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## SILVICULTURE: FOREST AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

*The article examines contents and proposals of the Third National Congress of Silviculture's session dedicated to forest and environment policies.*

*It is divided into three sections. The first one offers a key to the interpretation of the papers presented in the session. The second part describes some main problems in the forest policies guidance. Particular attention is given to the changes, in progress or desirable, in the governance processes, along with the redefinition of the role of governmental authorities, and a parallel growth of the society's responsibilities and actions. The last part sums up possible guidelines for forest strategies.*

*Key words:* forest policy; governance; public institutions; Italy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of contributions (26 papers) presented at the Session on Forest and Environmental Policies is an indicator of the interest for such a topic as well as of the diversity of issues and approaches belonging to this specific field. Forest policy is indeed a crosscutting field which provides a comprehensive overview of both analyses and proposals addressing forest issues. This is why the Session's contents might be very useful in making operational the Congress outcomes if the recommendations will hopefully be implemented by policy makers. Moreover, the Session's contents represent a benchmark for the ones who would like to assess feelings, ideas, and expectations of Italian forest stakeholders at the beginning of the century.

This synthesis is organized as follows. The first section provides a synthetic review of the Session's contributions. The second recalls top-priority issues framing forest policy: here the emphasis is on the on-going or

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desirable changes in governance, which focus on the changing role of public stakeholders and the emerging influence (both in terms of actions and responsibilities) of civil society. The last section summarizes some possible lines of action in forest policy.

## 2. A SYNTHETIC REVIEW OF THE SESSION'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The session's contributions can be classified into five groups according to their contents and/or spatial scale. The first group focuses upon general/large scale contributions (national or international). PETTENELLA and ROMANO (2009), in their opening speech, analyse the new approaches to forest policy governance. The link between international policies and national policy has been analysed by COLLETTI (2009), while ANDRICH (2009) provides a theoretical contribution on how to design a forest strategy. A couple of papers focus on forest programming, namely CESARO's (2009) on the so-called national programming framework and BOTTALICO *et al.*'s (2009) on regional forest planning.

The second group of contributions focus on the financial sources for forest activities. The papers presented here can be ranked according to the current role played by public interventions in forest income-generating activities, i.e. an effective role in the case of the Forest Measures within the Rural Development Plans framework (ROMANO and CILLI, 2009), at an early stage of development for environmental service production activities (GATTO and SECCO, 2009), a prospectively fruitful role for carbon sink related activities (CICCARESE, 2009), and negligible for wood production activities (BRUN, 2009).

Forest and environmental law is the topic of the third group of contributions. ABRAMI and HOFMANN (2009) provide an overall discussion of Italian forest regulation. AMORE (2009) focuses on criminal law aspects of environmental protection. CHELAZZI *et al.* (2009) review regional regulations as related to forest roads. Two papers focus specifically on indemnification, namely MARONE *et al.* (2009) deal with forest activity compensations in National park areas and CARBONE (2009) discusses the obligations stemming out from the so-called "vegetation relevant interest" declaration in the Lazio Region.

The fourth group of papers address issues related to regional forest policies, namely Apulia (CAMPANILE, 2009), Friuli Venezia Giulia (D'ORLANDO *et al.*, 2009), Campania (GRASSI, 2009), Umbria (GROHMANN *et al.*, 2009), and Calabria (LEONETTI and OLIVA, 2009). All authors provide an overview of forest programming framework, with an emphasis on the Rural Development Plans and available financial sources, describing rather than critically assessing the implemented forest regulations.

The last batch of papers is made by contributions aiming at providing a more detailed analysis of particular regional issues. Specifically, BORCHI (2009) analyses the expenditure policy of Tuscan Mountain Communities, NASTASIO (2009) assesses the problems of forest management in Lombardy Region forest holdings, DEBRANDO *et al.* (2009) discuss professional training in Piedmont, PARIS *et al.* (2009) analyse the role of the common agricultural policy in promoting agro-forestry, FRATINI and RICCIOLI (2009) assess the impact of Rural Development Plans provisions on wood harvesting activities, and PERULLI and VIGNOZZI (2009) analyse the vertical coordination aspects of forest programming in Tuscany.

All contributions analyse forest policy only from a public intervention perspective. In fact, all speakers belong to public bodies, an important indicator of some critical features of Italian forestry. These features will be briefly addressed in the next section with specific reference to forest policy.

### 3. ON SOME FOREST POLICY TOP-PRIORITY ISSUES

The objectives and the contents of Italian forest policy have gradually evolved over time. Public interventions have been traditionally aimed at modernizing forestry, specifically wood harvesting: the rationale was cost-minimization within a rigid constraint framework (without indemnification) to preserve publicly-provided forest services (CESARO and PETTENELLA, 2007). Around the end of the nineties, new interventions have been proposed side by side to the previous ones, specifically oriented to a proactive environment and the countryside conservation by means of novel tools such as the Payments for Environmental Services (PES). The key idea behind this change is that only a proactive forest management is able to ensure the provision of non-marketed goods and services that would otherwise not be provided (environment, landscape, and biodiversity conservation, cf. MANTAU *et al.*, 2001; MERLO and CROITORU, 2005) along with wood production, that is multi-functionality.

The reform of the EU rural development policy which took place over the last decade or so (decoupling, conditionality, regionalization, etc.) is consistent with the above-mentioned forest policy changes, although it lags behind vis-à-vis the evolution of the economy. It also shows a biased resource allocation between areas characterized by advanced agriculture and mountain and hill areas (SOTTE, 2007), and it is definitely inadequate in financial terms to promote innovation towards the provision of environmental services by marginal area firms.

The problem of financial viability is exacerbated by public administration inefficiency (PETTENELLA, 2009). The gap between private

(i.e. market) revenues and social value of environmental services implied a larger and deeper direct involvement of public bodies as a substitute for stagnant private initiative. In Italy, a large share of forests (33.9-43.9% depending on the statistical sources) is publicly owned and 65-70.000 forest workers are public bodies employees. Surveillance activities, extension services, training, watershed management, forest nurseries, certification, and sometimes even wood processing are all examples of some publicly managed activities. As a result, there is no much room for financing interventions other than the ones above-mentioned. Furthermore, direct public involvement is against the principle of horizontal (i.e. social) subsidiarity introduced by the reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution in 2001 (art. 118 c. 4)<sup>1</sup>. In conclusion, direct public involvement constraints the possibility of an alternative model of development, based on entrepreneurship, social capital, bottom-up initiatives, shortly on more innovative PES models.

The widening gap between the inadequacy of policies and institutions on one side and the demand for new instruments, interventions as well as financial resources on the other side is well shown by the evolution of the Italian forest added value (wood and non-wood production). The forest sector share shrank over the last decades (the forest added value currently accounts for only 0.9% of the primary sector added value, while it was on average around 1.5% between 1984 and 2004) as well as its monetary value in absolute terms (Figure 1) despite the steady growth of forest areas.

Even more alarming is the materialization of a “Northern question” (specifically, a North-eastern question) in the forest sector as opposed to the long-lasting “Southern question” in other sectors of the economy (agriculture included). In fact, the organizational-production pattern of Northern Italy forest sector – traditionally the most advanced in the country, oriented to high-added value products – is weakening, producing lesser-value wood (Figure 2). Even not accepting the over-simplification of RUPF’S (1960) *Kielwasser Theory*, that is the idea of a direct relationship between wood production and supply of forest public goods, it is self-evident that a decreasing wood production both in quantity and value is a sign of a declining forestry. This is even more striking if we recall that over the last 50 years the forest area doubled, wood consumption tripled and the number of universities delivering forestry degrees escalated from only one (Florence) up to fourteen (BRUSCHINI, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> “The State, Regions, Metropolitan Cities, Provinces and Municipalities favour the autonomous initiative of citizens, either single or associated, to pursue activities of general interest on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity”.

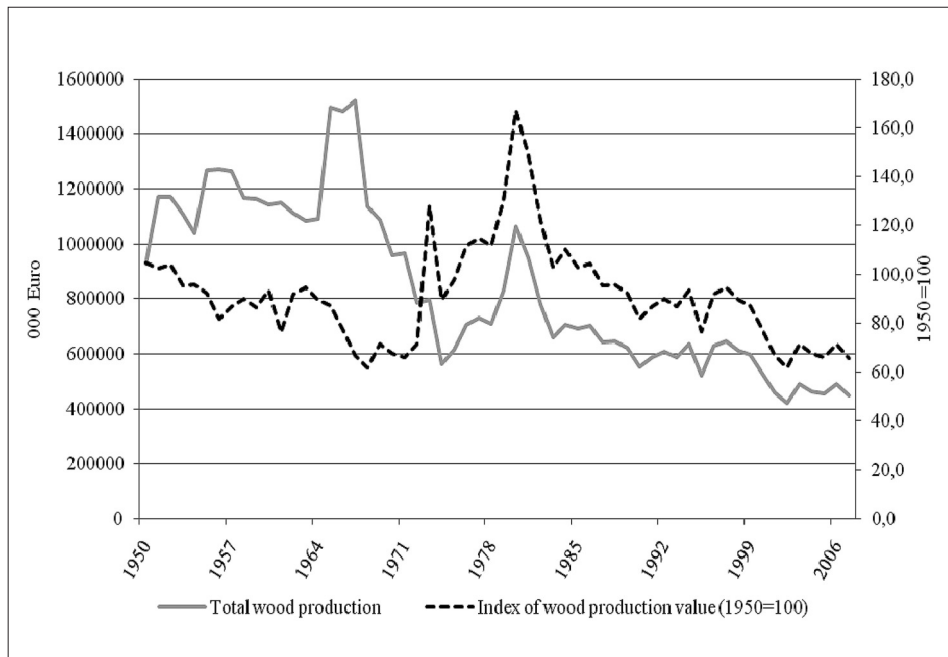


Figure 1 – Value of wood production in Italy (1950-2007; constant values in Euro 2008).  
Source: computation on ISTAT data.

If this trend will be kept in the future, a non trivial share of forests and pastures will increasingly be loosely managed, eventually evolving towards abandonment and a seemingly-wilderness status, which instead will be a very vulnerable condition, especially considering the effects of climate change. In such a situation an intervention logic based on ex-post restoration of environmental damage will likely dominate rather than a proactive resource management based on ex-ante interventions. Only an extraordinary government capacity of the forest sector, a downsizing and requalification of direct public involvement, and a significant development of “green” entrepreneurship (i.e. PES system) might resist this evolution.

Specifically, a blueprint for a forest policy reform should include a switch from the use of command and control instruments towards the use of voluntary instruments, a wider use of partnership and negotiation with the involvement of civil society as well as firms in medium-scale and inter-sectoral planning, the improvement of informational bases and the enhancement of monitoring ability.

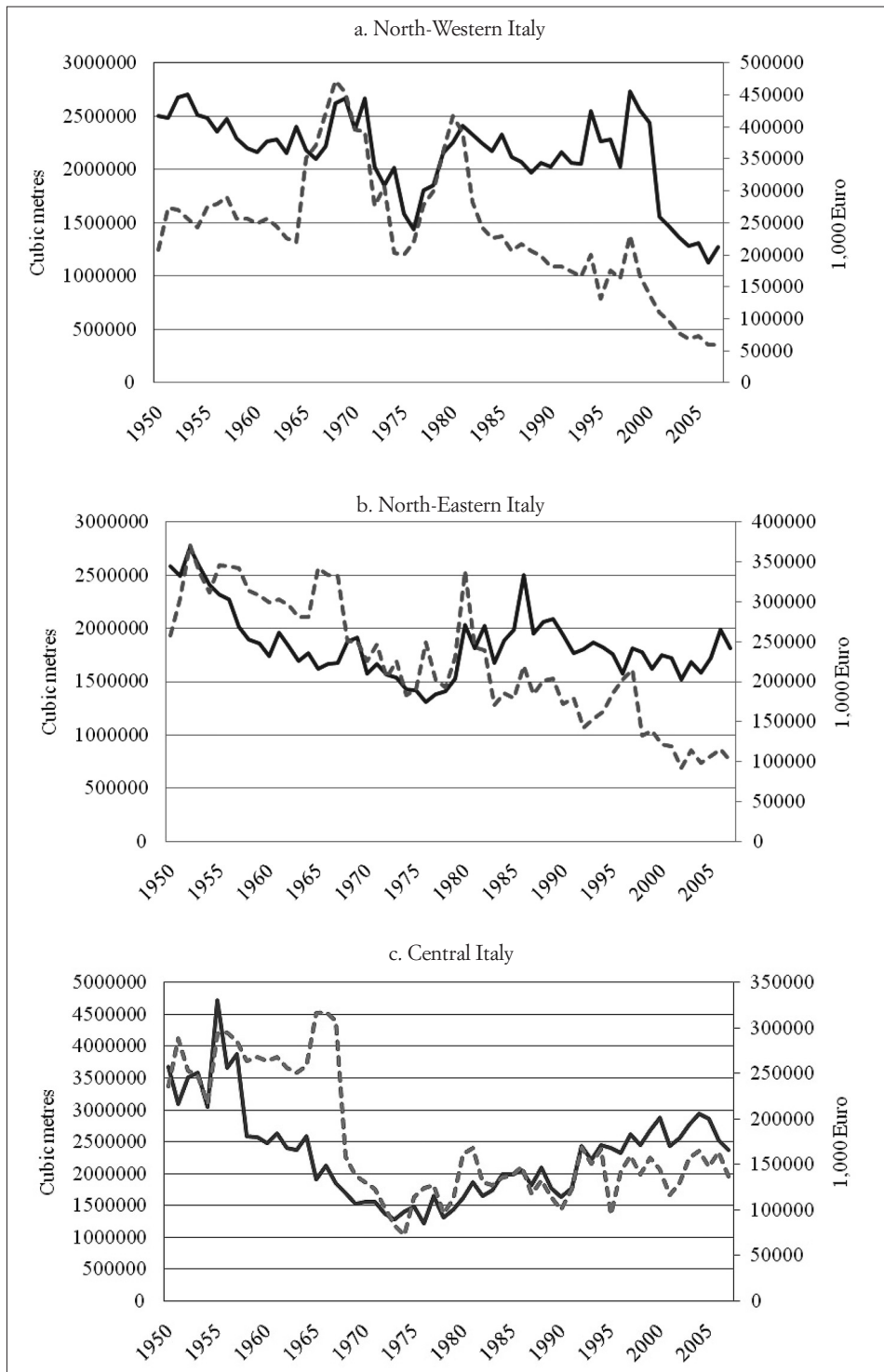


Figure 2 – Wood production (solid line) and value (dotted line) in selected Italian macro-regions (1950-2007; NUTS1 regions; constant values in Euro 2008). Source: computation on ISTAT data.

#### 4. LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

Many factors contribute to the inertia in Italian forest production, namely static and fragile land ownership structure, fragmented wood supply, legal constraints due to the public nature of many forest services, low private profitability of wood production in mountain and hilly areas, scarce integration of forest management with other land use based activities, lack marketing cooperation, and absence of consistent sectoral policies. Those problems are exacerbated by the dyscracy between the slowness of forest production cycles and the fastness of changes in the economic, social, and institutional contexts (ROMANO, 1995).

The contributions to the session have emphasized some critical issues which are relevant for forest policy, namely (PETTENELLA and ROMANO, 2009):

- guarantee certainty and continuity to incentives to the forest sector, i.e. abrupt changes in the level of incentives as well as eligibility criteria; this will also enable an accumulation of technical and organizational capabilities that would otherwise be lost;
- ensure transparency to public action, specifically when public bodies embark in direct management of resources: communication and accountability are essential pre-conditions to keep the flow of financial resources primarily towards public body associations;
- favour private involvement – both profit and non-profit – in forest management and restrict public involvement only to some specific activities (i.e. supervision);
- enforce the compliance to work security regulation by forest firms, enhance forest workers skills through the introduction of qualification certificates; promote and coordinate forest workers training and logging company extension;
- promote the use of short supply chain lumber through public procurement policies; promote the use of firewood for small scale heating plants;
- strengthen Italian institutional capacity in international fora, promoting inter-ministerial and vertical (i.e. EU-State-Regions) coordination;
- implement the international commitments on FLEGT regulation and ENA-FLEG initiative, fighting the import of illegal origin lumber as well as through the environmental and social certification of domestic wood supply;
- enhance the coordination of Regions' initiatives in the forest sector through common guidelines for the marketing of forest nursery products, support to forest companies, wild fire prevention, market promotion;
- finance, coordinate and finalize forest research; reduce the number of forest universities; strengthen forest extension and technical training programs.

There is plenty of room for innovation and improvement of public action in the forest sector. One third of Italy is already forest area and this share is still increasing, although it is unfortunate that forest resources have not been included yet in a consistent framework of environmental protection and economic valorization.

The success of forest policies will depend on two main transformations: an institutional one, through the reform of public administration, and a cultural one, i.e. acknowledging that Italian forests are not anymore poor woodlands that should be protected against illegal logging but rather natural resources that have an economic potential to be valorized through a wider and deeper involvement of private stakeholders in the supply of forest goods and services.

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<sup>2</sup> In the list of references “Atti 3° CNS” stands for “Atti del Terzo Congresso Nazionale di Selvicoltura per il miglioramento e la conservazione dei boschi italiani, Taormina (ME) 16-19 October 2008. Accademia Italiana di Scienze Forestali, Firenze, 2009; vol. 2” (Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Silviculture National Congress for the Enhancement and Protection of Italian Forests).

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