



Impact and Recovery from COVID-19 in the Irrigation and Drainage Sector in Italy

- Impact of COVID-19 on agriculture in Italy
- Major impacts of COVID-19 specifically related to irrigated agriculture in Italy
- The EU coordinated response to COVID-19 epidemic to counter the economic impact
- Ensuring continuity of critical service delivery and the vulnerable in accessing irrigation services
- New ways of work that might improve service provision post-COVID



Impact of COVID-19 on agriculture in Italy

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for Italian agriculture varies according to different sectors, with peaks of up to 100% for the agritourism activities, as all 23,000 Italian structures operating have been closed down due to anti-contagion measures.



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The numbers regarding impact of the Coronavirus 19 - based on analysis led by COLDIRETTI – leave no room for doubt:

- Cancellations on orders ranging around **30%**
- Drop in turnover estimated at **40%**
- Fall of presence in farm holidays structures ranging from **80 to 100%**
- Abrupt stop of the catering channel and closure of related businesses
- Export orders reduced of about **70%** due to difficulties at the borders



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Immediate liquidity is needed for **60%** of Italian farms that have had a decrease in their activities due to the Coronavirus pandemic.



Major impacts of COVID-19 specifically related to irrigated agriculture in Italy

Agricultural production cannot be stopped or delayed, so significant problems have arisen.

The main problem has been regarding **labor force**: seasonal workers in agriculture, for many years now, have been made up of a large portion of foreigners, increased from 15 to 20% of the total migrants in the period 2011-2017 (Source: EU Research Center).



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Due to the Covid-19 health emergency, the closure of borders in EU and non-EU countries has hindered the arrival of foreign labor in Italy. This shortage of foreign seasonal workers, therefore, has been greatly alarming producers, who are now facing the lack of manpower for harvesting season.



Major impacts of COVID-19 specifically related to irrigated agriculture in Italy

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This is the reason why the Government has approved the regularization of foreign workers (about 600,000 undocumented people) in the 'May Decree', approved by the Council of Ministers some weeks ago.



Major impacts of COVID-19 specifically related to irrigated agriculture in Italy

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To date, the situation has improved, thanks to guidelines issued by EU on March 23rd, who established "preferential pathways" for essential products and services, such as perishable products; and provided indications for haulers that can guarantee workers' health and acceptable times for checks.



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Export to non-EU countries and particularly in overseas Countries has been reflecting the negative wave of activities lock down, even in Countries that had been affected earlier by the Coronavirus and where there was no container availability, for example.



The EU coordinated response to COVID-19 epidemic to counter the economic impact

- **State Aid Framework Flexibility** (as of May 4th 2020)

Direct grants, equity injections, selective tax advantages and advance payments of up to **€100,000** to a company active in the primary agricultural sector, up to **€800,000** to a company active in all other sectors to address its urgent liquidity needs. Member States can also give up to **€800,000** per company **zero-interest loans or guarantees on loans covering 100% of the risk**, except in the primary agriculture sector and in the fishery and aquaculture sector, where the limits of **€100,000** per company respectively, apply.

The European Commission has approved a **€30 million Italian scheme** to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agricultural and fishery sectors



European Commission

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European Commission

State guarantees for loans taken by companies to ensure banks keep providing loans to the customers who need them. These State guarantees can cover up to **90% of risk on loans**, to help businesses cover immediate working capital and investment needs.

Ref: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_803

Ensuring continuity of critical service delivery and the vulnerable in accessing irrigation services

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- In more than half of the irrigated area (1,3M hectares out of total 2,4M), irrigation is collectively managed by water bodies such as land reclamation and irrigation consortia.
- The value of agri-food production accounts for about **270 billion euros** (over a total GDP of 1,8), exports are worth around **45 billion**. More than 3/4 of this production comes from irrigated agriculture, which employs about **3,300,000** workers.



Ensuring continuity of critical service delivery and the vulnerable in accessing irrigation services

- Throughout all lock down period workers of the Irrigation Consortia have been constantly engaged in the maintenance of hydraulic structures, ensuring daily management operations.



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- At the same time, the Government is currently working on the hypothesis of opening new construction sites, with investments of around 1 billion €, with the overall aim of improving the Italian hydraulic network.



New ways of work that might improve service provision post-COVID

Sanitary restrictions and human fears have not conditioned public service responsibility, fulfilled by various staff people who, in compliance with the health prescriptions conceived for the containment of the corona virus, have been ensuring service delivery and access to irrigation for farmers.



Of course, this has been possible because of the very efficient network of Governing Bodies that is currently operating in Italy (Irrigation and Land Reclamation Consortia), who in time have been adopting "Smart Systems" for the managing of water resources, such as "IRRIFRAME". The implementation of such a system, for example, has been greatly enhancing possibility of adopting "smart working" procedures in ensuring service provision.

New ways of work that might improve service provision post-COVID

IRRIFRAME is an Expert System for Irrigation Scheduling developed with the support of UE funds, providing each farmer information on the following parameters:

- Crop water requirements
- Irrigation interval and frequency



IRRIFRAME can be easily accessed by Internet or provided by SMS messages, sent directly to the farmer. The farmer is provided with a password, in order to have the irrigation advice related to his farm.

