

# *Floods Hit Northern Italy, Draw Accusations of Neglect*

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Rome, November 6 (RHC)-- Flooding has hit Italy's agricultural heartland in the fertile north, destroying agricultural lands and products and sparking accusations of environmental neglect.

On Wednesday, Italy's national agriculture association, CIA, said mud and water had damaged orchards and vineyards in Tuscany, Liguria and Veneto regions. Meanwhile, the Italian farmers' association, Coldiretti, warned of dangerous weather from Liguria in the northwest to the southern island of Sicily.

CIA said this is the latest in a series of problems faced by Italian agriculture, whose income has already been reduced due to low prices for agricultural produce.

In a statement, Coldiretti added: "A flawed development program which has reduced the countryside by 15 percent and eliminated 2.15 million hectares of cultivated land in the last 20 years is far from innocent in this situation."

This comes as the unstable, mountainous areas of Italy make it susceptible to flooding and landslides, a problem which worsens farmers' abandonment of land and irresponsible construction in the areas. Coldiretti has said that 82 percent of Italy's towns risk landslides and flooding in some of their parts where some five million people reside.

Severe weather conditions alone have already inflicted one billion euros (\$1.25 billion) damage on the sector since the start of this year, CIA said. A "red alert" has been issued for most of Liguria, whose main city, Genoa, is still suffering from flooding in early October which killed one person.

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