



Digital
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Global
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Excerpts from an interview with **Grahame Dunling** | Advisor and Mentor | Worldwide **Local Salads**

What is the Future of AgTech by 2050?

We have already seen advancements in automation, AI, Lighting, energy efficiency along with steps taken to solely run renewable energy. I can see in the next few years, with more and more business focus being on the reduction of our carbon footprints and the global goal of carbon neutrality, the need to marry all these technologies together in being able to grow truly sustainable crops.

What are the greatest benefits and risks of embracing advanced technologies on urban and sub-urban farming?

Advantages of the technology is greater control of crops and nutrients knowing the minutest of details, efficient use of energy, water etc. Collection of data is now easier with AI.

The risks are that we become too data reliant and lose the ability of old school methods of growing crops that only are available with human interaction. Energy cost will constantly increase as all the systems will require greater energy supply. So to combat this we need to embrace the use of renewable energy and also to think how we can improve the viability of these.

With the unprecedented climate change, what can farmers do now to preserve health and build resilience in the agriculture ecosystem?

The need for less pesticide and herbicide usage along the hedge rows to preserve the wildlife needed for the ecosystem to thrive and natural predators to have homes. Also the tillage of wasted leaves and trimmed crop wastage back into the soil can help to replace nutrients used by the crops. This in turn will reduce the usage of manufactured fertilisers on the soil, NOT replace but reduce usage.

What it takes to adapt to precision farming from current agriculture practices?

As for large scale arable farming we need to be able to adapt the way we farm and the use of super modern warehouse growing to help improve arable farming. Remember we are talking about 2050 which is 30 years from now .

Look what we have achieved since 1990 to the present 2020 (30 years). In 1990 we did not have computers talking to each other and we could not move data like we do now.

So simply saying we cannot do this, or we cannot grow that. We should be saying HOW can we do this and HOW do we grow that. **Every problem has a solution & every solution will bring a new problem.**

What steps need to be taken to encourage future generations in agriculture business? If not, what are the drawbacks?

The younger generations need to be shown and taught that Farming / Growing is a computer science and uses high tech control systems. It also takes skill and knowledge to grow crops for flavour and we do need human intervention to get that extra wow factor. If we do not encourage the younger generation then we will face a future of processed unflavoured food and completely lose the Salads. You only have to look at the number of people who have become 'Farmers' by buying a grow system that anyone can grow in and see and taste the green disgusting mess of leaves that they have grown, and they call salads. How many NEW Farmers have failed? After all, you only sow a seed and wait to harvest.