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Bologna is putting on airs, cleaner airs!

The problem of climate changes has become crucial at a global level and needs strategies that work on its causes, by reducing and limiting the CO₂ in the atmosphere, and on its effects, through adaptation interventions.

In towns the consequences of climate change are more and more evident, due to air overheating, a phenomenon that is known as “heat island”, which is also caused by the increase in the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere and by the urban structure. Besides the quality of air worsened because of the presence of dusts and pollutants derived from the traffic, from heating and industrial processes.

Urban green areas can play a key role in mitigating the urban micro-climate: trees can absorb CO₂ and fight the “heat island” effect, contributing to the depuration of air from pollutants.



How much CO₂ does a tree absorb?

At least 700 kg of CO₂ in its entire life cycle

Which equals to:

5,000 Km covered by car

18,000 Km covered by train

The production of 500 Kg of paper

The use of 5 computers for one year

The GAIA European project

The local community - public institutions and businesses - working together under a co-responsibility approach in order to increase green areas, in this way contributing to the compensation of a part of the emissions that are due to production activities and contributing to the improvement of air quality in the city area.

The city

The municipality of Bologna is involving the key actors of the local territory in an initiative aimed at improving the town environment and the life quality of citizens, thanks to an innovative approach based on cooperation with companies.

The presidents of the districts took part in the project creating an Ethical Committee, which guarantees the consistency of the project goals with the interventions carried out.

The companies

By cooperating in the planting process of new trees, the companies will compensate the emissions that are caused by their production activities, in this way becoming the protagonists of a sustainable economic development.

The first companies which joined the project became part of the Promoting Group, that was set up in order to support the pilot project in the first green areas. The Group is composed of: Airport G. Marconi Bologna, Coop Adriatica, Enel, Hera Group, La Perla Group, Unipol Group, Manutencoop and M. Casale Bauer.

The research

Not all plants are the same and not all plants have the same effects in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Through an appropriate scientific approach IBIMET-CNR selected some types of trees which have better effects for the absorption of CO₂ and for the improvement of air quality, for instance: field maple, Mediterranean hackberry, hornbeam, cherry tree, common ash, flowering apple tree, myrobalan, common elm, black alder, flowering ash, elder and small-leaved lime tree.

The key phases of the project



November 2011

Constitution of an Ethical Committee and of a Promoting Group of Companies.



From March 2012

Start of a planting pilot project in the areas of: park of Villa Angeletti, courtyard of Palazzo d'Accursio and Roveri industrial area. Participation of local businesses in the GAIA project, for the planting project.



September 2012 - December 2012

Start of the planting process in the selected green urban areas (30 areas for a total of 12 hectares).

The aim of the GAIA project is to plant 3,000 trees in the city area by March 2013, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, to the improvement of air quality and to the renewal of the city environment.