



After Life Communication Plan

LIFE12 BIO/IT/00213

**Control and eradication of the invasive plant species *Ailanthus altissima*
from the Alta Murgia National Park**

LIFE ALTA MURGIA

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ISTITUTO DI SCIENZE DELLE
PRODUZIONI ALIMENTARI



The Project

The LIFE Alta Murgia - LIFE12 BIO / IT / 000213 project, carried out with the contribution of the LIFE + financial instrument of the European Community, lasting 6 years (October 2013-December 2019) had as main objective the eradication from the National Park of the Alta Murgia of the invasive exotic tree species *Ailanthus altissima* with the use of innovative and environmentally friendly techniques.

The target plant

A. altissima, commonly known as tree of paradise or ailanthus, is one of the most harmful invasive tree species in Europe as it spreads quickly and spontaneously in all anthropized, natural and semi-natural environments. Since August 2019, it has been included in the list of invasive species of interest to the European Union. The species is very rustic and can adapt to any type of soil and water regime. Being undemanding and very fast-growing, the ailanthus is very competitive for native species. Invasive alien species are the second leading cause of biodiversity loss, altering protected habitats and ecosystems. Therefore, they must be controlled in order to protect biodiversity, preserve our landscapes, natural environments, native species and animals.

Area of intervention: Alta Murgia National Park

The park, established by Presidential Decree of 10 March 2004, is a Site of Community Importance (SCI) and Special Protection Area (SPA) within the European Natura 2000 network of protected areas. The park is among the largest at national and European level with its 68,077 hectares and includes the territories of 13 municipalities belonging to the provinces of Bari and BAT. In the Park, *A. altissima* could cause biodiversity loss, modifying or replacing autochthonous species of remarkable naturalistic value, causing degradation and loss of natural habitats.

Partners

CNR, ISPA – Institute of Science of Food Production, Bari, Italy (www.ispa.cnr.it) - Coordinator

CUFAA – Headship of Forestry, Environmental and Agri-food Unit (www.carabinieri.it)

Alta Murgia National Park Authority (www.parcoaltamurgia.it)

ARIF - Regional Irrigation and Forestry Agency (www.arifpuglia.it)

Duration of the Project: 01/10/2013 – 31/12/2019

Total cost: 1.757.000 euro

EU contribution: 832.000 euro

Lasting results

The interventions carried out within the Project have made possible to achieve, as a fundamental result, the elimination of the ailanthus in over 680 infested areas, for a total area of over 200 hectares, over 250 of which in natural areas, and over 400 in public or private areas that are not purely natural.

The contents, activities and results of the project were communicated through a wide range of tools and initiatives in order to reach the various stakeholders, which include the farmers, landowners, technicians, both professionals and public administration officials involved in the implementation of the Rural Development Programs, researchers, academics, students, environmental and agricultural associations, and common citizens. Specific attention was paid to promoting the exchange of

experiences and knowledge, also outside the area directly affected by the project, promoting networking activities with other Italian and European organizations and participating in numerous initiatives to present the objectives and of the results of LIFE Alta Murgia.

A series of activities, carried out during the Project as dissemination activities, have made it possible to obtain long-lasting end-products, which will make it possible to inform in the future, even well after the end of the Project, a wide range of interested people, about the activities carried out and the results of the Project. These tools (identified by the reference Logo adopted for the dissemination materials produced) will also contribute to raising awareness of environmental conservation issues, and training on the characteristics of the Park, the native and allochthonous species that populate it, and the risks of biodiversity loss. Particularly important are the products that allow to know and implement innovative and low environmental impact interventions for the management of invasive tree species.

What will remain after the Project

- The Eradication Action Plan, which explain an innovative and sustainable strategy for controlling ailanthus in natural areas.
- The APIS-MapS software, which allows to accurately map the presence of ailanthus in the Alta Murgia National Park, indicating all the characteristics of the infestation, and to record the actions taken and the results achieved. This software will remain available for the same use, and may be adapted to map other invasive species, and transferred to any environment.
- Properly trained ARIF technical staff, capable of carrying out interventions to control invasive tree species, with the help of environmentally friendly low-impact methods.
- CUFAA staff trained to recognize the alien species, to monitor its presence, and to use the software designed to map invasive plant species
- Printable questionnaires for landowners, which will allow you to report any new infestations.
- The Project website (lifealtamurgia.eu) rich in contents both in Italian and English, which will be maintained after the end of the Project for at least 5 years, and which will provide a useful tool always available to get information.
- 5000 copies of the brochures (also available in electronic format, in Italian and English), partly distributed and partly available for future events, which will be a useful information source on the damage caused by ailanthus and on strategies for controlling this species.
- 3000 copies, in total, of two booklets: "Autochthonous and allochthonous flora of the Alta Murgia National Park" and "Guidelines for the sustainable management of invasive tree species in natural areas" available in both Italian and English (available in electronic format on the project website).
- 14 scientific publications in the form of Articles in specialized journals, book chapters, abstracts and communications in the proceedings of international and national conferences, produced in electronic format available on various Internet sites, always accessible and printable all over the world.
- Stakeholders, informed and educated by numerous public events (Kickoff opening, 13 dissemination-training seminars, 3 public information events on the results of the project, the final conference) during which scientific and technical presentations were made regarding the Project, weed management techniques, the problem of invasive alien species, the importance of the Alta Murgia Park, the need to protect biodiversity.

- A video documentary, in Italian and English, and two short videos available in HD on the Project website and through YouTube, dedicated to the contents of the project entitled "Ailanthus: a threat to biodiversity" dedicated to the Project and the problem of the spread of Ailanthus in the Alta National Park Murgia, which describes the Park, its habitats, the main aims and activities of the Project, the operating methods used so far for the eradication of this species, interviews with the coordinators of the activities.
- 15 information signs installed in different areas in the Park, which indicate the activities carried out and the references to the project and the LIFE Program.
- The Layman's report, a summary information document that illustrates the main contents of the project, available from the official website of the Project.
- Numerous places and artifacts recovered from ailanthus infestation, witnesses of the work done and the results achieved. Many of them have been recovered from degradation, many are located along the hiking trails regularly frequented by visitors, some will be used as educational farms.

After-LIFE communication and dissemination strategy

The dissemination and after-LIFE communication activities will be inspired by the following main lines of action:

- Dissemination of results and further collaborative developments on the territory.
- Maintaining and strengthening relations with the networks and communities of projects contacted on a national and European dimension - in particular with those with whom significant collaborations have been established.
- Maintaining and expanding relations with the scientific community that deals with similar issues, in order to create new opportunities for using the techniques and software developed, and to invite the search for new innovative solutions.

Below are the initiatives identified for the after-LIFE communication and dissemination strategy over a period of 5 years following the administrative closure of the project (31/12/2019).

Updating and maintenance of the official project website

Objective: dissemination of the Project results and further developments

Partners involved: CNR-ISPA

Target to reach: general public

Description: the official project website will be regularly maintained and updated with the latest news and progress and will remain active at lifealtamurgia.eu for a period of at least 5 years from the end of the subsidized period (2019).

Maintaining and creating new contacts with other local authorities outside the Alta Murgia Parka Murgia

Objective: Extension of the control area of ailanthus to all the municipalities that gravitate around the Park

Partners involved: All partners

Target to reach: Municipalities and other local authorities

Description: Relationships with the contacted local authorities will be kept alive and new ones will be created

Participation in initiatives and events open to the general public, with initiatives for students and schools

Objective: to sensitize the population, and in particular students to the problems of environmental protection, invasion of alien species, and conservation of biodiversity

Partners involved: PARK, ISPA

Target to reach: General public, sector professionals, universities, schools

Description: Events will be organized where presentations about the Life Alta Murgia Project will be shown or participation in other external events will be scheduled

Participation in events, meetings and other initiatives organized by the EC and by the projects of the created network of contacts

Objective: Increase of the European added value created by the project and incentive for further developments

Partners involved: ISPA, PARK

Target to reach: General public, sector specialists, project communities, companies, research and technological development communities

Description: Participation in events, collaborations for any future initiatives, exchange of results and information

Visits and meetings with stakeholders

Objective: To inform stakeholders about environmentally friendly and low environmental impact control methods for the control of invasive plant species

Partners involved: All partners

Target to reach: All categories of stakeholders, with particular attention to Municipalities, other local authorities and businesses

Description: Individual meetings with project stakeholders will be organized, presenting the results and progress of the Life Alta Murgia Project, encouraging their involvement

Dissemination to professionals and representatives of the scientific community

Objective: Dissemination aimed at professionals of the sector, experts in modeling and forecasting, research and technological development community

Partners involved: ISPA CNR

Target to reach: Professionals, modeling and forecasting experts, research and technological development community

Description: The dissemination activity will include: participation (and/or organization) in events aimed at a professional or scientific public, presentation in conferences, drafting of scientific articles with reference to the project and its results