

Report to the Atkinson Center on the Topical Lunch of the International Water Group

Fouad Makki (Development Economics) led a discussion with students and faculty concerned with international water issues at a Topical Lunch hosted by the Atkinson Center and the International Water Group on Tuesday, October 25th. Professor Makki's introduction, entitled "Large-scale Land Acquisitions in Contemporary Ethiopia: Implications for Water," offered a fascinating overview of the historical and political events that led to the large-scale acquisition of agricultural land by foreign and local investors in Ethiopia. He reminded the audience of the recent nature of the so-called "land grab" in his country, most of which has taken place since 2008. Concerns about the effects of this sudden change in land-use on inhabitants of the Ethiopian lowlands, on biodiversity, and water have been voiced by national and international organizations but ignored by the government. Ethiopia plays an important role among the riparian nations of the Nile Basin since 84% of the Nile's water originates in the Highlands of Ethiopia. The construction of a large dam in Ethiopia is causing concern to downstream countries, but recently the new Egyptian administration has entered into discussions with Sudanese and Ethiopian delegations about the future of the Nile.

The audience for Professor Makki's discussion was broad and included a large number of students. This was pleasing but in talking with Professor Di Salvo following the presentation, it was clear that there is a need for a more active water research team on the campus. The international water group, led by Steenhuis and Holst-Warhaft, will draw up a list of research questions and try to engage other faculty who work on international and national water issues. Next semester, instead of presenting a particular topic, we will organize a meeting around the possibilities for cooperation in defining key research areas and identifying sources of funding that we can apply for as a group or sub-group of faculty concerned with water.

Attendees:

Host – Gail Holst-Warhaft, glh3

Host- Tammo Steenhuis, tss1

Fouad Makki, fmm2

Drew Harvell, cdh5

Wendy Wolford, www43

Chuck Geisler, ccg2

Laurie Damiani, lad2

Rodrigo Alatraste-Diaz, ralatristediaz@gmail.com

Cathelijne Stoof, crs333

Asha Sharma, ans62

Gilbert Levine, gl14

Becky Sirianni, sirianni.becky@gmail.com

Edmund Oh, edmundohjoovin@gmail.com

Christian Guzman, cdg65

Frank DiSalvo, fjd3

Nicole Wilson, njw53

Gokce Gunel, gg268

Chris Barrett, cbb2

Pratyush Ranjan Singh, prs83

Brian Thiede, bct42

Kathleen Sexsmith, kjs256

Sara Keene, sek99

Lauren Chambliss, elc55

Randy Barker, rb19

Divya Sharma, ds738