

WELCOMING ADDRESSES

GIANCARLO CONTA

Councillor of Environment Politics of Veneto Region

The Third National Congress of Silviculture was held on last October in Sicily, ten years after the second Congress that had taken place in Venice in 1998. The Third Congress represented a fundamental occasion for analysis and study on the sector's weak points.

The Veneto Region, which have always proved sensitive towards forest topics, favourably accepted the proposal of organizing in our territory this Convention presenting the proceedings of the Third National Congress of Silviculture.

In the Veneto Region, forest policy are central topics of the local administration's planning and are part not only of the rural development politics, but also of those related to the environment, landscape, hydrogeological territory defence, with particular reference to alpine territories.

In mountain areas, indeed, characterized, on the one hand by heavy features of naturalness and on the other hand, by great structural fragility, sustainable forest management must be interpreted in a wide sense, involving the whole of the human activities on the territory in order to grant an harmonic ecologic, economic and social development.

As far as different climatic and geopedological situations and complexity of historical and current processes of territory transformation are concerned, Veneto Region shows a variety of forest environments very diverse and rich of biodiversity, since over 45% of its forests is part of Rete Natura 2000.

The Regional forest area covers over 400,000 hectares and, thanks to a long-term commitment in the field of planning, over 60% of its area is comprised in specific managing plans.

Our forests are, indeed, the product of a millenarian cohabitation with man and are to be considered as "managed forests" in that they are strongly affected by previous anthropogenic activity that has shaped the agricultural-forest-pastoral landscape resulting in high diversity of environments, biotopes and landscape.

The managing and productive sector of Veneto's silviculture is significant since the forest engages over 330 specialized companies that manage an annual amount of timber of over 260,000 square metres.

The forests managed in a sustainable way represent, as well, a necessary element for prevention of phenomena of hydrogeological decay that are handled with a constant and widespread work on defence and active prevention.

Every year the Regional administration, through a specific hydrogeological defence program, perform extensive actions along the mountainsides to improve arboreous structure, and intensive ones in bed mainly through works of naturalistic engineering.

Every year, about 700 forest workers, over 120,000 hours of labour and over 20 million euro are employed in the hydrogeological defence.

Suitably trained forest workers also operate in forest fires prevention and fighting sectors, though fortunately in Veneto such events do not occur frequently, also owing to the action of over 1,600 volunteers that are coordinated by the Forest Direction and by the Regional Forest Services.

In Veneto forest fires phenomenon has stabilized at extremely low physiological levels, since it affects only 0.01% of the wooded area (an average of about 50 hectares per year covered by fire).

Study and research in the sector lead the Regional Council to continuously improve its environmental performances, allowing us to acquire the environmental certification ISO 14001 as well as the certification of sustainable forest management in accordance with the PEFC international standard.

Thanks to the attention on research and experimentation, we take advantage of this important occasion for presenting an innovative study on "Durability of timber works in forest hydric regime control activities" that proposes an original and innovative contribute for the comprehension of those phenomena that can compromise the efficiency of works of hydrogeological defence realised through naturalistic engineering.

GUIDO MUNARI

Manager of Forest and Mountain Economy of Veneto Region

Some months ago, during a meeting in Florence, Professor Orazio Ciancio, President of the Italian Academy of Forest Sciences, made the proposal that Veneto could host the Convention for the Presentation of the proceedings of the 3rd National Congress of Silviculture for the preservation and improvement of Italian woods, held in Taormina on October 16th to 19th 2008.

The proposal, besides honouring the forest contest in Veneto, met the full recognition by the Regional Council, as a confirmation of a strong cooperative relationship with the above mentioned Academy. The Council granted the availability of this prestigious location.

We are gathered here today, in a great number and with highly qualified representatives, not to celebrate the end of such an event as the National Congress, with the awareness of having accomplished every commitment, but to be inspired by its indications in order to involve ourselves in a coordinated and shared engagement. A commitment aimed at the forest benefit, that implies respect of the competences owned by every involved institution, as far as strong implications in the vast environmental topics, and current important effects on the promotion and social-economic development of the territory are concerned.

Today we have the opportunity of linking the ongoing activity with the Second National Congress of Silviculture held in Venice in June 1998 which was then preceded by a number of workshop days, one of which had been held in Asiago in January of the same year. In Asiago, some lecturers anticipated, with great intuition, the topics of territory protection, climatic balance defence, greenhouse gases control, including the use of renewable energies and preservation of biodiversity. Themes that represent strategic tips for the future of humanity and are at present object of more complex debate.

Veneto Region has been giving constant attention to those topics in a joint management frame of the forest subject, widened to consider, along with the more specifically silvicultural aspects, those of defence, of forest fire-fighting and, last but not least, those regarding hydrogeological defence laws and hydraulic-forest organization.

We believe that the achievement of effective results in the sector cannot be disjoined from administrative procedures, conceived to be as simplified as possible, and at ease for the users. This belief has led us to elaborate, in collaboration with the Italian Academy of Forest Sciences, the draft of a new regional forest law, that will be submitted to the examination of the legislative Assembly.

I thank the Authorities, the lecturers and all the people here, and I kindly invite Professor Orazio Ciancio to assume the Presidency of the Convention.

