

Aquate aims to provide sustainable solutions to 3 major environmental issues: Water, energy and food

• By EHUD ZION WALDOKS

Israeli company Aquate Group Ltd. recently signed a NIS 300-million deal with Hevrat Moshve Hanegev to provide reservoir enhancement services to their four reclaimed waste-water reservoirs.

Hevrat Moshve Hanegev, the country's largest agricultural company, is a partnership of 34 moshavim that cultivate over 150,000 dunams. The company specializes in field crops (wheat, potatoes, peanuts, sunflower, chickpeas, corn and carrots), citrus fruits, almonds and pomegranates, among other things.

Aquate uses a floating cover to increase water production, improve water quality and even generate clean electricity. Its reservoir enhancements will generate another 900,000 cubic meters of water from those same reservoirs by preventing evaporation, according to the company's calculations. The water quality will also improve, as the water that would otherwise have evaporated now remains in the reservoir, lowering the concentration of reclaimed sewage there and also reducing the water's salinity.

The floating covers also incorporate photovoltaic solar panels, which have the capacity to generate 16 MW of clean energy.

Barak Yekutieli, chairman and CEO of Aquate Group Ltd., told *The Jerusalem Post* Wednesday that "the cooperation agreement with Hevrat Moshve Hanegev is the company's first entry into the Israeli market, but we expect to announce many more such agreements over the course of the year."

At the core of Aquate's philosophy is sustainability and increasing natural resources without using up non-renewable natural resources like land. By building on existing reservoirs to generate electricity, there's no need for huge swaths of land.

An increase of water in drought-stricken Israel is always appreciated, and by increasing water for agriculture, the company is enabling more food to be grown within the country's borders.

"Israel's numerous irrigation reservoirs are critical to supporting agricultural production in Israel, as well as to reducing pressure on supplies of drinking water," remarked Shimon Tal

- Israel's former water commissioner, director of Aquate Group Ltd., and president of Aquate's operations in Israel.

Rather than focus on just one sector or environmental aspect, the company seeks to increase as many as possible. As an innovative infrastructure services company, it uses existing, proven technologies - floating covers have been installed around the world for years - in combinations heretofore mostly unexplored, the company said.

"The services Aquate is providing Israel will produce clean electricity on a large scale and enhance the capacity of these reservoirs to support agricultural production without interfering with the operation of the reservoirs," said Tal. "The Aquate team has experience planning and installing cover systems on hundreds of reservoirs around the world, and that experience spans over more than 30 years. By implementing existing knowledge and methods in the design and installation of reservoir covers, we can provide a system-wide solution that will preserve and enhance the original designation of the reservoirs for agriculture."