



Avigad VONSHAK

Professor Avigad Vonshak is the Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) and served as the first Director of the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The BIDR is the research arm of Ben-Gurion University which studies the problems of Desertification and tries to develop new methodologies that will help in preventing Desertification and promote sustainable development of drylands. The Institutes are organized into three institutes dealing with Water sciences and technology, Agriculture and biotechnology in Dryland and Dryland environment. The BIDR serves as the "Focal Point" of Israel to the Convention for Combating Desertification"

Professor Avigad Vonshak received his Ph.D. in 1980 from BGU and did his postdoctoral training in the Plant Research Laboratory of Michigan State University. Professor Vonshak has been a faculty member of the BIDR in the Department for Dryland Biotechnologies since 1982.

His research interests include the study of environmental stress in plants and algae. The main goal of these studies is to try and understand the mechanisms involved in the adaptation of dense algal cultures to the extreme environment existing in many drylands. The concept was developed as part of the approach that sustainable development of drylands requires the need to develop new innovative biotechnologies that will make use of the special environmental condition of drylands and increase the water use efficiency as compared to conventional agriculture methodologies.

Professor Vonshak served as President of the Asian Pacific Society for Applied Phycology. He has been involved in many international training programs organized by UNEP, UNESCO and other international agencies. He took part in many international meetings presenting keynote lectures related to the potential of algal biotechnology as a tool in sustainable development of drylands. He is also involved in running international training programs on Algal biotechnology and photosynthesis.