

# The agricultural sector's attitude change toward construction in agricultural lands following the 2002 supreme court decisions

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—ABSTRACT—

Since the establishment of Israel, the land policy has given great importance to public ownership of agricultural lands. It was determined that lands managed by the Israel Land Administration (ILA) would be leased, and not sold permanently. Moreover, it was decided that land-use change would require return of the land to the ILA with lessees' compensation limited to their agricultural investments in the land. These policy principles were undermined during the 1980s with the decline of agriculture, the 1977 political shift, the Kibbutz crisis, and the immigration from the USSR, which resulted in a housing crisis requiring quick solutions. These changes led the ILA to make the "Boeing" decisions that allowed lessees to initiate land-use change to enable construction, and to receive compensation related to the value increase of the land after the change. The agricultural sector saw it as an opportunity to exit the economic crisis. The decisions were contested through social and environmental petitions submitted to the High Court of Justice. The verdict confirmed the objections, and the decisions were annulled. The article analyzes the shift in the position of the agricultural sector following the verdict, which currently opposes land use change in favor of construction. Although this is a self-interested change driven mostly by a lack of economic viability, in its struggle against the land-use change the agricultural sector stands with the environmental organizations while using environmental arguments.

Keywords: agricultural sector; agricultural land; land-use change; Israel Land Administration; environment.

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