

**National Report to the Third Session of the
United Nations Forum on Forests**

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

General

II.A : Initiatives taken on assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context.

In Italy, ministerial responsibility for Forestry Policy and Environment fall under distinct and separate administrations, that nevertheless collaborate in various ways, often very effectively.

The method suggested by the Secretariat (i.e. to proceed with the integration of further elements in the reports presented to the "Commission on Sustainable Development ") does not seem appropriate for the Italian administrative situation. In fact, the above-mentioned reports are totally lacking any reference to the "implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals", that would lead to the adoption of this methodology.

On the other hand, the situation of the forestry policy in Italy is well set out in the report that was sent, in November 2002, by the Minister for Forestry Policy to the Liaison Unit of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, to be examined in the course of the Fourth Ministerial Conference, that will take place in Wien (Austria) in April, 2003.

The systematic reference to the "wide-ranging set of approximately 300 IPF and IFF Proposals for action", in Italy's case, was not particularly developed, as it was deemed unnecessary to proceed in that sense.

It was considered in fact that, overall, the situation corresponds to the objectives proposed in the resolutions themselves. This occurred both at the ministerial level, and in terms of scientific research, civil society and multi-stakeholders.

Therefore, in order to illustrate the situation of Italian forestry policy, this report is appropriately based on the considerations and indications that emerged from the 2nd National Silviculture Congress for the improvement and conservation of Italian forests, which took place in Venice in June 1998.

This important event, that took place almost half a century from the preceding one (Florence 1954), included an intense preparatory phase that involved the most important interlocutors from the central, regional and local levels, the most authoritative university and scientific institutes, industrial associations, agro-forestry sector technicians and workers, the media, and civil society.

The final motion of that Congress framed prospects in the context of norms and promotional initiative carried out in the following years and ongoing still at the various administrative and technical levels, in favour of "Sustainable Forest Management" and which should be reproduced in its entirety as the basis for this report.

1. Italian forests, that cover almost one third of the country (approximately 10 million hectares), are a precious and necessary patrimony for the quality of life.
2. Forests are complex systems and resources that carry out multiple functions. They protect soil, manage waters, improve climate, purify air, contrast the green-house effect, encourage tourism and recreational activities, safeguard bio-diversity, provide wood and other products. Activities related to products and positive output of forests are sources of occupation.
3. For the sustainable management of forests and the conservation of bio-diversity, it is necessary to:
 - ensure the continuity of the management of forestry patrimony with appropriate selvicultural techniques;
 - give value to the social, economic and cultivational role of forestry resources for mountain territories and their communities;
 - maintain the ability of forestry ecosystems to respond to natural and artificial factors of disturbance;
 - defend forests from fire through prevention, and failing that, through fire-fighting, and from other biotic and abiotic adversities;
 - fight processes of desertification currently occurring in southern regions;
 - see to the constant updating of the National Inventory, as well as Regional ones, including ecological and social parameters as well as economic and selvicultural ones;
 - develop the planning of public and private forests at the regional, district and industry levels, attributing to them their necessary urbanistic and economic-social worth;
 - ensure an integrated system of representative ecologically-protected forestry areas, which are able to guarantee all forestry components;
 - promote the use of processing residue and waste deriving from the maintenance of forests for the production of paper, panels, energy, heat, natural compost for agriculture.
4. Forestry policy and the management of forests must take into account international conventions signed by Italy, in particular those regarding climatic change, sustainable management, conservation of biodiversity; carry out all monitoring action of forestry ecosystems and research on their functionality, bio-diversity and on interaction with selviculture operations.

5. To satisfy the demand for wood, it is also necessary to enlarge forest areas with the cultivation of logging trees, in order to obtain products in large supplies or of high quality. For this purpose, it is necessary to:

- see to the production and marketing of green-house material that is genetically improved, rigorously selected and eco-certified, from guaranteed sources
- apply intensive cultivating techniques that add value to production;
- provide for non-binding norms for the cutting and the cultivational reconversion of logging tree plantations.

6. Set up a National Forestry Fund to:

- activate a national informative-statistical forestry system;
- see to and adequately finance a new National Forestry Plan;
- support the economic function of private and public forests;
- improve or reinstate degraded or damaged forests;
- encourage forestry activity and support forestry enterprises;
- promote the use of appropriate equipment for silvicultural activities;
- bring up to standard and improve infrastructure;
- develop the market for wood and other products.

7. Foster the coordination among all the institutional and social components interested in forest-wood sector to provide guidelines for the management of Italian forests.

8. Commit institutions to an integrated forestry policy even at the level of the European Union for sustainable development and conservation of biodiversity, that is of reference in particular to mountain areas and the Mediterranean area within the larger context of rural development.

9. See to a Framework Law, respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the commitments undersigned by Italy at the international level, which sets out the general norms for:

- the protection, conservation, management, rehabilitation, enlargement and valorization of forests;
- the conservation and protection of terrain with particular attention to high-risk areas;
- the ecocertification of management systems and forestry products;
- stimulate forestry ownership and enterprise for the development of forestry activity, given their public interest function;
- stimulate association in the management of forestry property;
- tax exemptions for the rehabilitation of degraded and damaged forests.

10. Promote information on the value of forests, improve technical and professional formation and university teaching through, among other things, the recognition of first level diplomas and the creation of schools of

specialization, develop research and experimentation, see to norms that stimulate occupation, youth entrepreneurship, give value to the specific nature of the forestry profession: the only one that operates in terms of long-term management and development of the sector.

The motion quoted above was the basis for legislative and administrative provisions regarding forests in the years following the above-mentioned Congress.

Of particular significance are the provisions adopted at the national level in the period 2000-2002, that can be summarized as follows:

- National law n.353 of 21st November 2000: represents the new law against forest fires and replaces the old one of 1975. It acts as a framework for local actions carried out at the regional level with the help of the Italian Forest Service and Civil Protection Offices and provides the draft of annual regional plans devoted to preventing damage by forest fires. The law confirms the Italian Forest Service's responsibility to carry out the next National forest inventory.

- National law n.57 of 5th March 2001: is a general law containing provisions concerning the improvement of some market conditions to favour the sustainable development of the forest sector, according to criteria and principles set out by the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and to help also the creation of employment (especially for young people), to fight damage by forest fires and to implement more ecocertification programmes

- National law n. 227 of 18th May 2001 represents the new forest law replacing the old one of 1923. It provides a new general framework for actions to be implemented mainly at the local level by Regions, gives the definition of forest, and promotes activities related to forestry, forest research and information. Some guidelines of national forest policy are briefly depicted to the Regions, underlining the need to implement the resolutions signed along the process of MCPFE. The law provides the foundation in the National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) of the National Observatory for the marketing of forest products and services, entrusted with the task of promoting activities in favour of the marketing of forest products and services according to methods of SFM.

- The decree n. 124 of 19th April 2002 of the Ministry of Economics and Finance provides, inter alia, the opportunity for forest owners to write off from taxes a significative part of the expenses relating to the improvement of management and protection of forests: this measure is devoted to preventing the lack of management practises in woodlands, especially where the risk of forest fires is high.

- National law n.120 of 1st June 2002, n.120 represents Italy's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol drafted in accordance with UNFCCC and providing special duties to forests mainly related to their role as ""carbon sink"". The drafting of new guidelines

for its implementation and for the updating of those done during November 1998 is ongoing.

II.B : Initiatives taken for the development and implementation of national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests.

Since 1998, various relevant studies, reports, or activities have also been carried out, focusing on forestry or dealing with it in some way, for example:

- National Plan for Cork, drafted by the MiPAF, aimed at defining strategies and actions to sustain the production and commercialisation of Italian cork forests (April 2001);

- the National Plan for Renewable Energies coming from Biomasses (PNERB), drafted by the MiPAF at the end of the year 1998 and recognizing officially the role of Italian forests as a source of renewable energy and, at the same time, an important sink for the carbon dioxide responsible for the "greenhouse effect" and global climate change;

- two national reports regarding the implementation of CBD (1998 and 2001) drafted by the Italian Ministry for the Environment according to the suggestions and information given on forest aspects by the MiPAF and containing as well as details on the national policy devoted to the preservation and use forest resources in a sustainable way;

- "Forest for All", joint exhibition of the Italian Forest Service and the Forestry Department of FAO, devoted to show to the public methods related to the sustainable management of forest and to the preservation of natural forest and agriculture landscape (October 2001).

- One relevant example of a project aiming to define and implement in the field methods of sustainable forest management started in March 2000 and is going to end. It is devoted to promoting new ways to manage coppice (which represents more than 60% of Italian forest), improving its structure on small plots to enhance both the preservation of biodiversity and economic functions.

II.C: mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management.

The answers regarding these topics are included in the explanations of the previous parts.

Economic aspects of forests, including trade

2. These aspects correspond with the with the indications of Resolution L1 of the Ministerial Conference of Lisbon (MCPFE) entitled: "People, Forests and Forestry - Enhancement of Socio-Economic Aspects of SFM".

In the report sent to the Secretariat of the Wien Ministerial Conference, as "general approach for the implementation of L1", it was recalled that the Italian National Forest Programme (PFN), prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, was launched in 1987 and expired during year 1997: nevertheless its guidelines are still valid and implemented because they are in line with indications given by the international forest processes and were confirmed, in 1998, in the above-mentioned Venezia Congress.

Despite the absence of a new NFP, a general framework for the activities to be carried out in agriculture and forestry during years 2001-2003 is given by the plan drafted by the Ministry for Agricultural and Forest Policies. This document underlines the tight integration existing on Italian land between agriculture and forestry, recognizes the importance of sustainable forest management according to the need to preserve natural resources and to assure at the same time the socio-economic and employment functions of forests

Since January 2000 the NFP's role was practically carried out by the Regional Rural Development Programmes (PSR), drafted and implemented by 19 Regions and 2 Autonomous Provinces executing UE rules. These programmes act from 2000 up to 2006 as a framework at the local level for all activities related to agriculture and forestry.

3. It can be said that the question regarding this point is related to the Lisbon Resolution L2: "Pan-European Criteria, Indicators and Operational Level Guidelines for SFM".

The General approach for implementation of the L2 resolution is referred to the work of defining Italian indicators for sustainable forest management drafted according to MCPFE resolutions and recommendations. The work started during 1999 and was completed and published at the beginning of year 2000 by the Ministry of Environment, involving a broad range of forest stakeholders and public institutions.

Thanks to it a group of 54 national indicators was recognized, comprising all the MCPFE indicators and a group of national ones, regarding mainly plantations, natural conversion to forest, effects of forest fires, non wood forest products (NWFPs), tourist functions and number of forest workers: it provided also a complete although summarized collection of all the up-to-date information about Italian forestry.

Related to the field of C&I is the work to carry out a new national forest inventory. The last was done during 1985 by the Italian Forest Service and needs to be updated due to new developments existing both in the Italian

forests situation and the last international commitments signed by the Country. The new inventory is starting at present in accordance with FAO guidelines and recommendations and will end at the end of year 2004: it will investigate, for example, the extension of new woodland due to afforestation, reforestation and revegetation, and take into account the special need of knowledge due to the Kyoto protocol commitments and the CBD expanded program of work on forest biodiversity launched during COP6 in April 2002.

A field next to the sustainable forest management is represented by forest certification: although wood removals in Italian forests are very low, Italy remains at the top for the processing of wood and the production of furniture all round the world, activities where the impact of forest certification is relevant and still increasing. During 2001 main events in such field are represented by the foundation of FSC Italy and its buyers group and of the PEFC Italy. At the forest level only one forest is already certified under the FSC system, the Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme in north-eastern Italy, 11,000 hectares wide: anyway a growing number of firms working in the processing of wood have already got certification for chain-of-custody. The field of ecocertification is going to become even more important in the future.

At the end of 2001 the Director General of the Italian Forest Service appointed a core group to carry out the revision and development of the national indicators for sustainable forest management, taking into account the main new developments in such field and the need to reach a broad consensus between main forest stakeholders. The group is in close contact with the authors of the last one and at the present is waiting for the final definition of MCPFE-recommended national indicators to start its work.

Regarding certification, although it remains a voluntary market instrument, the Italian Forest Service is taking part in the main activities devoted to coordinating - at least at a general level - and increasing public awareness regarding the existence and usefulness of various schemes. This activity of coordination is mainly carried out in the ecocertification group founded in the CNEL Observatory as a result of the national forest law n.227/2001.

Forest health and productivity

4. The activities regarding this chapter can be referred to the related activating programmes of European Union regulations.

The Italian Forest Service, together with Regions and some research institutes, annually inventories forest conditions on 265 permanent plots of EU network (level I). This project started in year 1985.

The Italian Forest Service also leads intensive monitoring of tree conditions on 28 permanent plots of II level, 11 of which are in the International Cooperative Programme on integrated monitoring of air pollution effect: This programme, led in implementation of ECC regulation 3528/86, is known as CON.ECO.FOR (Control of Forest Ecosystems) and started on 1997.

Last national, detailed report about monitoring of level I and II was published by Italian forest service on 2001.

Such projects -- led in accordance with international and EU agreements -- allow to collect various data on forest ecosystems in the long period and give the opportunity to integrate and elaborate them to obtain new information.

Regarding the great problem of forest fires, collection, elaboration and diffusion of national data regarding forest fires in Italy, started since 1986 by the Italian Forest Service and available on Internet at www.corpoforestale.it. Since 2001 the annual report written by Italian Forest Service is available in English too. Cooperation with international data-banks provided, for example, by Global Fire Monitoring Centre of Freiburg and FAO.

The Minister of the Agricultural and Forest Policies and the Italian Forest Service launched during July 2002 a major campaign on television and newspaper to raise public awareness against forest fires.

Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

5.6.7. The answer to points 5,6 and 7 of this chapter can be found, not only in the initiatives already mentioned, but also in the important research project financed by the MiPAF and developed in collaboration with the various Regional Administrations. The objective is to produce new knowledge, both basic and experimental, of the Italian forestry patrimony.

The RISELVITALIA research programme is made up of 72 research Units that involve over 100 individuals, between researchers of scientific institutes, universities, technicians from Regions and private industry.

RISELVITALIA has 9 research lines grouped into 4 principal thematic topics: Biodiversity and forestry nurseries; Logging-tree cultivation; Selviculture; Planning.

Under Biodiversity and forestry nurseries, project objectives are:

- Safeguard the biodiversity of Italian forests, which is at the highest level in Europe and which is calculated to be on average 5 times higher than central-southern nations, in accordance with the agreements undersigned by our country at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and transferred to the National Plan for Biodiversity currently being drafted.
- Find a scientific solution that avoids loss and alteration of biodiversity caused by the free importation from other European countries (66/404CEE) of forestry material genetically inappropriate, proposing an efficient technical/legal system of certification and control of seeds and plants to be used for the reforestation of the entire country.

- Initiate the creation of a national network of seed trees made up of trees having a genetic make-up as diversified as possible and certified with certainty in terms of origin and genetic quality, for the purpose of using their seeds in the product on seedlings in nurseries, for successive reforestation.
- provide basic scientific information and guide lines that allow for the operative management of biodiversity and the genetic improvement in the entire sector: for the moment of seed gathering or commercial acquisition, to the seedling cultivation phase in nurseries, and in the final phase of creating new plantations on the field.
- take into consideration especially the species wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), walnut (*Juglans* sp.) and silvestre pine (*Pinus silvestris*), due to their economic and ecological importance and for the relatively advanced stage reached in scientific knowledge and experimentation.

The programmes regarding Logging-Tree Cultivation aim at meeting the needs of Regional Administrations, to allow Italy to contribute to the world's demand for wood, and to respect international commitment regarding climatic change. To this end, three Research Lines have been set up:

- Logging-Tree Cultivation with high-quality species and medium-long productive cycles;
- Logging-Tree Cultivation with rapid-growth species;
- wood biomass for energetic and industrial use.

As for Selviculture, the great variety of forests that exist in Italy's forest patrimony suggests the need to define operative guidelines to recover and give value not only to coppice forests, which alone represent about two thirds of Italian forests, but also reforestation and newly-formed forests.

For this reason, two Research Lines were set up under Selviculture:

- coastline pine forests, reforestation and newly-formed forests; selviculture, multifunctional defence and management;
- selviculture, functionality and sustainable management of coppice in the Mediterranean/Appennine area.

Under Forestry Planning, the need for organized and reliable information is stressed, which can only be obtained with the agreement of the subjects involved. In order to plan, it is necessary to have available information that allow for a comparison over time and space of the activities carried out and social needs.

Furthermore, in the last decades, in the light of the Kyoto Protocol, the Biodiversity Convention and the Desertification Convention, it has become necessary to identify objective methods for comparing national forestry inventories. In order to contribute to the solution to these problems,

Ri.Selv.Italia has activated 3 Research Lines:

- inventory and monitoring of forestry resources and environments;
- information support systems for forestry management;
- models and indicators for planning sustainable forest management at the medium territorial scale

Other information and emerging issues

7. Programmes aimed at "Sustainable Forest Management", as is well underlined by IPF/IFF work and the first two sessions of UNFF, must be considered processes that are subject to continuous up-dating and detailing.

The very use of definitions and forestry terms represents a problem on which groups of specialists operating at the FAO seek to remedy with appropriate analysis and reflection, which remains nevertheless open to the variability of subjective interpretation.

Besides, selvicultural imagery and symbolisms are evoked in the literary works of various nations and cultural traditions, to represent the most significant aspects of the existential condition.

Thus, there remains the basic problem of updating awareness using the available means to meet, as much as possible, with appropriate technical and organizational procedures, the needs that continuously emerge in the course of history.

III. Preparation of the Report

8. This report was prepared on the basis of existing documents, which have been mentioned, and which have been an extremely important source of indications and reflections.

It is worth recalling how the process that brought to their drafting has been extremely arduous and has been fruit of intense debates that have largely involved public administrations, private sector, media and social society as a whole.