

RICE GROWING IN WEST PO VALLEY AND WATER RESOURCES

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In many pavillions at EXPO there are datas on water use related to different cultivations, included rice that has a millenary history in our Country. In the Po Valley, among Piemonte ad Lombardia, the production of rice represents 95% of the national production of rice. Rice cultivation, in the centuries, has made the landscape and the biodiversity.

Waters for rice come from the rivers Po, Dora Baltea, Sesia, Ticino (that use the water of Lake Maggiore) Adda and from Consortia reservoirs. Waters for rice do not take away resources for other water uses as hydroelectrical, drinkable, industrial. Rice submersion is made in April and May generally using waters coming from springtime rains and snow melting otherwise destined to go in Adriatic sea.

The scheme of rice submersion is the following: the waters are taken by rivers and throught the canal network of Consorzi di bonifica submerge a first part of the rice land; these waters go in the acquifers and after they are reused to submerge other parts of rice land. Rice cultivation in Po Valley has also the important function of storing waters inside acquifers that can be used during June, July and August when there is water scarcity.

Looking at the future of rice cultivation there are worries related to the introduction of some national and regional laws about environment. The implementation of the principle of "Minimum vital flow" should consider that the "rice system" provides benefits to the environment to whom it gives waters back after the use. To afford climate change it should be necessary to build new multifunctional reservoirs. In the areas of rice cultivation it should be possible to increase the summer water storage capacity of Lake Maggiore at 1,5 m over "hydrometric zero of Sesto Calende" that would allow to store 50 million c/m more of water.