

## **Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Water Pipeline Construction and Irrigation Project in North-Tunisia**

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### **Relevance of the Project**

One of the challenges that Tunisia has fought to overcome since the days of antiquity is the development of its modest water resources in a semi-arid geographic zone. This challenge has taken the form of an organized battle to provide for the drinking-water needs of the urban population as well as the agricultural needs of the rural population, which still employs 33% of the country's workers.

The plan to build 80 km of aqueducts and irrigation facilities in the north of Tunisia is the second part of a three-part effort in the Provinces of Béja (Nefza) and Bizerte (Sejnane). It is a provision of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plans and aims to irrigate 4,420 hectares for agricultural use, and thereby improve the quality of life of the residents of the region of the Sejnane and Joumine dams.

### **Impact:**

In spite of delays – all of them warranted – in the completion of the project, it should be noted that the total cost has been less than the amount estimated before work began. Better yet, the volume of water being transported has already reached two thirds of the goal set for the year 2010, which motivated the new loan that Tunisia signed with JBIC in 2004 in response to the growing needs of the region. It's estimated that the project now benefits 1.6 million residents in the area.

Regarding the surface area of irrigated land, the zone benefited from the irrigation project is already 20% larger than what was expected. The same applies to the number of people who have been benefited.

### **Sustainability:**

The Japanese expertise that conducted the evaluation (in November 2006) correctly underscored the necessity of considering the project to be in its build-up period. It recorded progress in the creation of jobs, in the annual revenues of irrigated farmland, and a spectacular improvement in the physical environment: a tripling of environmental water supply to the Ichkeul Lake, which has been under UNESCO protection.

Tunisian authorities rightly foresaw the need for a supervising body. Thus, the Regional Agricultural Development Commission (C.R.D.A.) manages a host of organizations specializing in irrigation, maintenance, farm equipment, agricultural interest groups (G.I.A.), education and guidance in a region that never before enjoyed the particular benefits of irrigation.

### **Conclusion:**

This Japanese-Tunisian project presents a superb prospect for the future. We should recognize the vision and the perceptiveness of those who conceived of it in the spirit of which we already call the "water process."