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AQUIFERS: THE NATURAL RESPONSE TO THE HYDRIC EMERGENCY IN ITALY

In this national water emergency period, it is fundamental to point out that the largest water resource in the Italian territory consists of groundwater that guarantees 85% of the water demand (48% by wells and 37% by springs), which also significantly covers both the agricultural and industrial needs.

Despite the decline in rainfall, the national groundwater resource is annually renewed, for about 50 billion cubic meters, i.e. 10 times more than the total amount of water stored in the Lake Garda and than that discharged in the Adriatic Sea by the Po River in a year. In addition, deep reservoirs of even greater volume are also present, hidden in the subsoil of our plains and mountains. Italy, due to the hydrogeological characteristics of its territory, thus possesses an abundance of groundwater to represent an invaluable economic resource, also thanks to its excellent natural quality, compared to natural and artificial lakes.

It is therefore logical to say that the optimization of national water needs and consumption must rely on a careful assessment and conscious use of groundwater, as well on a proper water saving policy. Hydrogeologists have, and generally provide, technical tools and knowledge to ensure the sustainable use of this resource, which by nature can mitigate the contingent problems created by drought and can cope, within certain limits, with the effects of climate change and marine intrusion. These favourable conditions allow us to set up a truly sustainable cultural approach, with immediate practical application even in an emergency phase. In particular, this would avoid resorting to the maximum possible interception of water flowing into the rivers, with possible undesirable effects of river ecosystems alteration, land overbuilding and soil consumption.

We therefore invite all involved stakeholders, technical and political, institutional and private, to reconsider the central role of groundwater and the professionalism of hydrogeologists in planning both short and long-term interventions, in order to ensure the rapid formulation of effective, and economically advantageous, responses to the water crisis and climatic trends that will inevitably continue to affect our country.

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