

CARABINIERI

for the environment and sustainability





**“The world
is a fine place
and worth
fighting for.”**

(Ernest Hemingway)



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FOREWORD

The Earth has been host to life for billions of years. This is the place that we inhabit and where we would also like future generations to grow up. That is why we must safeguard and protect it against increasing threats and assaults.

Protecting and restoring ecosystems, using natural resources in sustainable ways, mitigating the effects of climate change, opposing the use of soil and land degradation, stopping desertification and the loss of biodiversity are all essential priorities.

In 2017, following the merger of the Carabinieri with the State Forestry Corps, the Forestry, **Environmental and Agricultural Units Command was founded (CUFA)**, an organization aimed at reinstating and encouraging sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems with the awareness of how much of this is fundamental for humanity and other living beings.

This is a model whose strong point is organizational unity and strict integration with a thorough network of Corps stations throughout the country that guarantees in its turn a widespread and efficient warning system and intervention, enhancing the efficiency of preventative and repressive activities fulfilled by specialised departments.

Today the Corps is thus responsibly engaged along with other Italian and international institutions and all the other voluntary organizations in their fight to protect life and the quality of life.

The Corps Units embody world-class competence that capitalizes on the extraordinary expertise of the State Forestry Corps personnel with complementary attitudes and operative skills of special and territorial structures of the Corps engaged in environmental protection, natural landscape and cultural goods, agriculture, as well as the fight against illicit waste trafficking and eco-mafias in general. The specialised organization dedicated to these issues is the Forestry, Environmental and Agricultural Command Unit, with various subdivisions that are united through a coordinated and interconnected vision:

- **Carabinieri Command for Forest Protection;**
- **Carabinieri Command for Biodiversity and Parks Protection;**
- **Carabinieri Command for Environmental Protection and Ecological Transition;**
- **Carabinieri Command for Agricultural Protection.**





CARABINIERI COMMAND FOR FORESTRY PROTECTION

Italy is becoming greener and greener. Woods and forests are expanding at the rate of 50,000 hectares per year thanks to the “natural” reforestation of land abandoned by farmers. **Today these lands cover 11 million hectares, which represent 37% of the national territory.**

Italian forests, which are some of the most important in Europe for their dimensions and variety, constitute a great treasure trove both from an economic and environmental point of view and are fundamental for the hydro-geological balance of the country, carbon dioxide storage that mitigates the effects of climate change and the conservation of biodiversity and landscape.

Woods are the natural habitat for many animal and plant species, the protection of which is one of the missions of the Carabinieri Command for Forest Protection, which is responsible for preventing environmental damage and the misuse of natural resources. Their activities throughout the country are both

thorough and constant, also thanks to a collaboration with the various Italian administrative regions in order to prevent and punish environmental crimes, especially in cases of altering ground and topsoil in areas that are characterized by the presence of woods, especially if they are particularly vulnerable due to their hydro-geological profile.

The Command's activities are performed in the country through the 14 Regional Forestry Carabinieri Commands, 83 Groups, within which 83 Investigative Teams of Environmental and Agricultural Police and Forestry (NIPAAF) and 788 Stations operate.

HYDRO-GEOLOGICAL SYSTEM PLAN

The Italian territory, 70% of which is hilly and mountainous, is characterized by a complex org-





Checks by the forestry sector are one of the main activities of the Command aimed at protecting forests and allowing for a sustainable use of woodlands as a resource.

raphy and geologically unstable sediments that cause it to be effected by widespread phenomena of hydro-geological instability.

The urbanization of floodplain areas, the illegal collection of aggregate, the search for new farming areas and the anthropisation recorded over the last fifty years have contributed to an imbalance in the natural conditions of many streams and river channels, caused during major devastating events, the loss of numerous human lives and enormous economic resources.

The Carabinieri Corps helps to safeguard the territory for the prevention of hydro-geological instability, it cooperates in emergency duties of water and forestry policing. These activities are undertaken for the most part by the Carabinieri Command for Forest Protection.

FOREST HERITAGE

In the area of forest management, particular attention is granted to illicit felling in public areas, private land and areas of special natural value, while respecting the safety norms of working places and the regularity of employed manpower. **If not adequately prosecuted, criminal activities in this area could put at serious risk the equilibrium of forest ecosystems.**

FOREST FIRES

Every year thousands of hectares of forest burn because of fires often caused by neglect, carelessness or arson.

In the last thirty years 12% of Italian forests have been destroyed with very severe consequences in





- **remotely controlled aircraft (drones) for the recognition of forest areas on fire; software for the automatic detection of the onset of flames**
- **operational post-fire surveys and protocols, for the first estimates of hydro-geological instability caused by forest fires;**
- **remote satellite sensing for the swift containment of forest fires;**
- **training with a specific simulator that uses virtual reality to improve preparedness in the field of post-forest fire investigations.**

terms of causing soil erosion and increased instability of the affected sloping areas, habitat destruction, loss of animal and plant biodiversity and a rise in gas emissions affecting greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide).

THE NIAB

The Anti-Arson Informative Team (NIAB) works under the Carabinieri Command for Forest Protection. It provides technical, scientific and operative support to the territorial department of the Forestry Corps, and it draws up proposals for the planning of emergency services for the prevention and prosecution of forest fires, using innovative tools and methods, which include:

METEOMONT

Meteomont is a service for the prevention and forecast of the threat of avalanches in Italy by the Carabinieri Corps through weather surveys in high altitude areas and snow analysis. Snow cover control for the Meteomont snow report represents an important means of monitoring mountainous areas in order to guarantee safety to the local population.

The Carabinieri Anti-Arson Informative Team (NIAB) during operation to collect topsoil after a fire.





CARABINIERI COMMAND FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL PARKS

Due to the lay of its land and its geo-morphological and climatic conditions, Italy boasts some 60% of Europe's biodiversity. These areas are safeguarded through comprehensive monitoring of the territory and the application of national and supranational laws protecting biodiversity. As well known, the most effective tool for preserving biodiversity is the establishment and management of an effective system of protected areas. In this national system the Carabinieri Command Unit for the Protection of Biodiversity and Parks manages **130 Natural State Reserves and 19 state-owned forests** and is the agency responsible for the accurate supervision of the National Park system. Furthermore, they are in charge of enforcing the CITES Washington Convention, a pioneering international instrument for the protection of biodiversity. It coordinates anti-poaching activities as well as those for the prevention and punishment of crimes against animals.

They are also engaged in the study and monitoring of forest ecosystems. **These activities are undertaken by employees of Biodiversity, Park Rangers and representative of CITES.**

THE 130 ITALIAN NATURAL RESERVES

With its 28 Biodiversity Divisions and 40 Biodiversity Units the Carabinieri Biodiversity Group is in charge of the administration of 130 Natural Reserves and 19 state-owned forests, representing a treasure chest of biodiversity of fauna and flora. In a surface area of just 0.33% of the national territory and just over 3% of its protected areas, **Italian Natural Reserves are home to some 20% of the plant species at risk of conserva-**



tion, all 18 threatened mammal species in the country, which include the bear, wolf, otter, ibex and lynx, 70% of the most threatened avifauna and 75% of the European priority habitats.

CARABINIERI NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY CENTRES

The activities of the **three National Carabinieri Biodiversity Centres** are crucial for the study and conservation of forest biodiversity.

The Centres, which are located in Pieve Santo Stefano (Arezzo Province) and Dogana di Peri (Verona Province) carry out activities for the conservation of plants, tissues and seeds of the many tree and shrub species of national flora which represent a valuable data bank of the genetic variability of Italian forests. The **Fontal Forest Centre** (Mantua Province), on the other hand, has developed models based on the study of invertebrates that provide indications on how to evaluate the levels of biodiversity in forest ecosystems.

CRASE AND CSE

The Division also coordinates **10 Centres for the Rescue of Exotic Wild Animals (CRASE)**, where indigenous animals that have been wounded or are in difficulty are cared for, and, once they have recovered, they are reintroduced into nature or, if they are no longer self-sufficient, kept in suitable spaces and used for learning or research purposes. The Centres also take in exotic animals that have been impounded, in accordance with the Washington Convention (CITES) and the current rules in force.

In the **7 Equestrian Selection Centres (CSE)**, some of the most important Italian horse breeds are raised with the help of autonomous feeding production and experimentation of models of sustainable agriculture. The aim of these structures is both the conservation of indigenous genetic horse stock and the provision of horses to the mounted Corps divisions.

PROTECTING NATIONAL PARKS

The Carabinieri Parks Division is in charge of overseeing the territory of the 20 Italian National Parks



Forestry Carabinieri on duty in Parks Departments patrol the territory both on horseback and on the newly employed mountain e-bikes. In this way the Carabinieri help to disseminate an environmental culture of sustainability.

through the 20 Parks Units and the 148 Parks Stations. It also coordinates and supervises the activities of the Forestry Carabinieri, who carry out duties of “environmental guards” and “conflict mitigation” aimed at conservation and the improvement of socio-economic conditions in these territories, which play an important role in the Italian natural heritage and represent a sort of laboratory for sustainable development.

To this end, these units not only fulfil their ordinary duties aimed at preventing and curbing environmental crimes but also verify possession of authorizations issued in compliance with the laws about protected areas. They also monitor fauna and flora, provide support to park representatives in areas of scientific research and environmental education and evaluate damage to farming and livestock caused by wildlife. Another important part of their duties is monitoring the number of tourists with the help





The Washington Convention represent an important international normative tool that guarantees the preservation of biodiversity on the planet.

of specially-targeted services (including those at high altitude) in order to improve mountain safety. Particularly important in these activities are those undertaken on horseback and on bicycle as these means of transportation allow staff to access and reliably monitor impervious areas that are difficult to reach by other means both sustainably and without disturbing the flora and fauna.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES. CITES

The **Carabinieri CITES Group, which supervises 35 Units and 11 Detachments** is a fundamental pillar for the safeguarding of biodiversity. It oversees the implementation of the 1973 Washington CITES Convention, or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. This Convention regulates the trade of threatened species of wild animals on the basis of the innovative principle of conservation being pursued,

for the most part, through the rational and sustainable use of natural resources. The Group is also responsible for monitoring illegal logging as well as the prevention and enforcement of poaching.

FIGHT AGAINST POACHING AND THE PROTECTION OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS. SOARDA

Wild fauna is an essential part of the Italian natural patrimony and is protected both nationally and internationally. Accordingly, hunting cannot be practiced freely, but only by complying to special requirements including the possession of a valid hunting licence, which lays down the regulatory framework for such activities. Any non-compliance of these rule is considered poaching.

The **Operational Branch against Poaching and Crimes Against Animals (SOARDA)** of the CITES Carabinieri Group ensures proper hunting practices and carries out complex investigations on the trafficking of wild fauna, livestock with the help of local institutions and volunteers from environmental and animal rights associations. The Group takes technical command for the application of the national plan of action to combat illegal activities against wild birds, under the auspices of the Ministry of Ecological Transition. Furthermore, thanks to CUFA's role in the European Environmental Police Force, EUROPOL – EMPACT, the Commanding Officers of the CITES Group has been assigned the role of “driver” in the area of environmental crimes.

PROJECTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE

The Command monitors the qualitative and quantitative state of forest ecosystems and, in particular, evaluates the carbon sink and levels of biodiversity **through the realization of the National List of Forests and Carbon Tanks (INFC)**. This list represents a fundamental tool as it certifies the role played by forests in mitigating the effects of climate change. It also provides a detailed and scientifically accurate framework of the characteristics of the national forests, taking into consid-



eration the quantity of carbon stored in forest ecosystems; it also certifies the forests' contribution in mitigating the effects of climate change according to the international agreements signed by Italy (the Framework Convention for Climate Change and also the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement); it also arranges for the supervision of forest health (Con.Eco.For. – Forest Ecosystems Control), implementation of the NEC directive (National Emission Ceiling) as pertaining to the Ministry of Ecological Transition regarding the reduction of certain atmospheric pollutants and to the development of numerous projects for the safeguarding of particular species or habitats thanks to the involvement of the European Union through LIFE (Instrument Financier pour l'Environment) financial support. In this area, the Corps has also established the **Antivenin Cinephile Units**.



The 12 Antivenin Dog-Units prevent and minimize the terrible consequences of animal poisoning because they are able to spot out and remove poisoned baits and carcasses with any type of substances.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In addition to carrying out operations for the protection of the environment, the Command for the Safeguard of Parks Biodiversity adopts an extremely decisive tool for fulfilling such goals, i.e. **education about legality and envi-**

ronmental responsibility. Such actions belong to the process of sensibilisation and dissemination that the Corps carries out, employing specially-trained personnel to encourage the **responsibility of today's citizens, but above all of tomorrow's**.

Educating children to respect the environment is a noble duty that the Carabinieri fulfill with passion and dedication. Young generations represent our future.





CARABINIERI COMMAND FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

The annual yearly production of urban solid waste in Italy amounts to some 30 million tons, to which another 154 million tons of hazardous waste are added. This produces a progressive environmental impact, aggravated by illicit waste disposal by criminal organizations. **Every year in Italy more than 20 million tons of waste disappear**, and this quantity is analogous to a 1,900 meter high mountain with a 3 hectare base, providing criminality with a 22 billion euro profit.

The Carabinieri Command for Environmental Protection and Ecological Transition, responds functionally to the **Ministry of the Ecological Transition and is in charge of combating severe forms of pollution, organized environmental crimes, and national and illicit international waste trafficking.**

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

Illegal activity related to the waste cycle represents the most important aspect of environmental crimes, which draws substantial profit through illicit disposal, keeps these waste products competitive on the market and eases money laundering deriving from other types of criminal activity. This is, therefore, a type of criminality that crosses over various sectors involving other subjects from various fields, it operates through the perpetration of multiple crimes and avails itself of the help of people who have distinct professional skills and specific competence in their fields of operation.



OPERATIONAL ECOLOGICAL TEAMS - NOE

The Carabinieri Command for Environmental Protection and Ecological Transition is subdivided into **3 Group Commands**, which are respectively competent for the North, Centre and South of Italy with headquarters in Milan, Rome and Naples. **A total of 29 Operational Ecological Teams (NOE)** operate under its auspices both regionally and inter-regionally. These are supported by a specialised and centralized component, at the national level, the **Operational Department**, which is subdivided into four sections:

- **Central Operational Section**, responsible for the development of complex investigative operations nationally and internationally, aimed at dismantling criminal systems operating in the environmental sector;
- **Atmospheric Pollution from Radioactive Substances**, in charge of combating the illicit trafficking of material and radioactive waste;
- **Department of Air Pollution and Factories at risk of Substantial Accidents**, which is in charge of monitoring respect for the special regulations in use;
- **Analysis Department**, responsible for the interpretation of the flow of information and also the monitoring and provisional evaluation of environmental safety, necessary to optimize the use of resources, to plan and coordinate control activities and to define the activities in the fight against illegality.

This structure makes use of the **Centre for Data Analysis and Photo Analysis (CED)** in Naples, which, by employing highly specialized military staff in computer science, runs the **Computer System for the Safeguard of Environment (SITA)**, functional to the development of operational activities.



The Mobile Lab allows the Carabinieri to analyze the ground and air and to transmit collected data in real time.

NOE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

Internationally, the **Command is the Europol representative** in combating "illegal trafficking of nuclear material and other radioactive sources". It holds the vice-presidency in the informal network of Police Forces specialized in combating environmental crimes, it is part of the project **Life+ Satec**, it takes part in the training programme **"Counteracting Environmental Crime"** in support of the Bulgarian Police, and together with the General Command of the Carabinieri Corps it is the promoter of the initiative **"Waste trafficking. Evolution of the Global market and its effects on the waste streams"** within the framework of the Lyon-Rome G7 Group.



Personnel searching the area for a "sealed radioactive source".

Among the duties of the Carabinieri there is the protection of Italian quality agricultural products which are well known and appreciated world-wide.



CARABINIERI COMMAND FOR FOOD PROTECTION

Italy boasts the highest level of agro-biodiversity in the world with hundreds of products protected by the European Quality Mark and with a turnover, for this category alone, of 20 billion euros per year.

Subsequently, it is a sector that requires careful and constant monitoring aimed at avoiding scams and adulterations and any other action to the detriment of consumers and honest producers. In this area, the **Carabinieri Command for Food Protection** operates throughout Italy.

ITALIAN SOUNDING

This term refers to the use of denominations, geographical references, images, colour combinations and brands that evoke Italy and, in particular, some of its most famous typical products on food product labels and packaging, which are employed in order to promote their marketing even though they are not authentic. This is a very **frequent way of falsifying Made in Italy products**, which, by exploiting the reputation and attraction of fine Italian dining and the related food and wine tourism, and it actually damages the national economy.

Through the Food Protection **Command the Carabinieri Corps and the Health Protection Command are a leading institution in the fight against international food and agricultural product counterfeiting**, in cooperation with Europol, Interpol and the European Commission.

Thanks to its decisive action carried out internationally in 2012 Italy was able to modify the law obliging EU Member States to take products with misleading geographical indications found in the EU off the market.

CARABINIERI DEPARTMENTS FOR FOOD PROTECTION

The Carabinieri Command for Food Protection, under the auspices of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy, **operates throughout Italy with the Operations Department in Rome and five Carabinieri Food Protection Departments (RACs)** in Turin, Parma, Rome, Salerno and Messina. Its main mission is to verify the correct destination and regular use of funds disbursed by the European Union as part of the common policy in support of agricultural revenue.

The second concerns the prevention and suppression of fraud to the detriment of the quality of agricultural and food products.

Its activities include, for the most part, inspections verifying a product's compliance with the regulations in force in the various stages of the food chain: from primary production to processing and distribution and consumer choice.

Internationally, the Command participates in the **OPSON** network, which operates under the coordination of **Europol** and **Interpol**.



The CoESPU School in Vicenza is the Excellence Centre for Stability Police Units where the Corps has established a thematic Department in Environmental Protection.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

In our times when globalization has virtually eliminated the distance and timing of exchanges and relationships, but also the impact of environmental disasters, climate change and resource depletion, the effects and consequences of these factors have grown exponentially on a world-wide scale.

Viewed in light of food security and population growth, these factors can influence international competitive dynamics, as well as geopolitical relations and migratory phenomena, causing sudden upheavals of economic, social and political balances.

It is within this context that the activities undertaken for the protection of the environment and resources should be viewed, and we can summarize this under the principle of "comprehensive approach," i.e., an all-encompassing approach towards crisis management.

The Corps ensures the protection of territory, the environment, agriculture and forestry in compliance with fundamental human rights and related to international humanitarian commitment, in order to avoid lasting, extensive and serious damage to the environment.

Participation in projects financed by international organizations is an integral part of the strategy aimed at "ensuring territorial and environmental stability," through dedicated missions, in which the Corps plays a fundamental role.



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