



Italy: 2018 VAIA Storm Forest Recovery

Rebuilding Forests for a
Changing Climate

In October 2018, the VAIA storm devastated forests across northeastern Italy, flattening millions of trees. The recovery effort, ongoing today, combines ecological restoration with climate adaptation, demonstrating how environmental disasters require long-term, holistic responses.

The Storm

The VAIA storm brought hurricane-force winds exceeding 200 km/h to northeastern Italy. In forests across Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, millions of trees were flattened in hours. Over 42 million cubic meters of timber - representing decades of forest growth - lay destroyed. The environmental and economic impacts were enormous.





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Immediate Response

Italian Civil Protection coordinated the immediate response with regional governments and local forestry services. Priority was removing fallen trees from roads and infrastructure, preventing landslides in deforested areas, securing dangerous situations, and salvaging usable timber before it rotted or became infested.

Long-Term Recovery: The LIFE VAIA Project

Launched in 2021, the EU-funded LIFE VAIA Project leads long-term forest recovery and climate adaptation. The project focuses on ecological restoration using diverse, climate-resilient tree species rather than monoculture replanting, creating forests that can better withstand future storms and climate change. It includes research on forest adaptation strategies, community engagement in restoration, and sustainable forestry practices.

Lessons for Forest Management

VAIA highlighted vulnerabilities in forest management. Monoculture forests proved more susceptible to storm damage than diverse forests. Climate change is bringing more extreme weather events. Future forest management must prioritize diversity, resilience, and adaptation to changing conditions.

Key Lesson

Environmental disasters require long-term, holistic recovery approaches. Rebuilding ecosystems provides opportunity to build climate resilience through diversity, adaptation, and sustainable management. Investing in ecological restoration protects communities while preserving natural heritage.