

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **WATER CONSUMPTION AND BEEF PRODUCTION: STOP THE CONFUSION**

In response to recent media coverage stating a disproportionate water consumption for beef production, INTERBEV, the livestock and meat organisation, plans to restore the true figures representing the French cattle industry systems and does not accept the abusive assimilation between “drinking water” and “rainwater”.

#### **The methodology recording rainfalls on natural pasture is contestable.**

The figures frequently quoting 1 500 L of water consumption to produce a steak (or 15 000 L of water per beef kg) are issued from the Waterfootprint<sup>1</sup> methodology, used for bovines and are recording 3 types of water:

- “The blue water” represents 3 to 4 % of the quoted 1 500 L. This is captured freshwater volume onto surface water and water table. For the cattle industry, it mainly constitutes of drinking water used for livestock, water used for forage crops irrigation, and water used for meat processing. The French livestock institute assesses this water consumption in France at 20 L per beef steak.
- “The grey water” represents 3 % of the quoted 1 500 L. This is the theoretical water volume required to maintain the water quality to the current standards, in the beef production system.
- “The green water”, represents 94 % of the quoted 1 500 L. This is rainwater volume stored underground as humidity, which evaporates through cultivated areas or pastures areas, used to feed the livestock.

INTERBEV firmly contests including this “green water” to the “drinking water” used for cattle industry. If this industry disappeared, the 2 millions forage corn hectares and 13 millions of grassland hectares used in France for animals consumption, will be replaced by cereals, farmland and forests. The rainwater volume received and evaporated by these surfaces would be as important.

#### **It is therefore unacceptable to allocate this rainwater, which naturally falls onto the grasslands and cereal fields, to the meat processing industry.**

Remember that in France, bovine farms are small sized and independent: on average, these farms own about a hundred animals and produce 90 % of feed for their livestock. This feed mainly contains grass or hay, of which only 8 % of the total areas are irrigated.

Moreover, in France, the 13 millions of pastures hectares used for the cattle industry play a key ecological role, especially in flood control and in maintaining water quality.

If the French meat sector was to include rainwater into the calculation of the industry environmental impact, this would paradoxically result in rearing bovines exclusively indoors and not feeding them grass anylonger. Is it what the citizen-consumers would wish for ?

To conclude, INTERBEV and its 13 professional organisations, on behalf of the French meat sector, is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://waterfootprint.org/?page=files/productgallery>

outraged by the recurring diffusion of abusive figures, which discredits the entire sector, at the expense of any developments started by either farmers or companies, to preserve the water quantity and quality.

### About INTERBEV

INTERBEV is the livestock and meat organisation, created by the representative organisations of livestock and meat industry for bovine, ovine and equine sectors. Its role is to protect and promote the common interests of the artisanal, industrial and commercial, meat branch activities.

To find out more: [www.interbev.fr](http://www.interbev.fr)

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### National organisations comprising INTERBEV



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BOVINE



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OVINE



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