



## ITALIAN NATIONAL FOREST CORPS (CFS)

### COUNTRY REPORT

#### “Forest, forestry and National forest service in Italy”

## 1. The Italian forests

The National Inventory for Forests and Carbon (INFC) released in May 2007 the new estimates on surface and composition of the Italian forests referred to the year 2005. They are already based on the FAO definition of forest and will be fully in line with the official FAO statistics in occasion of FRA 2010. INFC was the second National inventory after the first one, carried out by CFS in 1985 according to different methodologies.

The total wooded land in Italy is currently represented by 10.467.533 hectares, i.e. the 34,7% of the national land surface: it is composed by 8.759.200 ha of forests and 1.708.333 ha of other wooded land (mainly shrubs and Mediterranean *maquis*.) The Regions having more forest area are Liguria and Trentino (forest coverage around 62,6% and 60,5%) while the less covered are Apulia (7,5%) and Sicily (10%). The most common tree species are oaks (*Quercus petraea*, *Q. pubescens*, *Q. pedunculata* and *Q. cerris*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). The number of trees in Italy has been estimated around 12 billion, i.e. some 200 trees each Italian inhabitant.

Concerning the distribution, forests and other wooded land are found mainly on hilly and mountainous areas, as two thirds of them are distributed above 500 m on the sea level. As for the ownership, 63,5% of the forest is private, 32,4% is public (with a wide range of owners as Regions, State, Municipalities, traditional common properties, Church, etc) and 4% is not classified. Most of the private forest is scattered and divided into very small estates (around 1 ha).

Concerning wood, the INFC shows that 81,3% of the Italian forest is potentially available for wood production: anyway the hydro-geological, landscape and tourist functions are often predominant, especially in Central and Southern Italy where Mediterranean low and scattered forests and *maquis* are quite common. According to national figures FAO-JQ collected in 2007, in Italy the harvest of roundwood is about 8 million m<sup>3</sup>/year, out of which 3 million m<sup>3</sup> industrial roundwood and 5 million m<sup>3</sup> fuelwood (mainly from coppices) .

Fires are the “public enemy number one” for the Italian forests, because their huge economic, social and ecological impact (loss of biodiversity, forest degradation, carbon emissions, etc). According to the average of the figures from last decade – collected yearly by CFS - each year some 7.500 fires damage 87.000 hectares of land, out of which half is represented by forest and other wooded land. Unfortunately 2007, due to extremely unfavourable weather conditions, represented the worst year out of last twenty: more than 10.000 fires destroyed 225.000 hectares on land, out of which half was forest, and 23 people lost their life during these events. It has also to be recalled that almost all forest fires are caused by man (some 98% between negligence and arsons linked to different

socio-economic reasons) and that thanks to the new investigation methods under development by the CFS, the number of arsonists discovered after the events occurrence is continuously growing (more than 500 last year). Other important developments in the fight against forest fires are represented by the establishment, at Municipality level, of the "Fire cadastre" (record of all the fire events to avoid illegal land change use) and the enhancement of the "Land dossier" (record of all the unfavourable events occurred on a certain area like flood, landslides or illegal disposal of waste). Both of them are linked to the National Forest Inventory and led by the CFS and its local offices.

## 2. The Italian National Forest Corps (CFS)

The Italian National Forest Corps (CFS) is a national police corps specialized in the control of land and environment: the responsibility for forest management is currently located at local level, i.e. the 20 Regions, that have established their regional, technical forest offices. The core of the CFS was established in the year 1822 to manage and protect the Italian forests and, since then, it has been modified several times. According to the legislation in force, in particular the National law N.3 of 6 February 2004 ("*New organisation of the National Forest Corps*"), CFS depends on the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forest policies (MiPAAF) and currently carries out the following main tasks:

- Contribution to public order and security, especially in rural and mountainous areas;
- Control, prevention and enforcement of infringements against environmental resources and legislation;
- Control and certification in the trade of CITES species of fauna and flora;
- Coordination and control in the implementation of environmental international Conventions, especially those related to forests, plant and animal biodiversity;
- Control on the implementation of EU agro-forestry and environmental regulations;
- Protection and control of State protected areas having national and international relevance (National parks, State reserves);
- Monitoring and control of land status in relation to fire, erosion, floods, landslides, snow, water quality, waste, etc;
- Contribution to public support and civil protection activities especially in relation to forest fires at any level (prevention, prevention, coordination, investigation on causes, suppression, collection of figures, etc);
- Support research activities and analysis, especially in relation to forest health and monitoring and to the National Forest Inventory;
- Support of the Ministry of Agriculture in the representation of national interests at EU and international level, also coordinating this activities at national level;
- Realisation of recruitment, training and extension for its staff.

The CFS is currently present in 15 out of 20 Italian Regions (the five autonomous Regions have their own regional or provincial Forest Services, often cooperating with CFS).

CFS is composed by some 8.400 people represented by specialised staff at any level, starting from forest guards up to a Director General plus some 1.800 people hired as temporary/seasonal workers. Apart from workers and technical staff all the rest has the status of police corps (i.e. use of the uniform, guns, specialised training, etc).

CFS is organised in different hierarchical levels structured on the land, the main ones being: the Headquarters (in Rome, inside the MiPAAF), 15 Regional coordinating offices, 83 Provincial/County offices and 933 offices at Municipality level. There is also a number of additional, specialised offices as the CFS School (Headquarters in Cittaducale/Rieti and some local venues), 19 CTA (Coordinamenti Territoriali per l'Ambiente – Land Coordinating offices for the Environment, located in the National parks) and 28 UTB (Uffici Territoriali per la Biodiversità – Land Biodiversity Offices) and some aerial bases.

### 3. The State natural reserves and State forests

The current CFS' State property is about 130.000 ha, out of which some 100.000 ha are covered by forests. The rest is represented by wetlands, pastures or other land use categories. This is the only remaining of a five times wider public surface belonging to the State until the reforms carried out in the '70 that transferred to the regional administrations most of the public forest estates. The current surface of the State forest property represent only the 1% of the national total one, because Italy is characterized by an high percentage of private and municipal forest property as said in advance.

Up to the Seventies the National Forest Corps carried out both the productive and conservative management on the public forests; later on most State forests were classified as National natural reserves. Nowadays the management of such areas is based only on naturalistic criteria aiming to conservation and research objectives. The forest type in these State areas and reserves are quite different, depending from geographic and altitudinal situation. In northern Italy spruce (*Picea abies*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) stands are dominant. On the Apennine mountains beech and silver fir (*Abies alba*) forests are the most important types. Along the coasts the most common stands are composed by Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) and umbrella pine (*Pinus pinea*).

The only productive State forest currently is the Tarvisio Forest, a 23.000 ha area based in Friuli Region next to the Austria and Slovenia border. There 12.600 ha (mostly spruce and beech stands) are still used for timber production: the silvicultural system put in place is naturalistic and based on natural regeneration and a treatment of shelterwood cutting. Growing stock is 280 m<sup>3</sup>/ha with an average annual increment of 4.59 m<sup>3</sup>/ha and a global average removal of some 30.000 m<sup>3</sup> timber/year. The Tarvisio Forest represents, at national level, a new experimental system for sustainable forest management.

The CFS' office deputed to manage State properties today is currently known as Biodiversity Office: it works on 130 Natural Reserves, 9 Ramsar Convention wetlands, 16 Experimental Farms for Genetic Resources Conservation and 3 State Centres for Forest Biodiversity Research and Conservation. The staff employed is about 1000 units. 75% of the areas are classified as Natura2000 sites and represent a relevant biodiversity source for Italy. Indeed, despite State Natural Reserves cover only 5% of national protected areas, they host 20% of the threatened plant species and 70% of endangered bird species breed. Over there also most representative Italian mammal fauna like brown bear, wolf, lynx and otter occurs.

The Biodiversity Office is organized with a special Headquarter in Rome (inside the CFS Headquarters) and 28 local offices (Land Biodiversity Offices) scattered on the national territory. Activities are funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forest Policies (MiPAAF) and some conservation actions are co-financed by the European Commission through the LIFE-Nature programme involving 34 Natura2000 sites.

At present some projects are ongoing, whose main objectives are the following ones:

- restoring alpine meadows relevant for fauna and flora conservation;
- renaturalisation of wood stands by removing alien or alloctonous tree species and by directing forest structures toward natural uneven-aged models and natural vegetation composition;
- promoting sustainable tourism inside natural habitats by increasing public awareness, for instance through press of informative material and establishment of visitor structures;
- improving conditions in wetlands zones for migrant and breeding avifauna;
- halting degradation processes in coastal pine stands threatened by erosion, pollution and habitat fragmentation;
- implementing conservation of deadwood micro-habitat and its environmental sensitive fauna;
- monitoring habitats and species of directives 92/43/CEE and 79/409/CEE particularly in relation to risk linked to climate change;
- rehabilitation of forest in accordance with large carnivores and ungulates requirements to increasing their presence and to improve their conservation status;
- developing research programmes and management plans aimed to guide choices towards environmental priorities.

#### **4. The new national forest programme (PQSF)**

Article 1082 of the National law 296/2006 prescribes that the Italian Ministries of Agriculture and Environment have to prepare together a new national forest programme, called "Framework Programme for the Forest Sector" (PQSF). It has to be structured around the concepts of sustainable forest managements and forest multifunctionality: it has also to reflect the forest-related commitments existing above the national level, in particular the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) and the resolutions subscribed in the framework of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of forests in Europe (MCPFE). This will be the second national forest programme in Italy as the previous one was launched on 1985 and lasted ten years. Later it was substituted by the regional rural plans drafter according to Regulation (EC) N. 1257/99 on rural development (RDR)

The PQSF is under draft by a so composed group: Ministry of Agriculture and CFS, Ministry of Environment, Regions and two research institutes (INEA and ISMEA). Its main characteristics - currently under definition and development - are the following ones:

- 1) It is shaped according to the EU FAP, its 4 objectives and 18 key actions;
- 2) It is meant to give national coherence and implementation to all the forest related commitments signed by the Italian government and still partly pending, as the non legally binding instrument (NLBI) agreed on April 2007 by UNFF7 or the CBD expanded Programme of Work on forest biodiversity (PoW);
- 3) It aims to list and put order between the implementation measures carried out at local level by the Regions, also underlining priorities and gaps to be filled and establishing links with other existing plans (e.g. RDR, fires, protected areas, etc).

The first draft of the PQSF should be ready during summer times in order to receive as soon as possible public/civil society comments according to a participatory approach. It is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2009, date when it is also foreseen the first review of the implementation of the EU FAP.