

Non-food crops in South Europe

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Future prospects and evolutionary scenarios:

there might be several topics and deeper studies about non-food crops related to market development and to impact of CAP (Common Agricultural Politics) reform, mainly related to the kind of crops and products concerned: tobacco, textiles from hemp and cotton, oil from seeds and energy crops like those for the production of bio-ethanol, bio-diesel, and so on.

It may be useful to remember the future prospects about energy crop development. They could be affected by several factors:

- The reform of the Title V of the Constitution increases the autonomy of the local administrations with respect to energy management; this brings to a valorisation of the local energetic resources, to a reduction of the demand and to a planning for consumption economies.
- The international agreement of Kyoto, concerning reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, considered like a fundamental paper in the European politics for energy and environment.
- The reform of CAP, concerning the abolition of non-food crops on set-aside land and the establishment of an energy credit of 45 euro/ha for land cultivated to industrial crops up to a maximum of 1,5 million hectares, in the frame of contracts between farmers and transformation industries, also related to the past surfaces of each Member Country on set-aside land and to the share of carbon dioxide reduction.

The proposed regulations raise some considerations:

- The distribution of the Minimum Guaranteed Surface based on the past surface would penalise Italy that decreased the surfaces of non-food crops to 15.000 ha. Some margins of compensations should be needed.
- The Italian yields per hectare are generally not competitive, especially for rapeseed. This increases the import of raw material by the transformation industry that can find it at better prices outside Italy. For example, only 20% of the 110.000 t of bio-diesel produced in Italy are from crops grown in the Country (mainly sunflower).
- The establishment of the energetic credit will produce a geographic differentiation about the amount of the help and maybe only in Central and Southern Italy the credit could be enough to justify the introduction of sunflower and rapeseed into rotation with the cereals.
- Last but not least, it must be underlined that the proposal decreases the importance of non-food crops for uses other than energy, whose cultivation was economically possible only with the set-aside helps.