



GRASSLANDS

HABITAT 6210 – DRY GRASSLANDS

Location

Found in 4187 Natura2000 sites in Continental, Mediterranean and Alpine biogeographical regions in Europe. This habitat is found throughout Italy, with the Continental biogeographical region—in which the LIFE Drylands intervention sites are located—occupying about 1218,47 km².

Description

In Italy, the grasslands habitat is typically situated on a calcareous substrate and consists of seminatural dry grassy formations covered by bushes, dominated by perennial grasses and sometimes by Orchideaceae species, whose presence gives sites priority status.

In the LIFE Drylands intervention sites, this habitat has the typological peculiarity of being situated on acid substrates rather than on the far more common calcareous substrates. The presence of biological soil crusts indicates that the habitat is high in biodiversity. It is a widespread, fairly well-represented habitat which, however, is often abandoned to deteriorate.

Conservation

This habitat is of conservation interest at the European level, in accordance with the Habitat Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC), and the Natura 2000 network—the most important network of protected areas in Europe—was instituted to protect it. In the Natura 2000 areas in Piemonte and Lombardia, the habitat covers an overall surface area of 69.745 m².

Conservation status

III Report ex-art. 17 (Directive 92/43/EEC): **inadequate**.

IV Report ex-art. 17 (Direttiva 92/43/EEC): **poor**.

Red List of European Habitats: **vulnerable**.

Pressures and threats

The main threats to grassland habitat, resulting in a loss of its identifying characteristics, are invasion by native and allochthonous shrub and tree communities in areas which have been abandoned, and the lack of an efficient management system.

Interventions planned for this habitat

- > Mowing of herbaceous plants with removal of cuttings;
- > Cutting and local uprooting of native and non-native woody species;
- > Sod-cutting, involving raking of the uppermost 5-10cm of substrate, to reestablish pioneer conditions and reduce the accumulation of nutrients;
- > Increase the biodiversity, by planting typical species like Carthusian pink (Garofano dei certosini), Jersey thrift (Spillo lanceolato), Jasione montana/Blue button (Vedovella annuale), cornflower species (Fiordaliso cicalino-Centaurea deusta (Ten.)), and Wall germander (Camedrio Comune);
- > **Ex-novo creation** with brush-harvested seed taken from donor sites where the 6210 habitat is in a good state of conservation. Brush-harvested seed is a seed mix of high natural value, collected from a natural/seminatural meadow harvested with ad hoc agricultural machines. Brush harvesting yields large quantities of a seed mix whose species richness enables rapid restoration of meadows and grasslands starting from bare soil.

Intervention sites

ZSC Lame del Sesia e Isolone di Oldenico (Greggio, Oldenico – VC); **ZSC Valle del Ticino** (Pombia, Trecate – NO); **ZSC Confluenza Po-Tanaro-Sesia** (Isola S. Antonio – AL); **ZSC Ansa di Castelnovate** (Vizzola Ticino – VA); **ZSC Boschi della Fagiana** (Pontevecchio di Magenta – MI).

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