

Extreme Weather Events and Scientific Research: The Italian Case

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Introduction

The catastrophic flood which has recently struck a large area of Emilia-Romagna region, northern Italy, brings to our attention, once again, the Italian territory's intrinsic fragility. Indeed, this is the last of a long queue of dramatic, extreme weather events which have hit Italy throughout the last 13 years. Within such context, the main driver of which appears to be climate change, special emphasis should be placed upon global warming, keeping well in mind that the last 8 years (2015-2022) have been the hottest ever experienced by Mother Earth across the last 140 years.

"How can we imagine to stay healthy in a sick world?", asked Pope Francis in his missive written three years ago to the President of Columbia for the

"World Environment Day", while the entire globe was dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear-cut example of a climate change-driven pathogen spillover caused by the SARS-CoV-2 betacoronavirus!

And, while the catastrophic Emilia-Romagna's flooding event once again underscores the extremely urgent and no more post-ponable need to invest ad hoc money sums into what I would call a "national extreme weather event-related preparedness and readiness system", it should be additionally emphasized that Italy continues to invest since many, too many years slightly more than 1% of its "inner/internal domestic product" in public research funding. Indeed, this appears to be completely inadmissible when compared with an average 2% invested by European Union Countries. Ironically enough, however, the Italian research community ranks 8th on a global scale for the prestige and quality of scientific publications, with the inadequate public research funding mentioned above largely justifying the "brain drain" which chronically affects our Nation since five consecutive decades, at least!

As a matter of fact, climate change, global warming and climate change-related health issues should be faced by adopting an "ad hoc mind and paradigm change" at the government and political levels and, no less important, through a multidisciplinary, transnational and transcontinental, basic and applied research effort, constantly inspired by the "One Health" concept/principle, reminding us that human, animal and environmental health are tightly and mutually linked to each other.

Last but not least and as we all know, the money sums invested in the "prevention" are exceedingly lower than those spent in the "therapy" of natural disasters, as the tragic flooding event occurred in Emilia-Romagna is clearly showing, and this is something we should firmly keep in mind. "*Errare Humanum est Perseverare Autem Diabolicum!*".