

Snow is already melting, water reserves are halved: “2023 will be worst than 2022”

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2023 starts with halved water reserves compared to the average, and with high temperatures that are melting the little snow we had: “The water deficit can’t be solved by rain alone, investments are needed”.

2023 has started with a minus sign, **-49,7% to be exact**. That is the amount of water missing compared to the average of the last 20 years in the Verbano basin, the maxi-reservoir that encompasses Lake Maggiore and all the rivers and lakes that pour their waters there from Lombardy, Piedmont and Switzerland. The figure emerges from the latest weekly monitoring by Arpa Lombardia on the availability of water resources, which captures a very delicate situation.

In the pictures, you can see the few centimetres of snow in the Passo della Forcora/Mount Corbaro area.

Throughout the area, 653 million cubic meters of water are estimated to be potentially available – contained in Lake Maggiore, other lakes, reservoirs, and in the form of snow – against an average value of about 1300 million, that is, the half.

Water is significantly missing in Lake Maggiore (-76,9%) and in the Alps, where snow is less than half compared to a normal season. And snow is actually the real problem: the small amount of snow has already started melting due to the high temperatures of recent weeks. This is a very big problem, considering that snow is a strategic supply which can provide water in spring and summer and that, last year, has been used up many weeks in advance, for example. With snow melting, the alpine reservoirs only can collect those waters, with only 20% less than the average.

This situation may start to change from next week with the arrival of rainfalls and snowfalls in the mountains. **What is certain is that a snowfall won’t turn the tide, because there is a real shortage of water.** This is well known by ANBI, the Decontamination and Irrigation Consortia Association, which is looking at the ongoing climatic changes with great concern. “Like any balance that has been in deficit for a long period of time, also the hydrological balance is already impaired, and the rebalancing can’t be done without important external interventions” says Francesco Vincenzi, ANBI President, whose Water Resources Observatory **certifies that a recovery is impossible with the current rainfall contributions**: “It’s clear that we need an urgent program of articulate, coordinate and multi-factional interventions, able to retain water, especially rainwater, to use it in times of need, from small lakes to reservoir formation, from expansion areas to the reuse of abandoned quarries,” adds Massimo Gargano, ANBI General Director. “This must be supported by a constant research on irrigation optimisation, without forgetting to improve the efficiency of hydric network and the possibility of using wastewater.”

These issues are not on the agenda of politics and public opinion. Vincenzi concludes: “By relaunching one of our slogans, we want to remind a distracted public opinion and politics that **food is irrigated, and that not only the quality of Made in Italy, but also the food sovereignty depend on water availability**. We say this at the beginning of a year that, as things stand, promises to be hydrologically more difficult than the already complex 2022, mostly in northern regions, hotspot of the agrifood economy in Italy”.

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