



Scientific Representative Committee

9/3/16

**Position of the Scientific Representative Council of the Agricultural Research Organization
regarding "Transferring ARO to Northern Israel"**

- The Agricultural Research Organization (ARO, Volcani Center), which is celebrating 95 years of research excellence for the benefit of the citizens of Israel, is one of the leading agricultural science centers in the world. The State of Israel benefits from both Volcani's research achievements and from the many international ties formed during joint scientific projects.
- The most valuable component of the ARO is the human capital—researchers who have expertise in all the varied aspects of agriculture. Research groups collaborate on a broad range of topics in agriculture and the environment, including: improvements in animal and plant production, food security, preserving soil and water resources, sustainability and environmental quality, and improving food quality and storability. The products of Volcani Center research are recognized all over the world, and serve as a model for international scientific and agricultural activities.
- The decision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to relocate Volcani Center "as far north as possible" will cause **the gradual dismantling of the Center until it is closed.**
- The location of ARO in the geographic center of Israel is an enormous advantage to Israeli agriculture in all areas of the country. It also encourages accessibility and daily contact with the best research centers in the country, the universities, and the R&D centers of biotechnology, seed and irrigation equipment companies.
- The ARO is closely associated with universities in the center of Israel, especially with the Hebrew University Faculty of Agriculture in Rehovot. Hundreds of graduate students carry out their research at Volcani Center and many Volcani scientists teach at the Faculty.
Closing or "transferring" Volcani will cause catastrophic damage to agricultural education in Israel.
- The "transfer" proposal causes uncertainty, which makes it difficult to attract and retain new scientists and technical staff. Established scientists who contribute greatly to Israeli agriculture are unlikely to move north, since their families have strong links to the center of the country.

- A considerable amount of the research carried out at ARO is performed by hundreds of master's and doctoral students in agriculture. The North of Israel does not have a university that grants advanced degrees in agriculture. **It will be impossible to maintain advanced agricultural research with a broad base and at a high level as in our current location.**
- The suggested location in the Far North will indeed make it easier to carry out research in the eastern and upper Galilee regions, but it will limit activity in projects in other areas of the country, especially in the South, the Arava, and the Negev. This will particularly affect research on drought and desert agriculture in a time of climate change.
- Without agricultural research there is no innovation, and without innovation farmers and agriculture will not survive. The basis for maintaining a nation is its ability to provide food for itself, especially in a country that is surrounded by enemies, and which is threatened by international boycotts. Closing the ARO will bring disaster to Israeli agriculture and to future generations.
- The proclamation of the Minister of Agriculture that "transferring" Volcani Center "will release thousands of apartments to the real estate market and will lessen the housing crunch in the center of the country" is pulling wool over the public's eyes. There is ample land area nearby for building tens of thousands of housing units. The city leaders of Rishon LeZion, within whose boundaries Volcani Center is located, want to preserve one of the few large "fresh air" tracts left in the Dan region. They are against the transfer of Volcani Center.

In summary: Volcani Center has developed and disseminated agricultural knowledge and progress for nearly 100 years. The heads of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development have stated that "the Agricultural Research Organization ... is considered a world-class research institute, ranked as one of the finest of its type internationally". Transfer to the North will destroy Volcani Center and will severely damage agricultural research in Israel. **Closure and destruction take only an instant; building an Institute of this stature takes a century!**