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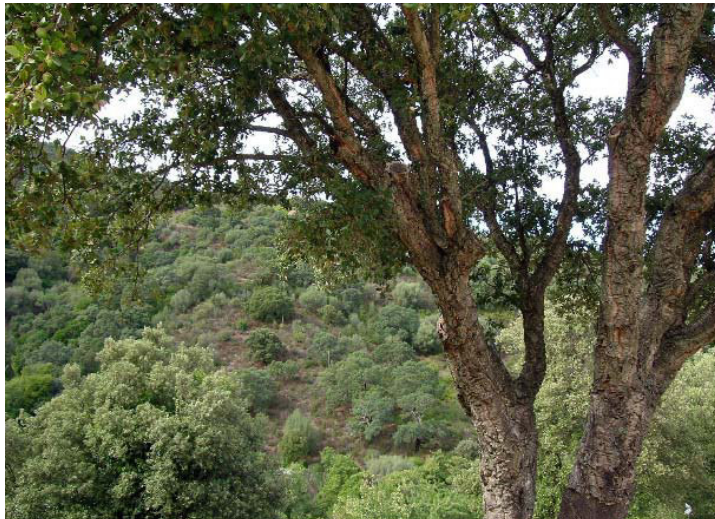


*Forestry and Wood  
Research Centre of the  
Italian Council for  
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*Institute of Ecosystem Study of the  
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## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CORK OAK TREES AND WOODLANDS

Conservation, Management, Products  
and Challenges for the Future



3° National Congress of Cork

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### ***Tipiditappi***



*Sughero d'albero fatto a pezzetti,  
tipi di tappi , quelli che vuoi.  
Tagliali lunghi, tagliali stretti,  
tipi di tappi, fatti da noi.  
Taglialo bene, taglialo tondo,  
tipi di tappi, quanti ne vuoi.  
Tappi di sughero per tutto il mondo,  
tipi di tappi fatti da noi.*  
*(Cecchi-Tognolini, Filastrocche e Canzoni)*

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# ABSTRACTS

## KEYNOTE SPEECHES



## TOWARDS A NEW NATIONAL CORK PLAN FOR ITALY, BETWEEN CRITICAL ISSUES AND NEW CHALLENGES

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Cork oak distribution in Italy is restricted to the Tyrrhenian regions (Liguria, Tuscany, Sardinia, Latium, Calabria, Campania, Sicily), and to Apulia. The 2005 National Forest Inventory survey estimated a total cork oak forest surface of 168,602 ha, more than 80% of which in Sardinia. In this region, the cork oak forms pure stands (i.e. with more than 25% of forest cover) on 80,489 ha, but also acts as a tree component in pastures or crops (with 5-25% forest cover) on 57,934 ha, and cork oak is present as single trees in other broadleaved woods. The typical cork oak landscape is favoured by optimal environmental conditions and by human interventions, or, most probably, by both factors. For example, in Alta Gallura (NE-Sardinia), cork oak woodlands find the best socio-ecological conditions: they are still linked to agroforestry systems (cattle breeding), cork production involves qualified local skills and cork processing into high value products (stoppers) is carried out by local industry.

More recently, traditional cork oak landscapes have been threatened by environmental disturbances (e.g. increased fire risk, insect damage, and water stress), land use and socio-economic changes and intensive woodland management. In Sardinia, the transformation of pure cork oak systems into agro-forestry systems with low tree cover (pastures, arable land or shrub vegetation) following an intensification of agricultural and livestock activities, is related to cork price declining trend and changes in the sheep milk sector, reducing the ecosystem resilience. Even so, in recent decades the national raw cork production has been decreasing: from the highest levels of more than 15.000 tons per year (TPY) before 1980 to a current production only slightly exceeding 6.000 TPY, vs. an annual world production of about 200,000 TPY. The local, small-scale industry (mainly concentrated in the so-called “Gallura cork district”) has been shrinking, while raw cork exports have increased over the last few years together with decreasing imports. Only bigger companies are able to meet the challenges of globalization by expanding their markets with targeted commercial strategies.

Conservation of the unique cork oak habitat (both as sparse forest with a well-developed shrub and herbaceous layer, and as semi-natural systems maintained

by livestock breeding), sustainable cork utilization, solid ties with the wine industry, appropriate legislation oriented towards rural development and research into innovative cork products are some of the main key-points discussed recently in the framework of the National Cork Plan update. We emphasize here the most relevant topics, which have emerged in the discussion between representatives of research institutions and cork oak stakeholders, coordinated by the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies.

The Italian cork oak system, like Iberian *montado* and *dehesa*, needs to find an equilibrium between opposing driving forces in order to maintain its ecological and socio-economic values. Despite the temptation to manage cork oak systems as simplified “cork oak plantations” characterized by low biodiversity and resilience, the focus should be on cork oak habitat conservation and multi-functionality, as also indicated by EU environmental policies, and on sustainable grazing in order to maintain ecosystem productivity. At the same time, in the general context of moderate expansion of the sector, strengthening the links between production and transformation in the national cork supply chain and dealing with the challenges posed by recent market trends might contribute to save the identity and peculiarities of the Italian cork industry.

Finally, the National Plan aims to coordinate national planning as well as regional and local activity to ensure the most effective use of resources available in the EU Rural Development 2014-2020. The National Plan also indicates the need for action throughout the supply chain: from the forests to industrial transformation enhancing, at every step, research and innovation.

Keywords: Italian Cork Plan, multifunctional forest systems, forest policy.