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WOODLAND RECOLONIZATION OF ABANDONED FARMLAND IN THE JULIAN PRE-ALPS (FRIULI, ITALY)

RIMBOSCHIMENTO SPONTANEO DI TERRENI AGRICOLI ABBANDONATI NELLE PREALPI GIULIE (FRIULI, ITALIA)

Abstract - Tree vegetation and soils have been analysed in five sites of the Julian Pre-Alps, on agricultural land on terraces, left fallow some decades ago. Dominant species are *Fraxinus excelsior* and *Acer pseudoplatanus*. Even if some trees established before abandonment density is still scarce and establishment is still taking place. Species composition is rather uniform but the pattern of colonisations are quite different in the five sites.

Key words: Secondary succession, Trees colonisation, Ash-maple stands, Terraces, Pre-Alps.

Riassunto breve - *Sono state analizzate le caratteristiche della vegetazione arborea e del suolo in cinque località delle Prealpi Giulie in coltivi su terrazze abbandonati da alcuni decenni. Le specie dominanti sono* Fraxinus excelsior *e* Acer pseudoplatanus. *Anche se alcuni alberi si sono insediati prima della cessazione delle colture la densità è scarsa e la rinnovazione è ancora in atto. La composizione specifica è abbastanza uniforme ma la struttura orizzontale varia nelle diverse stazioni.*

Parole chiave: *Successioni secondarie, Rimboschimento spontaneo, Terrazze, Prealpi.*

Introduction

The wide range of studies on the topic of abandoned farmland underlines the many different fields of research covered by this subject as well as its considerable geographical distribution. Publications from all over Europe cover the secondary succession of abandoned farmland as far as flora, fauna and soil development are concerned, and also consider aspects of landscape planning (DEBUSSCHE & LEPART, 1992; HANDKE & SCHREIBER, 1985; PUERTO & RICO, 1994; SCHWAAR, 1990; SURBER et al., 1974). These studies have also demonstrated that research on abandoned farmland is closely related to succession research.

In the Alps, the abandonment of agricultural land has become so widespread that in many areas fields and meadows are recolonised by woodland and the landscape has radically changed. For the Italian Alps, LOZITO et al. (1975) already pointed out the spontaneous