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**Care and prevention for land *illnesses***

*A conference on analyses of the phenomena threatening the land and the environment was held in Bari in the Agrilevante setting. Fires, disintegration and drought afflict enormous areas of the Italian territory where it is up to multi-functional farming to care for the land. A fundamental role is played by agricultural machinery capable of providing suitable technologies or purpose-built machinery for these maintenance tasks.*

The seriousness of environmental risks rose this current year as never before in the past. These were prolonged drought, shortages of water resources not only for agriculture but also for industry and public use, widespread forest fires as well as sudden and violent floods in the spring and summer, all of which focused attention on these ongoing problems for Italy. These were the issues taken up at a conference on *Disintegration, Fires, Drought: Emergencies and Strategies* held this morning in the Bari trade fair hosting Agrilevante, an international exposition of agricultural machinery and technologies. Taking part were authoritative academic figures and researchers. Danilo Monarca of the University of Tuscia reported that “Every year, wildfires destroy an average of 90,000 hectares of vegetation and this phenomena carries the risk of cyclical interaction beween environmental stability and the climate and society. Due to the vast farmlands and pasturage areas abandoned, Italian woodlands are expanding at the rate of about 30,000 hectares a year to create pre-forest conditions and woods coverage which are especially vulnerable to fires.” Also explained was that abandoning agricultural areas results in a lack of maintenance of the land and has an impact on the occurrence of landslides. It was said that 20% of Italian territory is classified as at risk of landslides and as many of 7,145 communities, 88% of the total, are located in “red zones” of territories where hydro-geological alarm is the highest. Environmental risks extend also to the consumption of soil for the progressive deterioration of agricultural lands which have deprived Italy of an important asset. Monarca stressed that in 2016 alone, this phenomenon involved 2.3 million hectares equal to 7.6% of the nation’s territory.

The Lombardy, Veneto and Campania regions have been hit the hardest. The loss of farmland also has repercussions on the climate, especially on the microclimate. It was noted, for example, that the phenomenon of heat in urban islands, with definitive differences between temperatures in cities and the countryside a few kilometers away, creates heat conditions especially in city centers. Franco Gentile from the University of Bari said, “The summer of 2017 will go down in history as one of the driest ever. The month of June saw a reduction of rainfall by 50% under average precipitation. And this is not isolated data but a trend featuring a spring decidedly drier than the average.”

Thus the country is in a condition of sufferance and evidently having trouble trying to optimize the use of available water resources. In this setting, agriculture is named as the only sector which can care for the territory at work not only on farm production but also in services. Multi-functional agriculture is becoming a key factor. Roberto Fanfani from the University of Bologna told the assembly, “Moreover, in the cycle of only 15 years, from 2000 to 2015, multi-functional work has almost doubled to as high as €10,7 billion, that is, a gain of 21% in value of all agricultural productions.” Francesco Sartori of the University of Padua said, “In the group of multi-functional activities the maintenance of the land accounted for a value of €540 in 2015 and have taken on a weight of significant growth. It’s up to multi-functional enterprises to pursue these land maintenance and care operations which are the only ones for countering environmental risks. But this is possible only thanks to the use of suitable technologies and machinery specifically adapted to projects.” Sartoli affirmed, “The mechanization industries can now offer an extremely ample array of specific machinery for cleaning ditches, canals and roadside verges for maintenance operations in wooded areas which also guarantee provisions of biomass for use in the energy sector.” On the impressive and interesting issue of machinery technologies for operations on the land is the scenographic setting of the M.i.A. Salon on multi-functional agriculture in the exposition.

**Bari, October 10, 2017**