

Forest biodiversity at risk, and rural and peri-urban land consumption

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Urban land consumption in terms of an estimated loss of 19 hectares of natural soil per day, of which 15 square kilometers are permanent artificializations.

The areas most affected are metropolitan cities and coastal areas but also rural areas. Data pertaining to agricultural land consumption in some Italian regions, including Sicily, show that peri-urban land consumption increased by 2.7 percent in 2022 compared to the previous year (Ispra).

Consumption is causing the impairment of ecosystem services, damaging and minimizing them. Loss of biodiversity, changes in the carbon storage process by forests, and vulnerability related to environmental hazards and hydrogeological disruption are just some of the negative consequences of this phenomenon.

Addressing the problem of rural land consumption requires innovative and flexible strategies that take into account the complexity of social–ecological systems. The promotion of sustainable development practices, the protection of natural areas, and urban planning supported by precise regulations (think of Italian regional laws on the containment of land consumption, Veneto's LR 14/2017, or those aimed at promoting urban regeneration interventions as a strategic alternative to new land consumption) are key to preserving the resilience of local communities and ensuring a sustainable future.

These include implementing the "chain" of sustainability, helping to preserve the environment and natural resources with measures, new technologies and eco-innovations for agriculture. Encouraging forms of rural tourism with a strong identity can counter forms of overtourism.

Keywords

rural land consumption; sustainable development; permanent artificializations

