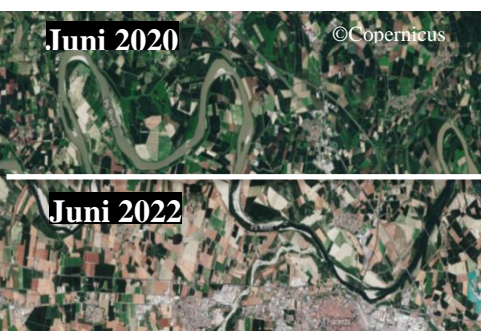


Special Stopover II: No Water, No Rice

The Po Valley in Northern Italy is extremely important for Italian agriculture. Mostly grain and rice is growing there. Italy is exporting different varieties of rice all over Europe and some of them are unique. Now, the rice agriculture in the Po Valley is in danger due to extreme droughts and floods caused by climate change.

Ciao! (Hi!) My name is Tommaso, I live in the Po Valley close to Novara. Here many farmers are growing rice. Together with the areas of Vercelli and Pavia, they produce 90% of the rice grown in Italy. So rice is fundamental for the economy and employs lots of people. However, planting rice needs lots of water, which we don't have due to extreme droughts.



In 2022/2023 it has reached its worst in history: almost no meltwater from the mountains and areas without rainfall for more than 100 days! This caused a severe drought in the whole Po valley, leaving space to big squares of dry sand. Mayors even limited water consumption for their citizens: no drinking water for private pools and car washing, even hair washing at hairdressers got limited!

Unfortunately, the droughts in North Italy were followed by heavy rains that lead to floods. Many people lost their homes. Also a friend of mine had to be evacuated by a helicopter.

Another reason why Italy is struggling with water (besides the climate crisis) is that water pipelines are old and leak. Specialists say that we lose around 40% of water because of old pipelines! Now, the government has a plan to renovate pipelines and save water in the long term, so let's hope it's not too late for action already!

Climate change and its effects are difficult to predict, so even with new water pipelines we don't know when this terrible situation in Northern Italy is going to end!



Buon viaggio! (Have a nice journey!) Yours, Tommaso

Questions and tasks on the Special Stopover Italy

For the younger ones

- 👉 What kinds of rice do you know? What's your favourite meal with rice?
- 👉 Have you ever experienced any water limitations at home? If yes, how did it feel? If not, ask your (grand) parents about their experience.
- 👉 Ask your grandparents or older neighbours what the climate was like in their childhood. And what is different today?

Task: Show some photos of your favourite rice-recipes to your classmates.

Tip: The travel station Australia "Where the Firebugs Dance" shows similar problems.

For the older ones

- 👉 *What's the link between snowfall and drought in the Po Valley?*
Part of the Po's water comes from melted snow on the Alps that flow into its tributary rivers. When it doesn't snow enough during the winter, then the Po Valley will be more exposed to droughts in the summer.
- 👉 *What happens when it starts raining after a long drought?*
When it has not rained for a long time, the soil is very dry and compacted. That is why it can absorb the water very poorly, it just runs off. When it rains too much at once (heavy rain), flooding occurs, which can be very dangerous.
Due to climate change, this is happening more and more often.
Example: Northern Italy in May 2023.

Task: *Look at the rice you have at home: Where does it come from? How is it grown? Is it climate-friendly? Do a quick research on the internet.*