

Position Paper

Committee: Food and Agriculture Organization

Theme: Disappearing Biodiversity: A threat to agriculture, livelihood and health

Country: Italy

Italy has been a Republic since 1946. With a territory bordering the Mediterranean Sea and borders with many countries, Italy has a varied ecosystem: forests, mountains, coastline. The peninsula is one of the most populated states in Europe with over 60.5 million inhabitants. Italy has been a member of the United Nations since 1955. With a GDP of 1770 billion dollars, the country is the 9th largest economy in the world and the 3rd in Europe. This wealth is due in part to its agriculture: wheat, rice, corn, beet, vineyards... It is one of the main agricultural producers in Europe and one of the world leaders in organic farming. However, agriculture and many other fields are threatened by the disappearance of biodiversity.

Since its creation in 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has worked to address the food shortages that followed World War II by working in partnership with national governments and regional organizations aiming to provide assistance and address food insecurity. Italy, which has hosted FAO headquarters since 1951, has played a leading role in this struggle. The World Food Programme has also helped to globalize the fight against food insecurity, leading to the World Food Summit and the Millennium Declaration. In recent decades, the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services has become critical to the sustainability of food and agricultural systems. It is essential for production systems and livelihoods to cope with and adapt to changing social, economic and environmental conditions. It is a key resource in efforts to ensure food security and good nutrition while limiting or

reducing negative environmental impacts, and makes multiple contributions to the well-being and livelihoods of many households.

Biodiversity for food and agriculture, the biological diversity that in some way contributes to agriculture and food production, is essential for food security and nutrition, sustainable development and the provision of many vital ecosystem services. Providing enough safe and nutritious food for a growing world population poses many challenges. Among the most serious is the need to increase global food production without compromising the ability of the world's land and seas to meet the food needs of future generations and to provide other essential ecosystem services. Despite repeated warnings of rapid biodiversity loss and growing evidence of its key role in food security and nutrition, production systems around the world are becoming less diverse in terms of ecosystems, species and intraspecific genetic resources. The main reasons for biodiversity loss are: land use change (ex. deforestation, intensive monoculture, urbanization), direct exploitation such as hunting and overfishing, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species. Today, climate change is having the greatest impact on biodiversity: ecosystems are being disrupted, oceans are becoming more acidic and many species are disappearing or proliferating.

Our well-being and that of our planet greatly depend on healthy forests, soils, streams and oceans, and on the genetic diversity these ecosystems provide. Italy pays special attention to mountains (among the world's most important and fragile environments) as well as marine life in the Mediterranean, which is deeply tied to its culture and economy. Italy's contributions to projects that protect natural resources near and far of its shores remain essential to sustainable development worldwide. The Italy-funded MedSudMed project has been a major joint endeavour to assess and monitor fisheries and fish stocks in the Strait of Sicily, ensuring the area's marine resources are used sustainably. Meanwhile, Italy has championed sustainable

mountain development by supporting the Mountain Partnership alliance's Secretariat (hosted by FAO), the Climate Change and Mountain Forest project, the launch of the Fragile Ecosystem Coalition, among other initiatives under FAO's Sustainable Mountain Development programme. Italy has seen several legislative and strategic policy updates relating to climate action in recent years. Air pollution limits are often exceeded in Italian urban areas and the June 2019 action plan for improving air quality includes several measures with the dual purpose of limiting air pollutants and supporting decarbonisation efforts. Along with this, the transfer into law of the Climate Decree in 2019, further aligns several Italian climate action measures with the EU Green Deal. In addition, in connection with the EU, the tool "Natura 2000" has been established. It is an ecological network established under the name of "Habitat Directive" and spread over the territories of all member countries. With the aim of ensuring the long-term preservation of natural habitats as well as rare or threatened species of fauna and flora. This allowed the creation of Special Protection Areas.

Italy and FAO will continue their joint work around common priorities such as the environment and sustainable use of natural resources, rural development, food security and nutrition, and increasing support for emergency and fragile states. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on supporting innovation in the international humanitarian system, and specifically on finding more diverse, effective and efficient ways to deliver relevant support to people in need. Moreover, Italy is committed to restoring damaged ecosystems and has increased the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas (including category V and VI areas defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature). As well as other effective measures for the conservation of biodiversity for food and agriculture and the preservation of associated ecosystem services in a given area, including World Agricultural Heritage systems and recognized sites where quality products of geographical origin (for example, geographical

indication products). Italy promotes sustainable food and agricultural production practices and approaches that use biodiversity for food and agriculture and contribute to its conservation and restoration, while improving livelihoods, economic outcomes and environmental health. Additionally, implementing sustainable resource management practices can help to balance the needs of humans and the environment, allowing for the responsible use of natural resources while minimizing negative impacts on biodiversity. Climate smart agriculture is just one of the tools available to increase resource efficiency in agriculture and build resilience to climate risks. Italy also suggests that the Food and Agriculture Organization's Technical Cooperation Department partner with Last Minute Market to create a system that would allow the purchase of near-perished goods for a reduced price by impoverished people to prevent food waste and combat food insecurity.

Finally, it is important to remember that biodiversity is essential, it has a major role in our survival. That is why we must pay the greatest attention to it. We must balance the needs of man and the environment. As well as a responsible use of natural resources and reducing the negative impacts on biodiversity.

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