



The Raghavan Report

Global food industry needs “da Vinci” type creativity

by Raghavan ('Ragha') Sampathkumar



Every year the UN celebrates World Creativity and Innovation day for six days from the birthday of Leonardo da Vinci (21 April), one of the most intellectually brilliant and creative humans who's lived on planet earth. He was an embodiment of creativity, vision, and extra-ordinarily innovative ideas and concepts that were way ahead of his time. History remembers him as a profound and versatile personality whose works inspired the whole world and paved the way for numerous inventions and discoveries across multiple domains such as physics, biology, architecture, engineering, medicine, astronomy, and of course, fine arts.

We must appreciate that our generation is facing some extreme and unique challenges that none of our previous generations would not even have imagined in their wildest dreams. Hence solutions to those problems must come from out-of-the-box thinking. Every industry needs fresh and innovative ideas from outside its ecosystem. Also, sectoral boundaries would vanish sooner than we imagine. For example, a decade ago, who would have thought the next big wave for IT (Information Technology) sector would come from agriculture?

Today, agriculture is witnessing an unprecedented level of technological transformation and investments worth billions of dollars are pouring in. With the emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) concept, mobile phones, and cloud-based applications, global agribusiness industry is getting swept by a “tech tsunami”.

Every day, newer and innovative applications are opening up and pushing the bar higher in terms of efficiency. For example, connected wearable devices on animals provide real-time data to monitor body temperature, vital signs, feed intake, stress or disease symptoms. All these not only to lead to enhanced productivity but also contribute to improved animal welfare as well. Similarly, soil-planted sensors help farmers measure moisture and nutrient levels in real-time to cut down unnecessary irrigation and fertiliser application. These applications not only lead to huge cost savings but also contribute to environmental sustainability.

However, the most important question would be: “Who will continue to bring these kinds of ideas to the global food industry in future?” Global food and agribusiness sector must attract the best talent, sparkling brains and skilled hands from different fields and most importantly, retain them. Age-old business paradigms and entrenched perceptions make for newer and fresher perspectives that only today's youth can bring in. Without them, innovations cannot sprout and flourish. They would become the researchers, regulators, policy makers, professionals and administrators of tomorrow who will feed the world. It is imperative that those who are currently working in the industry must make today's youngsters be aware of the ocean of opportunities available in this industry now and in future. It would be everyone's responsibility to become ambassadors of the food and agribusiness sector to carry the message to the budding future leaders or I would call them, the “da Vinci” type intellectuals.

Raghavan Sampathkumar is a food and agribusiness leader with a 360 degree understanding of the complex Geo Political, Environmental, Socio Economic, Techno - Commercial and Cultural perspectives of Agri Food value chain. He worked in various subsectors including agro inputs, international trade, biotech, and animal nutrition across Asia-Pacific and currently he is with Compound Livestock Feed Manufactures Association (CLFMA) of India as its Executive Director. He regularly writes for international publications on agri-food trends, food security and sustainability themes. Also, he pens his poems and thoughts in his personal blog - www.asmalltownkid.wordpress.com.