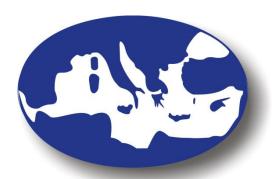


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ABSTRACT BOOK

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	Tintinnid (Protozoa: Ciliophora) Species in the Gulf of Gemlik and Some	
	Ecological Properties of the Environment	67
	Changes in phytoplankton community structure in the Gulf of Bandırma, Marmara Sea in 2006-2008	68
	Effects of Environmental pollution on morphological, nutritional traits and	. 00
	photosynthetic performances of olive (<i>Olea europaea</i> L.) and	
		40
	Fig (Ficus carica L.) trees	
	The Seasonal Changes of Zooplankton in Gulf of Erdek, Marmara Sea	. / U
	Temporal impact of urbanization on the protection zones of two	74
	drinking water reservoirs in İstanbul	, / I
	Assessment of thyme reduction using multitemporal satellite sensor data	
	and in-situ spectroradiometric measurement:	
	Altroluk plateau, Izmit-Turkey	. / 2
	Grapewine varieties distribution in the cultivation area of Rahovec, Kosovo	
	and their impact on different environmental parameters	eti
	tanımlanmamış.	
	Seasonal comparative study of macrozoobenthos of the rocky areas of the	
	Adriatic Sea in Albania	
	Data on macrozoobenthos of rocky coast of Nimfa, Vlora Bay, Albania	.74
	The repetitive DNA of Bryophytes, a new, different and earlier kind of	
	bioindicator Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmam	IIŞ.
	Growth stimulating effects of blue LEDs on indoor cultivation of marine	
	and freshwater green algae	
E	COLOGICAL DISASTERS	
	Cs-137 contamination in wild boars in Sesia Valley, Italy	.77
	Rehabilitation of methods used for assessing extreme floods to	
	climate change in Morocco	-
	A sample study on oil spill and cleaning action by using UAV	.78
	Monitoring and mapping of flooded areas using interferometric synthetic	
	aperture radar Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmam	11Ş.
	Calculation of Stream Water Velocity and Flood Risk using Numerical	
	Model- A Case Study from Filyos River	
	Italian foundry contamination due to Cs-137	.80
E	COTOXICITY	81
	Synergistic Chronic Ecotoxicological Impact (SCEI) of Emerging Endocrinic POPs	
	Mixtures in WWTP Effluents, Surface and Ground Water The "Ecotoxicological	
	connection": Water-Stressed Mediterranean Area Perspective	82
	Strategies underlying Halimione portulacoides (L.) Aellen tolerance to	
	environmental mercury exposure - organ-specific antioxidant metabolism and	
	polypeptide patterns significance	83
	Determination of acute toxicities of Fe ₃ O ₄ and SiO ₂ with aerobic (<i>Zoogloea</i>	
	ramigera, Nitrosomonas sp., Vibrio fischeri, Daphnia magna and Lepistes sp.)	
	and anaerobic bacteria (Methanosarcina sp.) Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmam	115.



Cs-137 contamination in wild boars in Sesia Valley, Italy

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Traces of cesium-137, well above the threshold set out in the Italian regulations, have been found in wild boars in the alpine area of the Sesia Valley, Piedmont, Italy.

We analyzed samples of tongue and diaphragm of animals slaughtered during the hunting season 2012-2013 and in 27 of these the level of cesium was higher than the threshold specified by the Italian Regulation 733 of 2008, dealing with the tolerable limit in the event of a nuclear accident. In fact, 27 samples have values above 600 Bq/kg, reaching up to 5600 Bq / kg in one sample, i.e., about ten times the limit. Cesium-137 is a radioactive isotope released, in 1986 from the Chernobyl disaster. It would seem that the contamination of these boars is so high due to the Chernobyl fallout and not, as it was thought at first, due to a radioactive medical source abandoned and disposed of illegally.

According to ARPA Piemonte (Governmental Regional Agency), the fall-out from Chernobyl was particularly high in certain areas of Piedmont, including the Sesia Valley, and it is not uncommon to find wild boars so contaminated and, in particular, this has already happened in other areas heavily contaminated by Chernobyl fallout as the Sesia Valley was.

A radiological test has been carried out, to assess conclusively that cesium-137 in the boars is "old Cesium" from Chernobyl and nothing something coming from a new contamination. Cs-137 (which has a half-life of 30 years) came from Chernobyl mixed with the shortest-lived isotope Cs-134 (which has half-life of about 2 years). In particular, in May 1986, the ratio of the radioactivity of Cs-137 versus Cs-134 present in the cloud and deposited on Italian soil was equal to about two (1.94): in other words, the radioactivity from Cs- 134 was approximately half that from Cs-137.

But the radioactivity from Cs-134 is halved every two years, while the longest Cs-137 halves every 30 years. So now, 27 years after Chernobyl, the radioactive concentration from Cs-134 has halved more than 13 times, falling to very little, while that of Cs-137 is still a bit 'more than a half of the original one. So, if we analyze the Chernobyl Radioactive cesium today, the ratio of the radioactivity of Cs-137 and Cs-134 is no longer near 2, but it has become, in favor of Cs-137, about 8900.

A further analysis has been performed with more precise measurements: the radioactive contamination of our boars shows a radioactivity of Cs-134 in their flesh almost imperceptible, but in the order - in the maximum case of the 5600 Bq/kg contamination - of 0.6 Bq/kg. Then it is confirmed that it is due to the heritage of the Chernobyl cloud contamination.

However, the wild boars are "sentinel animals" for pollution conditions in the areas where they live, because they provide precise information about the status of the environment. Thus, a contamination of the animals should require investigation and analysis of the environmental, meteorological and hydrological pollution in the areas where they live.

Keywords: Cesium-137, chernobyl, radioactive contamination, wild boars