



Visit of the INRA Head to Israel

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National Trade Union CGT-INRA RN 10 – Porte de St Cyr 78210 Saint Cyr l'Ecole, FRANCE - Tel : +(33)1.39.53.56.56 - Fax : +(33)1.39.02.14.50 Mail : cgt@inra.fr
Internet : <https://intranet.inra.fr/cgt/> et <http://www.inra.cgt.fr/>

A delegation representing the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) and several other French scientific agencies (CIRAD, CNRS, IRD et IRSTEA), led by INRA President F. Houllier, traveled to Israel from 17 to 19 March, 2014, where they met several Israeli leaders: the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Minister of Science, Technology and Space and the chief scientist of the Ministry of Agriculture¹. According to F. Houllier's interview with the France-Israel Chamber of Commerce², the aim of this visit was to « *renew collaboration with Israel, to help the country to cope with problems linked to climate change, to learn from their technology, and to make use of the complementarity between the two countries* ».

The CGT-Inra trade union is concerned about the consequences of this strengthened institutional collaboration, while the Israeli government continues and intensifies its settlements policy and its practice of expulsion and discrimination against Palestinian farmers. This is true both in the Palestinian occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, notably in the Israeli agricultural settlements in the Jordan Valley which has significant hydro-agricultural potential, and in Israel itself, where thousands of Bedouin pastoral farmers in the Negev continue to face expulsion. The development of Israeli agriculture has for decades been carried out at the cost of the destruction of Palestinian agriculture and food sovereignty, thus creating a captive market for the Israeli economy.

In his interview, for example, F. Houllier claimed that *"any system that improves the distribution and recycling of water, or that improves purification of polluted water sources, can help reduce tensions connected with water"*. But what are these good intentions in the face of the reality of the hydro-agricultural situation in Israel-Palestine, described in detail in numerous reports, but totally ignored in the declarations of the President of INRA?

Thus, in the report Jean Glavany (former minister for agriculture) presented in 2011 to the French parliament on the "geopolitics of water", one reads that: *"This is why, in the absence of a global political solution, one cannot imagine how what has become a genuine 'water conflict' can be resolved. ... Water in the Middle-East has become much more than a resource: it is a weapon. In order to understand the nature of this " weapon" at the service of this "new apartheid"³, one needs to know, for example, that the 450,000 Israeli settlers on the West Bank use more water than 2.3 million Palestinians."*

Again, every year, Israeli settlements release 35 millions cubic metres of sewage — 40% of the West Bank total — into the environment, damaging Palestinian fields and polluting their water resources. In Gaza, the Israeli blockade keeps 1.7 millions Palestinians below UN norms for the availability of drinking water, and prevents the treatment of wastewater⁴.

While we do not call into question all direct collaborations that may exist among scientists, the CGT-Inra condemns the support that the leadership of INRA, through its present institutional initiative, is providing for Israeli national policy. The CGT-Inra reaffirms its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people, and to the 2005 call of the Palestinian society for non-violent resistance by means of the "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" movement, as long as the state of Israel fails to respect international law and the human and national rights of the Palestinian people.

1- <http://fitscience.wordpress.com/2014/03/17/3730/>

2- <http://www.israelvalley.com/news/2014/03/20/42816/france-israel-interview-du-president-de-linra-jf-houllier-a-jerusalem-collaborations-agricoles>

3- Water apartheid and misappropriation is organized in particular by Mekorot [the Israeli water company], as well as by the army and the settlers (destruction of Palestinian storage cisterns, ...) (editor's note)

4- from « thirstingforjustice.org », 2013