



**NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT DROUGHT AND
DESERTIFICATION**

ROME
DECEMBER 1999

The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE)

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the resolutions of the United Nations Assembly regarding the struggle against desertification, drought and poverty and for the realisation of sustainable development, and in particular resolution 32/172 of 19 December 1977 regarding an action plan to combat the desertification phenomenon and resolution 47/188 of 1992 covering the institution of the "Intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa";

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Agenda 21, approved in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and in particular Chapter 12 regarding the struggle against desertification;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the United Nations Convention to combat drought and/or desertification in countries seriously stricken by drought and/or desertification, especially in Africa, hereinafter UNCCD, drafted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and having taken effect on 29 December 1996;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Law of 4 June 1997, n. 170, ratifying and implementing the UNCCD in the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, which calls for the elaboration of National Action Plans aimed at sustainable development with the objective of Reducing the declining productivity of soils caused by climate change and human activity, to be prepared in coordination with those of other sub-regions or regions, including the sub-region of North Africa;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Council of Ministers Decree of 26 September 1997 (O.G. n. 43 of 21 February 1998), which institutes the National Committee to Combat Drought and/or Desertification, with the task of following up on the preparation of the National Action Programme in the context of the Mediterranean Basin, implementing the UNCCD and drafting a first report before 31 December 1998;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH its decision n. 154 of 22 December 1998 concerning the "First national communication implementing the United Nations conventions to combat drought and desertification", which laid out the guidelines for preparation of the national programme;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Legislative Decree of 31 March 1998, n. 112, which transfers to the Italian Regions and local entities additional functions and jurisdiction in environmental matters, and considering the functions attributed by article 8 of the Legislative Decree of 29 August 1997, n. 281, to the Joint Conference for relations among the State, the Italian Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and Local Autonomies;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the 1999-2001 Economic and Financial Planning Document, and in particular Chapter V devoted to employment and development policies, which notes the need to develop policies and measures for environmental protection, among other matters;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Legislative Decree of 30 January 1999, n. 36, which establishes the functions of the ENEA operating in the fields of research and innovation for sustainable development, including in particular the function of agency for government offices having jurisdiction over public actions in the national and international area;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH EEC Regulations 3528/86 and 2158/92 relating respectively to protection of Community forests against atmospheric pollution and forest fires;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH EU Council Regulation (EC) 1257/99 of 17 May 1999, which defines the framework of Community support for rural development by the European Fund for Agricultural Orientation and Guarantee, with particular reference to Title II, Section 6, art. 22, Section VII, art. 29 and 32, and Section IX, art. 33, and Title III, Section I, art. 39, and section II, art. 44;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH EEC Regulation 2092/91 relating to provisions for organic agriculture;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Legislative Decree 22/97 regarding waste, in relation to the progressive reduction of discharges, to recycling of not less than 35%, and to the recovery of energy from waste-derived fuels;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Program for Lasting and Sustainable Development approved by the Council of Europe on 1 February 1003 and Decision n. 2179/98 by the same Council which points to agriculture as one of the priority sectors and in art. 10 encourages “measures in vulnerable areas, in harmony with the convention to combat desertification”;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH its decision of 28 December 1993 concerning the “National Plan for Sustainable Development” which indicates the main areas of action in the various productive sectors, according to a subdivision by area of ministerial jurisdiction;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH its decision n. 79 of 5 August 1998 concerning the CIPE’s internal regulations and in particular art. 2, paragraph 1, which, among others, creates the Commission for Sustainable Development in support of the committee’s activity.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Law 183/89 and measures associated with it having the purpose of ensuring protection of the soil, restoration of water quality, use and management of the water supply for rational economic and social development, and protection of environmental aspects associated with same;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Law 36/94 which sets provisions for the protection and use of surface and ground water resources;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the outline law on protected areas of 6 December 1991, n. 394;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Royal Decree Law 3267/23 “Legislative reorganisation and reform in matters of mountain forests and lands” and subsequent modifications and additions;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Law of 1 March 1975, n. 47, setting “Supplemental provisions for the defence of forests against fires”;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Law n. 267/98 establishing urgent measures for preventing hydro-geological risk and on behalf of areas struck by land-slide disasters in Campania Region;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the “Interim Report on Soil Protection” and related guidelines issued by the Public Works Ministry and the Environment Ministry for scheduling structural funds, 2000-2006;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the “Interim Report on the National Ecological Network” and related guidelines issued by the Environment Ministry for scheduling structural funds, 2000-2006;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Program for Developing the South, relating to use of structural funds in the period 2000-2006, forwarded by the European Community for approval, as well as the related financial plan, approved by CIPE decision on 6 August 1999;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Royal Decree n. 215 of 13 February 1933 for authority assigned to land-reclamation consortia;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the V Framework Programme for Technological Research and Development (1998-2002) of EU, which promotes new technologies in relation to the sustainable management of rural activities to improve the management of water resources and awareness of possible scenarios in European areas at risk for desertification;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the law establishing the National Environmental Protection Agency (ANPA) of 21 January 1994, n. 61, which assigns functions relating to the supply of scientific and technical activities associated with exercise of public functions for environmental protection;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the 1999 Activities Plan of the National Committee to Combat Desertification of 10 March 1999;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH its previous decision of 16 March 1994 (O.G. n. 107 of 10 May 1994) approving strategic guidelines for implementing the Rio Convention and for drafting the National Programme on Biodiversity;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Law of 27 May 1999 n.175 ratifying and implementing the final act of the Plenipotentiary Conference on the Convention to Protect the Mediterranean Sea from pollution with related protocols held in Barcelona on 9-10 June 1995;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH its previous decision of 19 November 1998 approving the guidelines for national measures and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Environment Ministry and the FAO dated 16 June 1998;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Environment Ministry, the ICRAM, the ENEA, the ANPA, the CNR and the CNEL to create a monitoring centre for the international conventions and instruments for collaboration in the Mediterranean region of 19 October 1999;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on local management of Turin's water supply of 18-19 October 1999 and the related Action Plan;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the document Draft Terms of reference for the Regional Action Plan (RAP) defined in Rome on 13-14 September 1999;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the outcome of the Third Ministerial Meeting of Annex IV countries held in Recife on 22 November 1999, during the sessions for the Third Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Legislative Decree n. 152/99 published in the O.G. n. 124 of 29 May 1999 and in particular Title III, art. 20, paragraphs 2 and 3;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Law of 7 October 1997 n. 344 calling for the Environment Ministry to proceed with implementation of the UNCCD through studies, research and activities aimed at drafting the national plan;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH law n. 426/98, which calls for the Environment Ministry to carry out training and research activities with the involvement of the National Desertification Monitoring Centre of the "Parco dell'Asinara" and the Matera Traditional and Local Wisdom Research Centre;

CONSIDERING the need to adopt lasting measures to combat desertification that ensure integrated protection of soil, water and air resources and at the same time make possible and promote development of socio-economic activities compatible with environmental protection, as called for during the seminar held in Palermo on 29 October 1999;

CONSIDERING that the actions to combat desertification identified in the aforesaid document are in accord with the principles of the UNCCD and with the report "First national communication to implement the United Nations conventions to combat drought and desertification";

BELIEVING that the actions to combat desertification identified in the National Action Programme, according to the instructions of the UNCCD and as part of the indications defined by the European Union, will constitute an opportunity to modernise Italy according to the criteria of environmental efficiency and will open new prospects for international cooperation with developing countries;

CONSIDERING that:

- the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean Basin share a context of environmental crisis generated by common climatic features and a long history of unsustainable use of environmental resources;
- even the effects of climate change are contributing towards making the nation vulnerable to desertification processes;
- the countries of the Northern Mediterranean have created a regional annex, Annex IV, within the UNCCD, pledging to coordinate their programs within a regional action programme;
- the UNCCD calls for the fourth conference of the parties (COP) which will be held at the end of the year 2000 to be devoted to laying out the national and regional programmes of the non-African countries;
- Italy, in its capacity as coordinator of Annex IV activities for the 1999-2000 biennium, is committed to coordinating the preparatory activities and implementing the Northern Mediterranean Regional Programme;

CONSIDERING that the Sustainable Development Commission, at its session of 2 December 1999, expressed a favourable opinion regarding the activity plan presented;

NOTING the document “Guidelines of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification”, approved by the National Committee to Combat Drought and Desertification at its session of 22 July 1999;

APPROVES the following

1. NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

1.a The National Action Programme to Combat Drought and Desertification according to the guidelines approved by the National Committee to Combat Desertification on 22 July 1999 is hereby approved.

1.b A working group is established within the VI Commission on Sustainable Development of this Committee, as part of the support structure described in point 4.2 of its decision of 5 August 1998 n. 79, consisting of representatives of the National Committee to Combat Drought and Desertification.

The working group’s coordinator participates in meetings of the Sustainable Development Commission on the topic.

1.c The Ministries of the Treasury, Budget and Economic Planning, the Environment, Industry, Transport, Public Works, Scientific Research, Agricultural and Forestry Policies, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Trade send to the Sustainable Development Commission and the National Committee to Combat Desertification, within 90 days, an outline of the resources allocated in the ordinary budgets of each ministry involving:

soil protection;

sustainable management of water resources;

reduction of the impact of productive activities;

land restoration;

information, training and research;

and aiming at programs and measures to combat drought and desertification in vulnerable areas within Italy and in developing countries, according to development cooperation priorities.

1.d The National Committee to Combat Desertification, with the contribution of technical and scientific institutions and bodies, promotes and coordinates:

- the support necessary for Italian regions and watershed authorities to identify “areas vulnerable to desertification” based on the provisions of art. 20, paragraphs 2 and 3 of Legislative Decree 152/99;

- the adoption of standards and methods better suited to understanding, preventing and alleviating desertification phenomena in “vulnerable areas”;

- the preparation of the Italian contribution to the Northern Mediterranean Regional Action Programme aimed at ensuring adequate participation in the coordination works with the Annex IV partners;

- the gathering of uniform soil data for all of Italy based on the activities of the National Soil Monitoring Centre, the regional Soil Services and other offices with similar duties, in close working relationship with the European Soil Office.

2. REGIONAL PROGRAMS AND THOSE OF MEDITERRANEAN BASIN AUTHORITIES

The programs, measures and activities mentioned in the present paragraph are adopted and implemented, with reference to the special-status Italian Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, in compliance with the provisions of their respective statutes and related implementing provisions.

2.a As part of the activities aimed at implementing art. 20, par. 2 and 3 of Leg. Dec. 152/99 and in compliance with the procedures described in Law 183/99, the Italian Regions and watershed authorities, based on the initial material provided in the guidelines, send to the National Committee to Combat Drought and Desertification, before 31 May 2000, an indication of the vulnerable areas, together with the measures and programs they intend to adopt according to the instructions specified in the present decision.

These measures and strategies take the form of specific programs to combat drought and desertification in vulnerable areas.

These programs must include:

- the preparation of an integrated program of measures of prevention and mitigation involving both rural and urban areas which integrate the use of traditional knowledge and that of new technologies, based on an inventory of the above and on a land informational outline of the region;

- a framework consistent with the overall objectives of the national economic policy;

- pursuing the alleviation of desertification and drought effects that may help consolidate and develop employment in the affected areas;
- the use of local community resources;
- specific training, education and information activities;
- measures of an agricultural, forestry, civil and social nature that must involve inter-sectoral action and the greatest possible number of public and private participants.

In addition, as prescribed by the UNCCD, the following must be included:

- monitoring and evaluation;
- assessment of social and economic aspects

The monitoring activities called for in the programs must be carried out both in the preliminary appraisal, in the form of a preliminary evaluation, during the work, and at its conclusion to evaluate the results achieved. In addition to environmental aspects, social aspects (in terms of new employment, improvement in quality of life, etc.) and economic aspects (cost/benefit analysis, opportunities for economies of scale, etc.) must also be taken into consideration. The results obtained will make it possible to identify the best practices to combat drought and desertification that can be extended to areas affected by analogous desertification phenomena.

The results will be disseminated in public information sessions.

These programs may be adopted as part of:

- sectoral emergency plans called for under Law 183/89 affecting the priority sectors indicated below;
- plans for national implementation of the Community agricultural policy;
- "Agenda 2000";
- Regional Operating Programmes (R.O.P.) for the use of structural funds.

The priority sectors of the regional programs are:

Soil protection
Sustainable management of water resources
Reduction of environmental impact from productive activities
Land restoration

A) Soil protection

Soil protection in areas vulnerable to desertification primarily involves:

- agricultural areas with intensive and marginal production;
- areas at risk for accelerated erosion;
- areas damaged by contamination, pollution, fires;
- fallow and abandoned areas.

Among possible measures for soil protection, the Guidelines identify measures for:

- creation of adequately scaled soil maps;
- sustainable management and increase of forest asset;
- updating of forestry inventories and reference regulations in order to bring Italian forestry policy in line with the Italian national commitments taken within Europe and internationally;
- development of greenhouse production to disseminate Mediterranean species;
- fire prevention and fighting;
- slope protection and flood control using measures with low environmental impact.

B) Sustainable management of water resources

Among possible measures for sustainable management of water resources, the Guidelines identify measures for:

- adoption of water protection plans and definition of the water balance in watersheds or for more limited but significant areas;
- definition of water needs and control of its demand;
- updating and revision of tools for monitoring and verifying authorisations for discharges and diversion in order to pursue greater protection of surface and underground of water bodies;
- improvement in the efficiency of water distribution systems to reduce waste and losses;
- rationalisation of irrigation activities by adoption of techniques of efficient distribution and correct planning of irrigation measures that favour typical Mediterranean crops;

- control and rationalisation of water runoff;
- providing incentives for research into multiple uses of water in rural and urban areas;
- development of reuse of sewage in agriculture;
- development of plans for prevention, mitigation and adaptation in terms of the effects of droughts;
- collection and reuse of rainwater in new urban areas and restoration of abandoned collection systems in historic centres.

C) Reduction of impact from productive activities

Among possible measures for reducing the impact from productive activities, the Guidelines identify measures for:

- mitigation of the impacts of productive activities in order to reduce consumption of non renewable resources;
- implementation of measures aimed at the adoption of agricultural, animal-husbandry and forestry production systems capable of preventing physical, chemical, and biological damage to the soil;
- increased use of the organic fraction of urban waste deriving from differentiated waste collection, and of organic wastes of agricultural origin to produce high-quality compost;
- reducing of pressure from tourism activities in vulnerable areas by means of incentives for diversification of the offer, relieving it from seasonal periodicity and reduction in water consumption.

D) Land restoration

Among possible measures for land restoration, the Guidelines identify measures for:

- recovery of soils damaged by erosion, salinisation, etc.;
- reclamation and re-naturalisation of contaminated disposal sites in abandoned mining areas;
- landscape reconstruction and implementation of integrated planning policies for regional systems, in particular along the coast and on the smaller islands;
- incentives for sustainable production and tourism in marginal hilly and mountainous areas;
- re-naturalisation and environmental transformation of areas subject to deterioration in urban and industrial environments;
- incentives for adoption of urban-development plans that call for the use of technologies aimed at the renewal and appropriate use of natural resources;
- reuse of traditional technologies and integrated revitalisation of historic centres.

3. NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3.a Under the proposal of the National Committee to Combat Drought and Desertification, and in agreement with the Joint Conference, the VI CIPE Commission defines a priority outline for the National Action Programme and for the regional programs and programs of the Mediterranean Basin authorities, and submits the consequent plan of activities to combat drought and desertification for approval by the CIPE before 31 July 2000.

3.b Under the proposal of the National Committee to combat drought and desertification, and with the advice of the Joint Conference, the VI CIPE Commission submits for the approval of the CIPE before 31 May 2000 the National Programme for information, training and research to combat drought and desertification in close collaboration with the National Program for Climate Change Research.

The Guidelines identify the following possible measures for information, training and research:

- development of public-information programs by government offices;
- promotion of information campaigns by public and private enterprises and associations through accords with government offices;
- survey of research activity in Italy on drought and desertification;
- analysis and evaluation of strategies to prevent and combat drought and desertification;
- study of the causes and processes of desertification and the evolution of the phenomenon in Italy;
- evaluation of the environmental, social and economic implications and consequences of drought and desertification;

- development of research programs in association with the international scientific community and international programs;
- dissemination of know-how and new acquisitions in scientific research;
- scientific and technical support for government offices;
- extension of information to the other countries in the Mediterranean Basin;
- support for strengthening the clearing-house mechanism;
- an inventory of traditional know-how and technologies aimed at reproducing them with modern techniques.

3.c The strategies which have been identified by the Italian Development Cooperation to combat drought and desertification in developing countries are aimed at:

- cooperation with the affected countries and coordination with donor countries, providing technical and financial support for the preparation and implementation of National Action Programmes. In order to avoid waste of the available resources, Italy's actions will target a limited number of countries selected on the basis of the experience and knowledge acquired and taking into account the programs presented at the conferences of the parties to the UNCCD;
- management of development cooperation activities in coordination with the bodies of the Convention, making use of national scientific resources. The Overseas Agricultural Institute (IAO) will act as coordination centre for research institutes in consultation with the Environment Ministry;
- support: for regional institutions, CILSS, IGAD, and OSS, whose members are located in particularly hard-hit areas; for international bodies like the FAO, IFAD, and OMM, to which Italy is one of the major donors, including the enhancement of the Italian presence within those agencies; for NGOs, whose collaborative efforts within the NAP must be experimental in nature and serve to consolidate and gain the participation and consensus of local communities;
- orientation of anti-desertification efforts, in accordance with UNCCD principles, towards sustainable economic and social development. Environmental recovery efforts are closely linked to problems of employment, production diversification, and market-oriented production. These efforts will adopt integrated approaches aimed at achieving a balance between development and conservation of natural resources, as well as take into account aspects associated with reducing poverty, migrations and exodus due to natural causes.

Financial coverage for government assisted development measures comes from optimised utilisation of already allocated resources, also exploring new sources and systems of financial support. It is planned to maintain the level of voluntary contributions to agencies which are particularly active in combating desertification unchanged, targeting these contributions towards sustainable-development objectives in arid lands. New funds may be allocated to assist regional agencies.

Italy also intends to assign to anti-desertification projects:

- a share of the debt repayment by developing countries deriving from aid loans made for industrial or infrastructure works in the less-needy countries that are nonetheless stricken by desertification;
- a share of the counterpart funds; these aid programs (grant) are generally aimed at the poorest countries (mostly in Africa) and often amount to substantial figures. The counterpart funds derive from the proceeds of sales of our donations and belong to the beneficiary country and can be managed in agreement with Italy.

Given the Region's high priority for the Italian foreign policy, the countries of the Mediterranean Basin can make use of both forms of funding in order to implement large, long-term investment projects for the productive recovery of damaged areas. Such highly labor-intensive projects could also help to reduce migratory movements.

3.d The National Committee and the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- establish an outline of priority efforts, including with the contribution of non governmental institutions and local authorities involved in decentralised cooperation action;
- identify those areas most affected by migratory exodus induced by drought and desertification;
- implement monitoring and information action in the Mediterranean Basin, also in relation to cooperation activities with development countries;
- identify the criteria and measures to promote programs to be developed as part of the joint implementation and clean development mechanisms, and in particular establish the means by which Italian representatives in the UNCCD signatory countries, at the United Nations and with the multilateral financial institutions will have to promote and assist Italian cooperation programs to combat drought and desertification in the developing countries, especially Africa, including as part of the activities called for in point 6.1 of the CIPE decision of 19 November 1998 approving the guidelines for national policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

- serve as a permanent technical board for implementing the aforementioned activities.

4. REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES (ANNEX IV OF THE UNCCD)

4.a The National Committee to combat drought and desertification coordinates preparatory activities and the elaboration of the Regional Action Plan of the countries of the Northern Mediterranean belonging to Annex IV of the UNCCD before the fourth Conference of the Parties scheduled for the end of 2000, based on the Draft Terms of Reference prepared by the Annex IV experts meeting in Rome 13-14 September 1999 and adopted during the third ministerial meeting of the Annex IV countries held in Recife on 22 November 1999, also taking into account the "Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on local water management in Turin, 18-19 September 1999.

4.b As part of the Regional Action Programme, the National Committee establishes contacts with countries and sub-regions of other annexes to the Convention so as to develop joint programs to combat drought and desertification in the Mediterranean region.

Rome
21 December 1999

THE CHAIRMAN

Giuliano Amato