cereal crops provide close to half of all calories consumed on an individual basis. ⁶ This consumption trend is currently driving a loss in biodiversity. Agroecology can help reverse this consumption trend by responding to a local, increased demand for diversity of products that are ecologically sustainable to produce. In the case of the Norway and Singapore, some aquatic species that are locally cultivated can provide for a greater variety of foods to eat as well as support rural livelihoods in the region.

Be a Food Source Detective

Read food product labels carefully, and know where and how your food has been produced. Producing food is energy resource intensive. Agroecological systems improve the use of natural resources by leveraging on

resource synergies. In the example of aquaculture, integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) provides the by products, including waste from one aquatic species as inputs (fertilisers and food) for another.


As a management strategy for environmental biomitigation, farmers can combine fed aquaculture such as fish and shrimp rearing, with seaweed and shellfish farming. Such aquaculture practices will also contribute to product diversification. Consumers can ask for wild harvested seafood to be indicated for sustainable harvests from internationally recognized certifications such as the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) on their food packages. Due to the perishability of seafood products, consumers can also ask for package labels that indicate how, where, and when the seafood had been packaged.

Encourage and Support Regenerative Farming Practices

Instead of feeling guilty about food choices, consumers can encourage and support better farming practices by buying from producers whose farming practices imitate natural ecosystems and who use biological recycling techniques. Recycling can take place both at farm scale and within landscapes. Rotating crop-livestock systems can promote the use of recycled organic materials. Manure can be used for composting or directly as fertiliser, and crop residues and by-products can be used as livestock feed.⁶

Connect with Your Local Producer and Market

Buying from local farms or local producers leverages on the short food supply chain enhances socio-economic resilience, and contributes to building a stronger network of food security. Effective agrosystem management depends on meeting local needs, resources, and capacities to create equitable, and sustainable markets. Supporting short food value chains can increase the income of food producers while maintaining a fair price for consumers.

In this aspect, social and institutional innovations play a key encouraging role. Examples of social innovations include local producer markets, community supported agriculture, and E-commerce initiatives. Co-producing and the sharing of food production methods, and knowledge between producers and business owners is also an important factor in effective agrosystems management. 

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