Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in urban wastewater in Italy
5th Report
Update to week 27 of 2022 (10.07.2022)

Authors:

- Giuseppina La Rosa, Giusy Bonanno Ferraro, Pamela Mancini, Carolina Veneri, Marcello Iaconelli, Luca Lucentini, Lucia Bonadonna, Mario Cerroni, Federica Simonetti (Department of Environment and Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanità)
- Mauro Grigioni, Giuseppe D'Avenio (National Center for Innovative Technologies in Public Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanità)
- Mirko Rossi (independent researcher)
- Elisabetta Suffredini (Department of Food Safety, Nutrition and Veterinary Public Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanità)

Main findings:

- As of week 27 of 2022 (04.07.2022 - 10.07.2022), a total of 6.899 wastewater samples were collected throughout Italy in the framework of the SARS-CoV-2 environmental surveillance (EU Commission Recommendation 2021/472)
- 6.887 wastewater samples were analysed and 6.096 (88.5%) were positive for SARS-CoV-2 RNA.
- The national trend of SARS-CoV-2 concentrations in wastewater showed an increase in SARS-CoV-2 concentrations in the weeks 26-27 (04.07.2022 - 10.07.2022), in line with trends observed in the previous two weeks. Increasing trends were observed in most of the Regions/Autonomous Provinces.
- The significant increase of SARS-CoV-2 loads suggests a rise in the number of individuals excreting SARS-CoV-2, which is in agreement with the current growth of Covid-19 cases, in relation to the spread of the Omicron sublineages BA.4 and BA.5.

On 17th March 2021, the "EU Commission Recommendation 2021/472 on a common approach to establish a systematic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants in wastewaters in the EU", strongly encouraged Member States to put in place national wastewater surveillance systems aimed at the collection of data on SARS-CoV-2 and its variants[1]. The implementation of the Recommendation was granted by the Decree Law n. 73 of 25.05.2021, art. 34 and coordination of the activities was assigned to Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS).
As on July 2022, 20 of the 21 Italian Regions/A.P. provide SARS-CoV-2 concentration data within the environmental surveillance program. Details on enrolled Regions/Autonomous provinces, sampling sites, sampling frequencies and methods can be found in the 1° Report on Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in urban wastewater in Italy (https://www.iss.it/en/cov19-acque-reflue).

The aim of this report is to update the results of the environmental surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 up to week 27 of 2022 (04.07.2022 - 10.07.2022).

Results

The data on SARS-CoV-2 concentrations in wastewater are produced by the SARI network laboratories (see Acknowledgement section). Results on SARS-CoV-2 detection obtained since October 2021 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results obtained in 20 Regions/Autonomous Provinces and as on week 27, 2022

Region/A.P.	N° of WTP	Collected Samples	Analysed samples	Positive samples	% of positive samples
Abruzzo	5	199	199	71	35.7%
Basilicata	2	75	75	59	78.7%
Calabria	6	120	120	118	98.3%
Campania	10	598	598	521	87.1%
Emilia Romagna	14	645	639	548	85.7%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	3	126	126	117	92.8%
Lazio	13	465	465	439	94.4%
Liguria	16	702	702	585	83.3%

1 Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/472 of 17 March 2021 on a common approach to establish a systematic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants in wastewaters in the EU. (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H0472&qid=1628798981209)

Lombardia	15	693	692	656	94.8%
Marche	6	205	205	194	94.6%
Molise	3	94	94	44	46.8%
Piemonte	7	260	260	247	95.0%
Puglia	16	551	551	536	97.3%
Sicilia	17	629	625	590	94.4%
Toscana	13	377	377	235	62.3%
Umbria	3	113	113	113	100%
Valle d'Aosta	2	158	158	143	90.5%
Veneto	10	440	439	432	98.4%
A.P. Bolzano	3	209	209	209	100%
A.P. Trento	3	240	240	239	99.6%
Total	**167**	**6.899**	**6.887**	**6096**	**88.5%**

Data reported since October 2021, extrapolated by the GIS database on 04 July 2022, at 20:00 PM.

Weekly changes in term of SARS-CoV-2 concentrations are shown in Table 2. Variation compared to the previous week are shown with arrows (red= increase, green = decrease, black = stationary). Data from the last 14 weeks of surveillance are shown in the table.

Table 2. Weekly changes. Variations compared to the previous week are shown with arrows (red= increase, green = decrease, black = stationary).The last 14 weeks of surveillance are represented.

Region/A.P.	week													
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Abruzzo	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Basilicata	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘
Calabria	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘
Campania	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Emilia-Romagna	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↗
Lazio	↗	↗	↗	↔	↗	↘	↘	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘
Liguria	↗	↗	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↔	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Lombardia	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↔	↗	↗
Marche	↗	↗	↔	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Molise	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗
Piemonte	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↔	↗
Puglia	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↔	↗	↗	↗
Sicilia	↘	↘	↗	↗	↔	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Toscana	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↘	↗	↗	↘
Umbria	↘	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗
Valle d'Aosta	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘	↘
Veneto	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↔	↗
A.P. Bolzano	↘	↔	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
A.P. Trento	↘	↘	↘	↔	↘	↗	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Italy	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↔	↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↗

Week 14 = data as on 10.04.2022;
Week 27 = data as on 10.07.2022;
n.a. not available

Quantitative data were used to elaborate the Quiver graphs, as described previously[2]. Figure 1 represents the global data obtained in Italy since October 2021 and as on week 27, 2022 (10.07.2022).

In the last two weeks, an increase was documented, suggesting a rise in the number of individuals excreting SARS-CoV-2 in wastewaters.

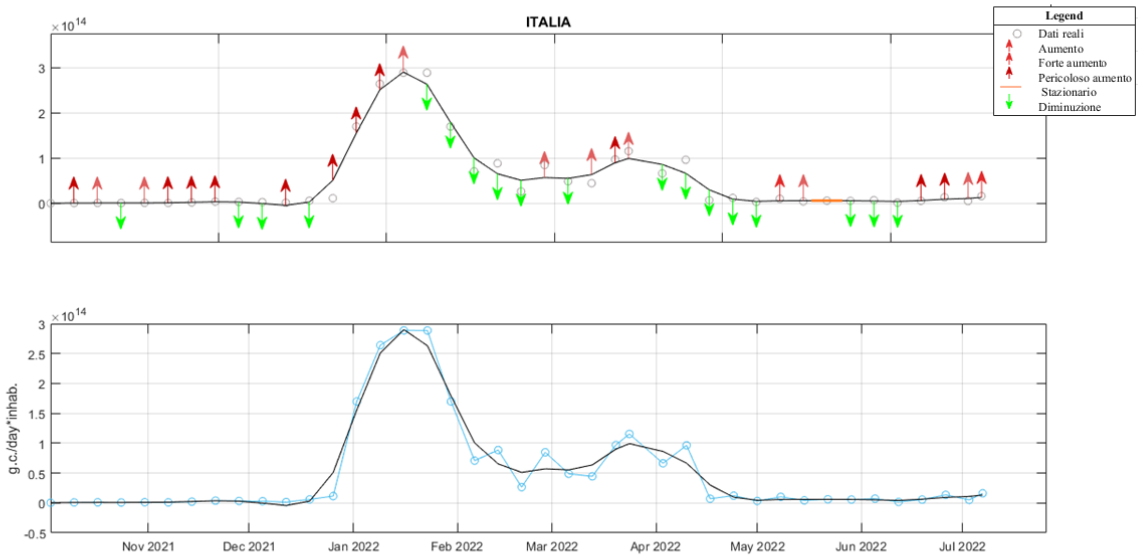


Figure 1. Quiver graph representing SARS-CoV-2 trends in wastewater in Italy in the period 1 October 2021 – 10 July 2022. Increase = 2%-20%; strong Increase = 20%-30%; dangerous Increase = >30%; stationary = 0-2%.

Legend (relative variation compared to previous week):
Increase = 2%-20%
Strong Increase = 20%-30%
Dangerous Increase = >30%
Stationary = 0-2%
Decrease = reduction of the concentration

Quiver graphs for each Region/A.P. are shown in Appendix 1.

[2] Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in urban wastewater in Italy 1° Report (Study period: 01 October 2021 - 31 March 2022. 8e5e2edb-bae0-f1b0-ee6e-08255c76484f (iss.it)

Limitations of the study

- The geographical and population coverage of the surveillance network is still incomplete, as 20 of the 21 Italian Regions/A.P. are actively reporting data to the surveillance system.
- Caution should be used in the interpretation of the most recent data, as trend analysis may be affected by missing data.
- According to EU Rec. 2021/472 and the national protocol adopted for SARS-CoV-2 analysis in wastewaters, analytical results should be uploaded to the SARI 2.0 databases within 48 hours after sample collection. According to available data, laboratories of the surveillance network comply with this time limit in most cases. However, different technical issues (e.g. the need to repeat the analysis to reach the quality assurance criteria, delays in samples collection/shipment, unexpected personnel shortage, delays in data validation or uploading, etc.) may hamper the timely update of results. Therefore, data within the last two weeks of observation should always be taken with caution, as they might be not completely consolidated yet.
- Molecular analytical methods applied to complex environmental matrices like wastewaters may be hampered by low viral concentration, poor recovery of the analyte, and/or inhibition of PCR amplification. Therefore, both the detection and quantification of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewaters may be affected by false negative results and/or by underestimation. According to collected data (Table 1), samples positivity rate varied significantly among Regions/A.P. and may conceal variability of detection performance. Besides this, analytical issues may sporadically arise depending on specific climatic/meteorological conditions or due to the characteristics of some samples or sampling points, leading to outlier results and, in turn, to trend alterations.
- Sewage networks are highly diverse (e.g. linear development, daily flow, ramification complexity, the ratio of urban to industrial waters, single/large vs. multiple/small WTPs, etc.) and the effect of such diversity on the representativeness of the different sampling points and on virus detectability is unknown.

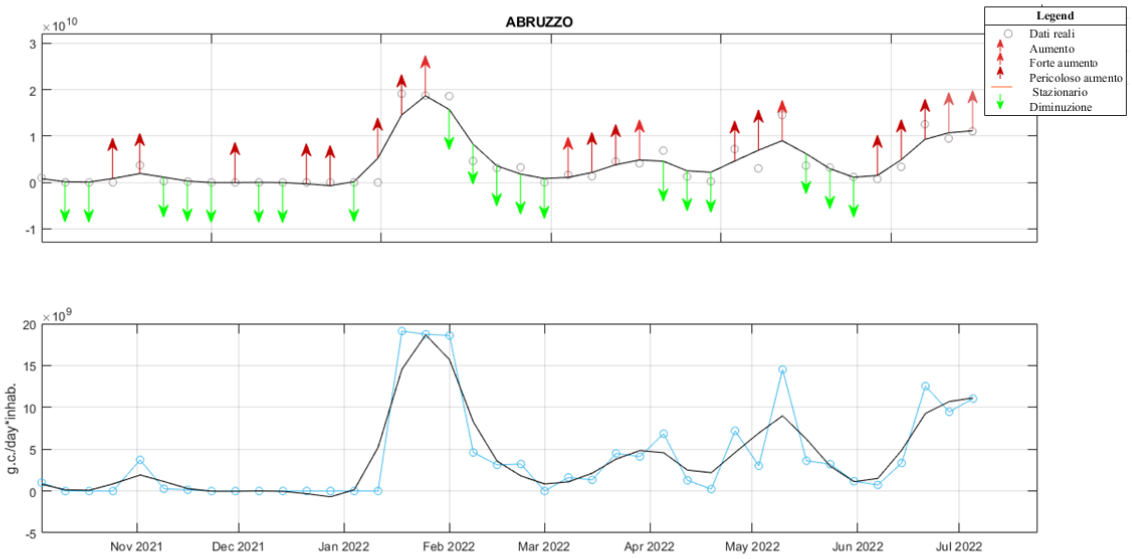
Conclusions and final considerations

The observed SARS-CoV-2 loads in sewage has grown considerably since mid-June 2022, suggesting an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, linked to the diffusion of the Omicron sublineages BA.4 and BA.5.

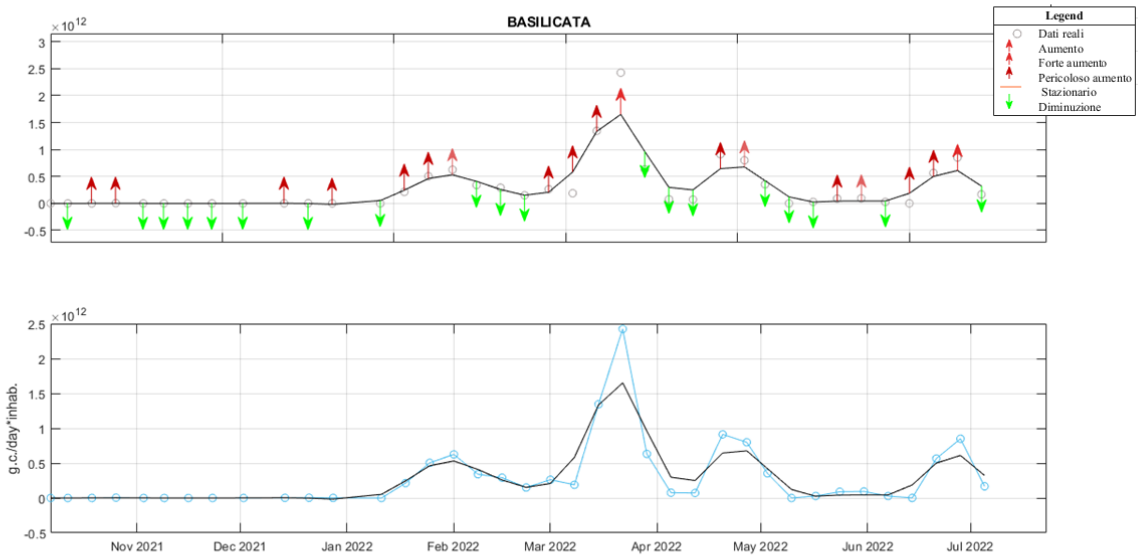
Appendix 1: Quiver graphs for Regions and Autonomous Provinces

Legend (relative variation compared to previous week):
Increase = 2%-20%
Strong Increase = 20%-30%
Dangerous Increase = >30%
Stationary = 0-2%
Decrease = reduction of the concentration

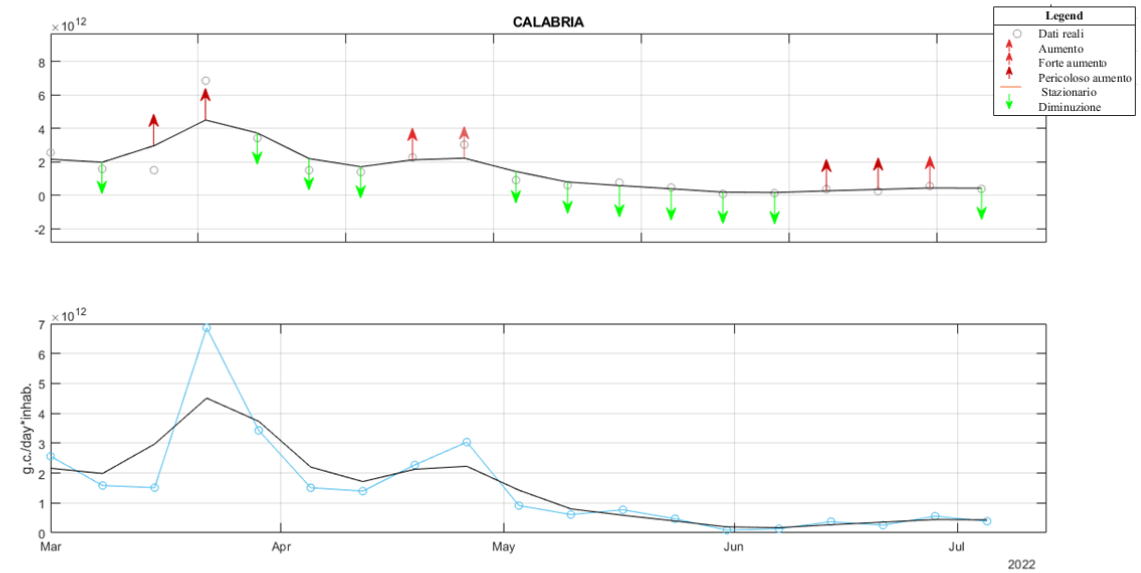
ABRUZZO



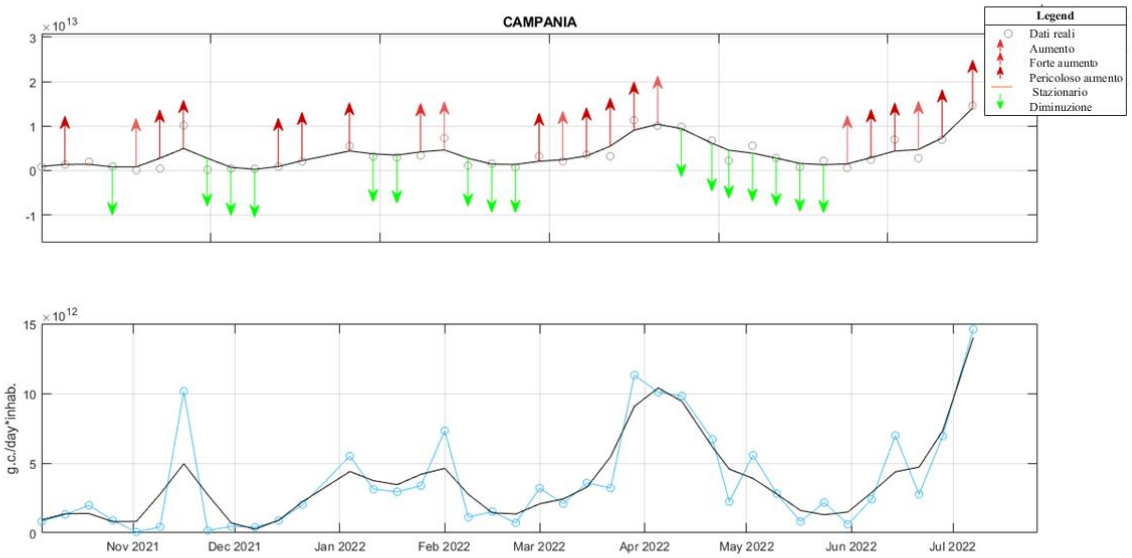
BASILICATA



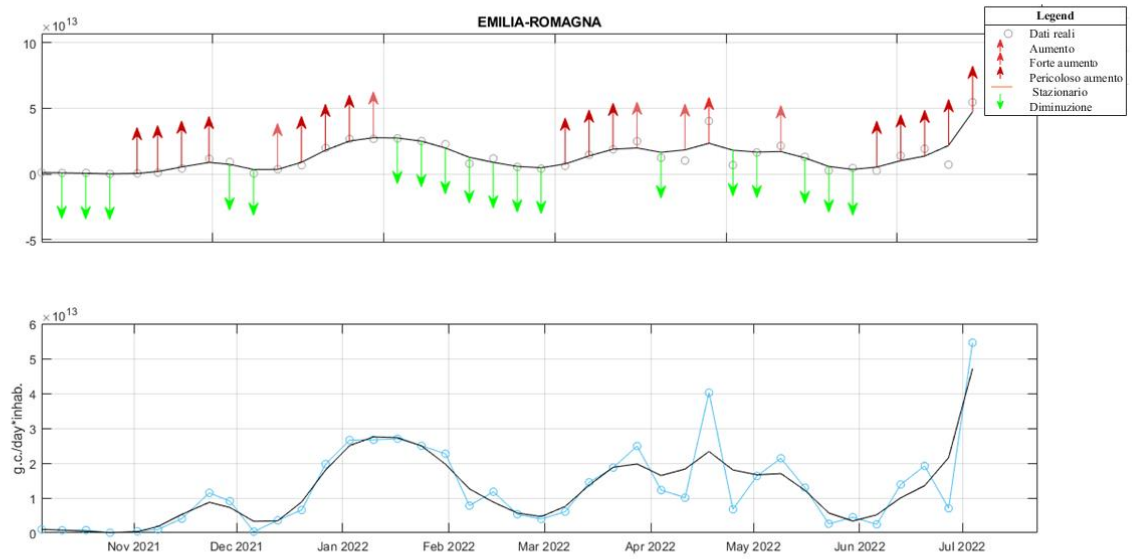
CALABRIA



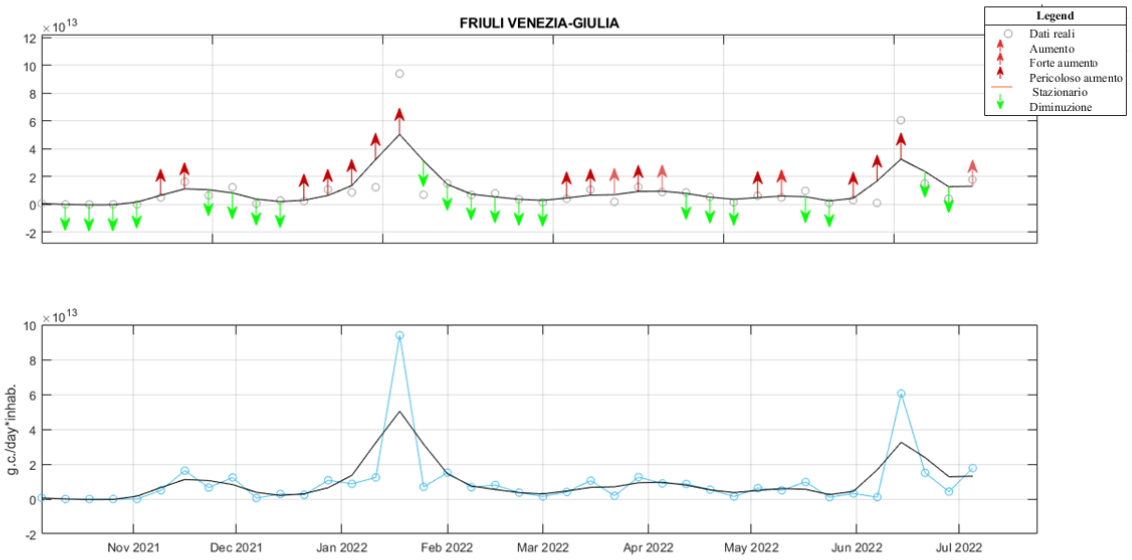
CAMPANIA



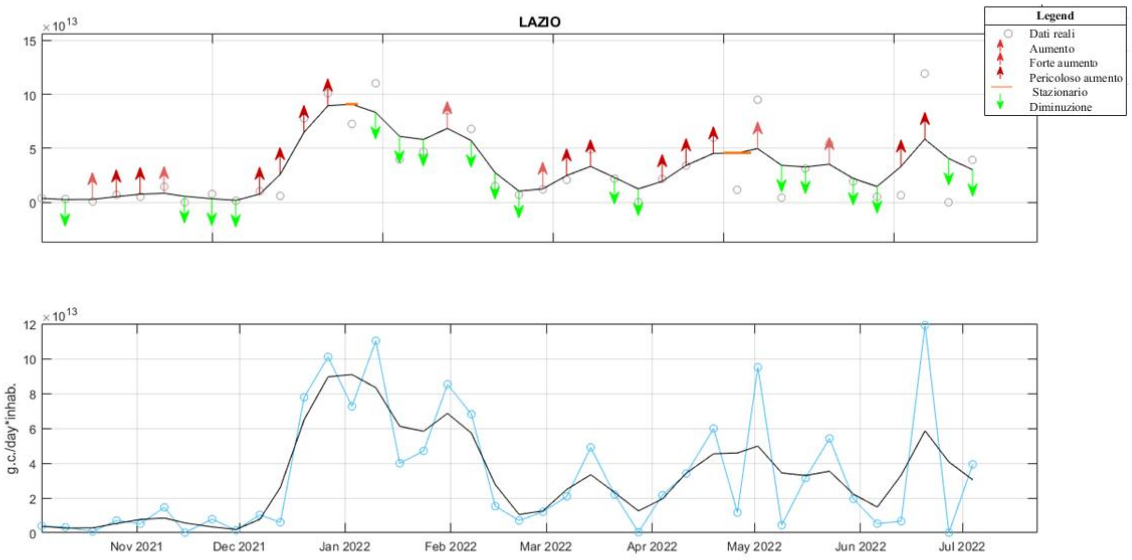
EMILIA-ROMAGNA



FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA

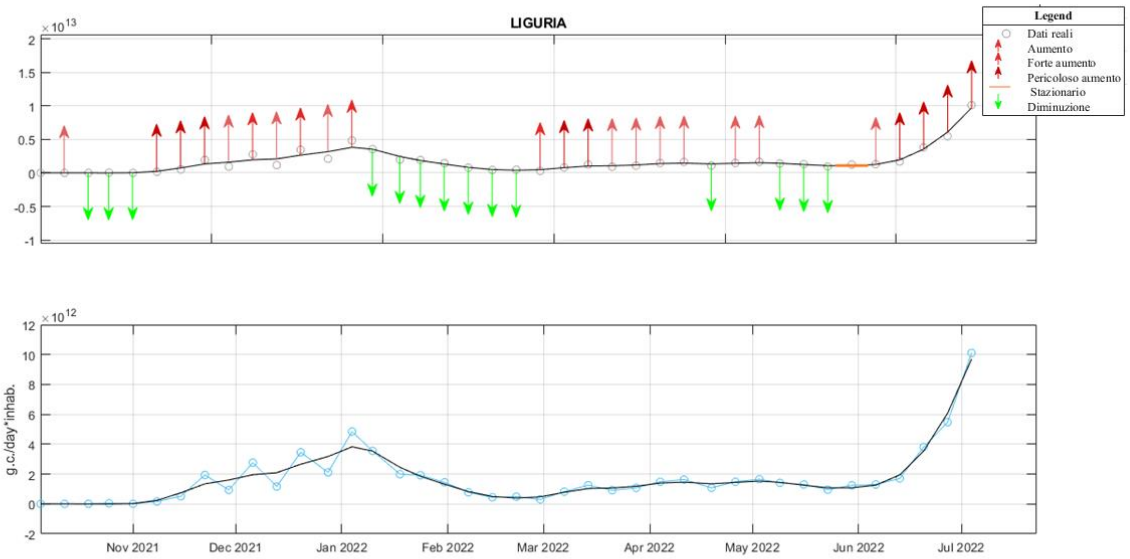


LAZIO*

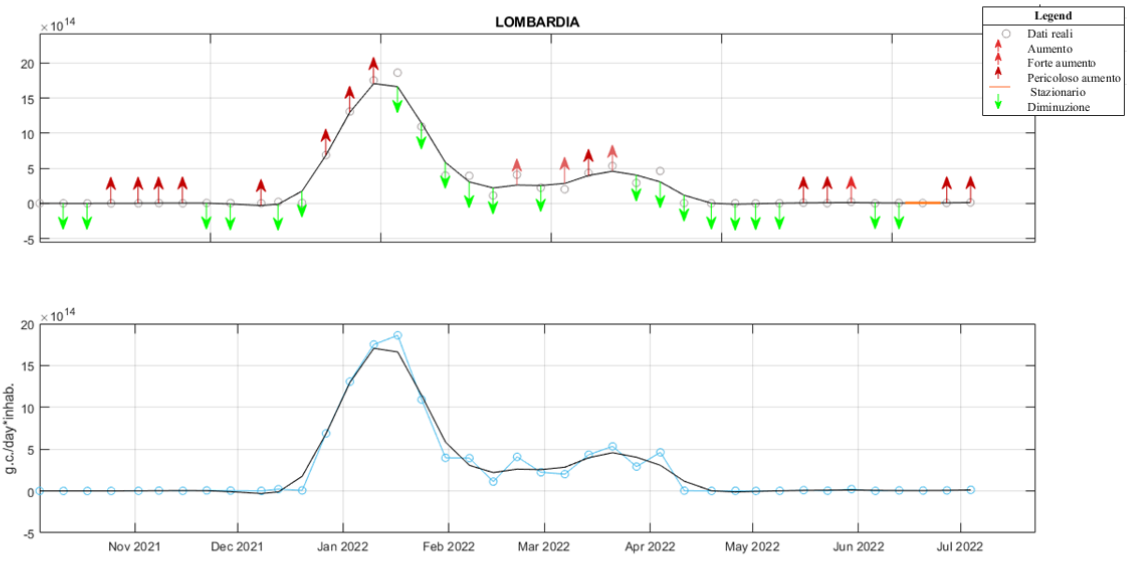


* Week 26 do not include data from the WTPs of Rome; these missing data may negatively affect the statistical analysis and may contribute to the final output of the analysis (observation of a decreasing trend)

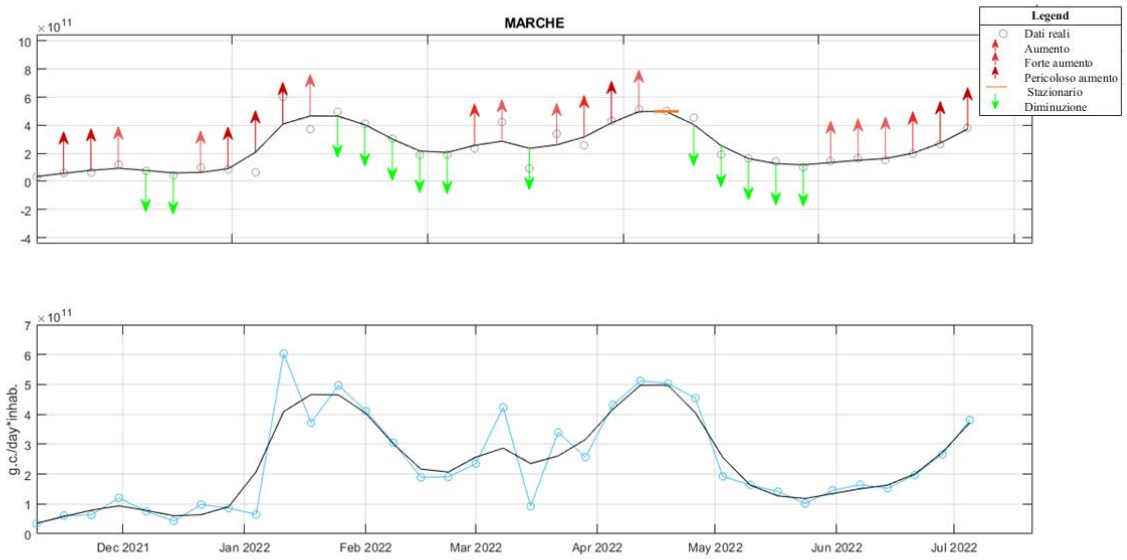
LIGURIA



LOMBARDIA



MARCHE



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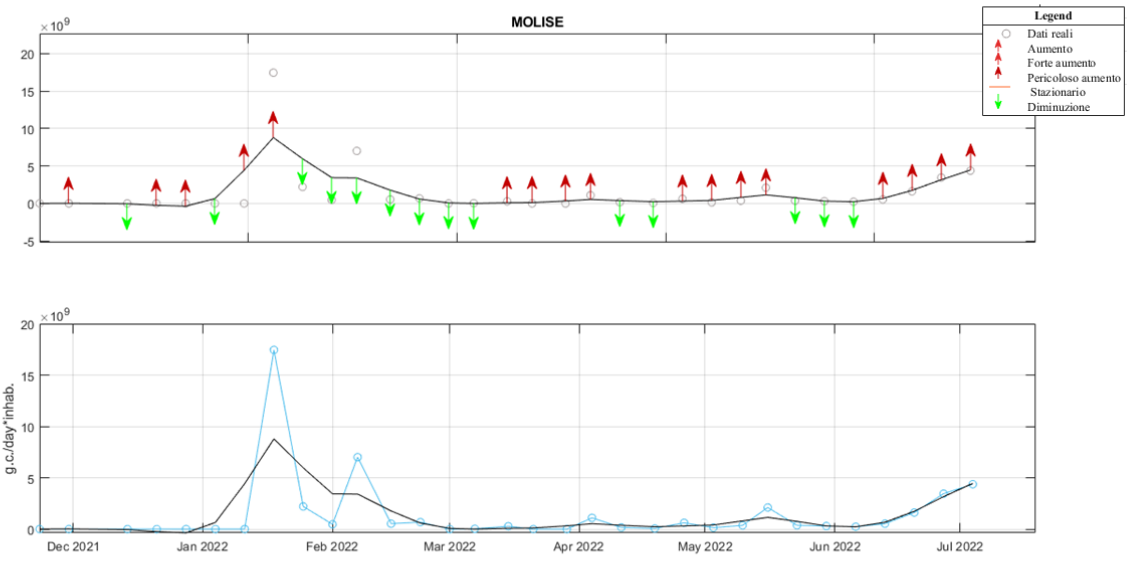
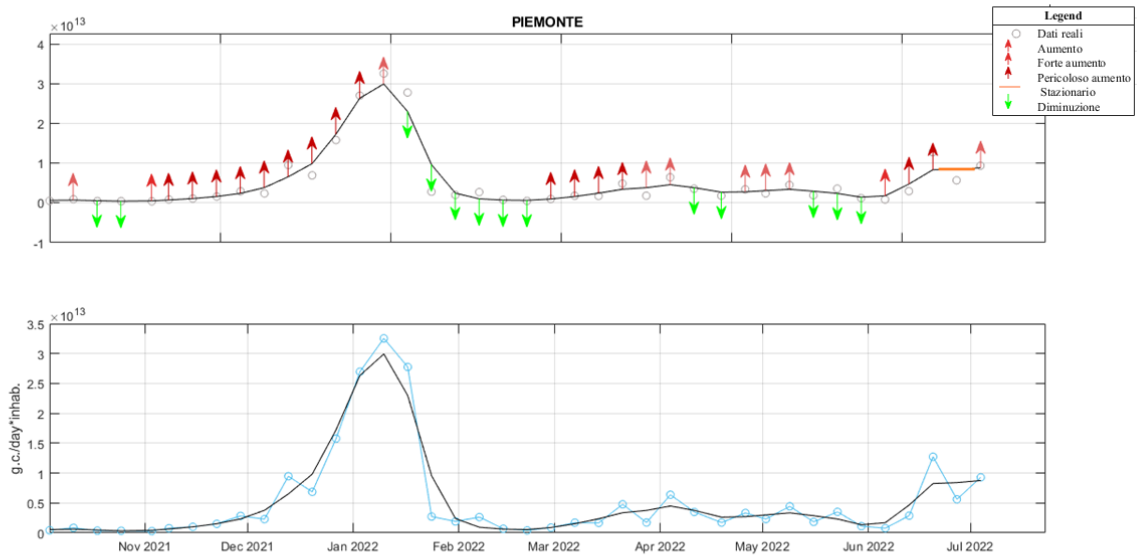
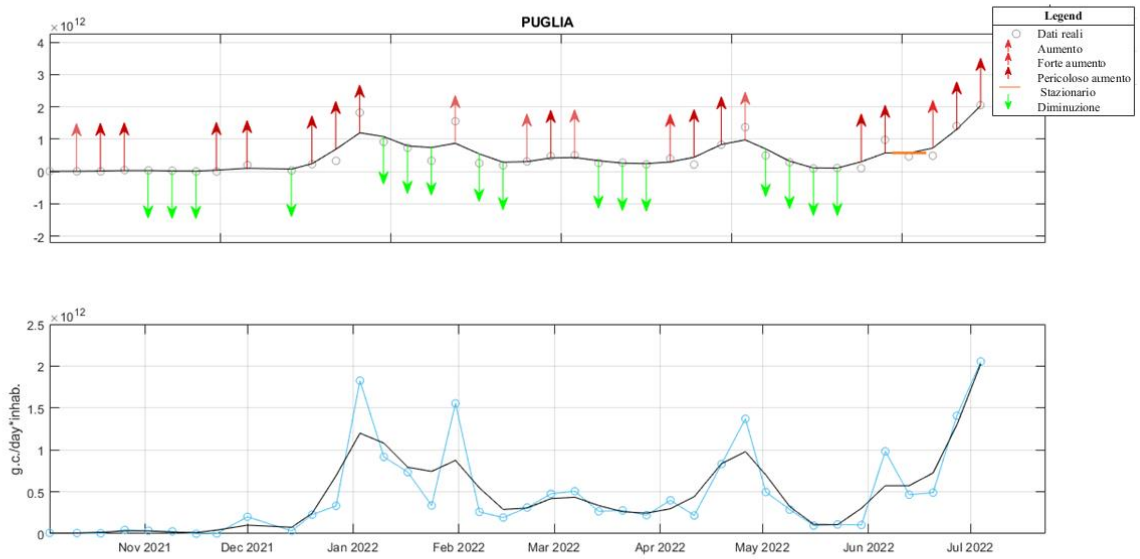


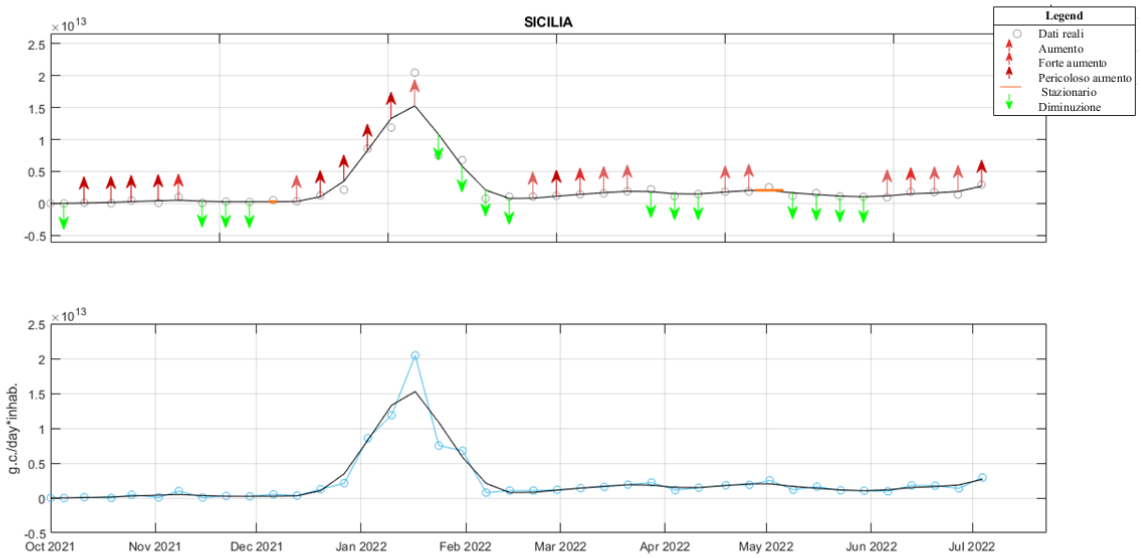
PIEMONTE



PUGLIA



SICILIA



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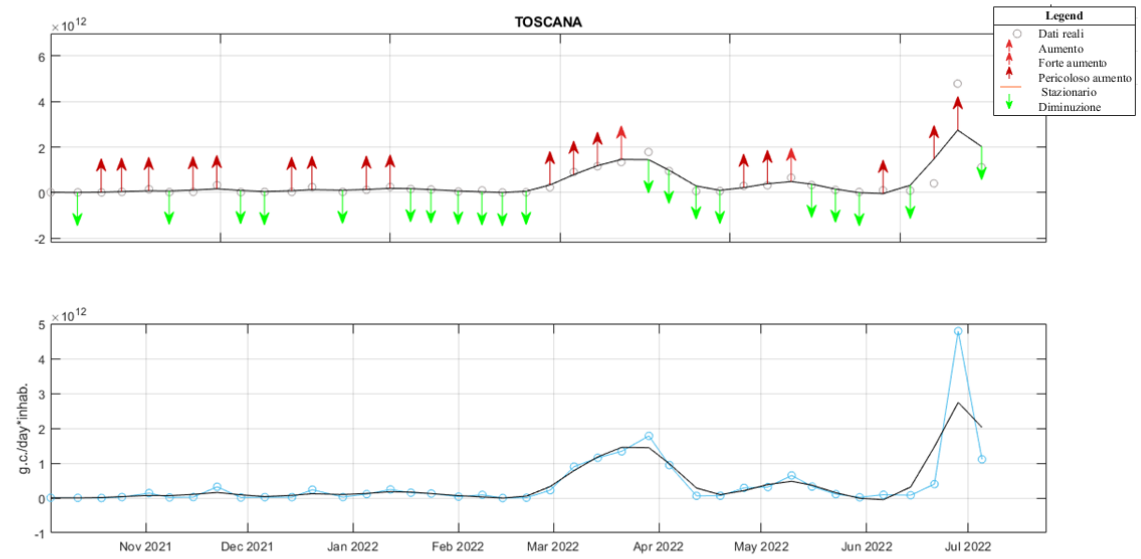
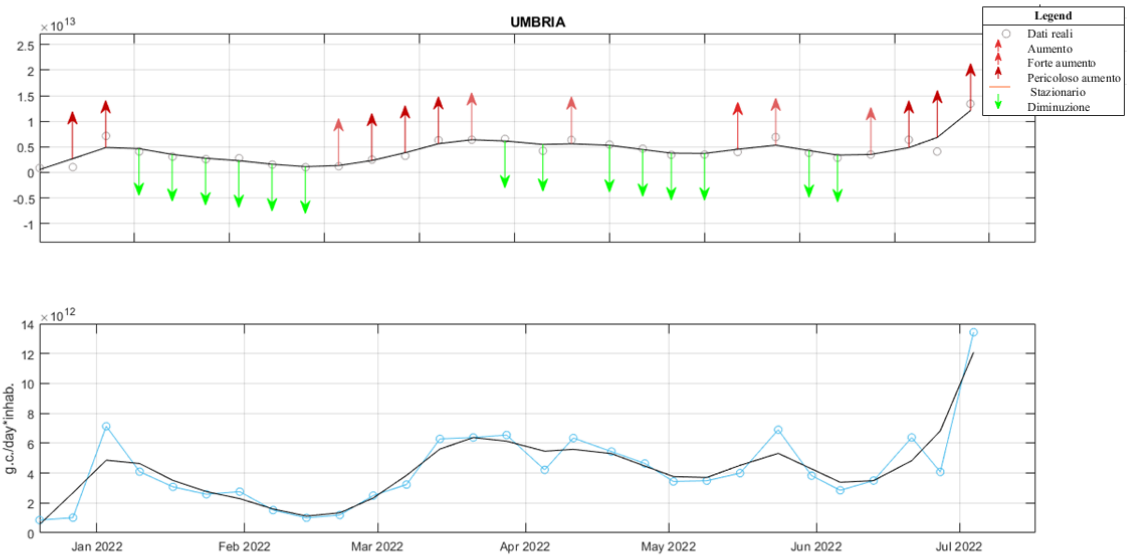
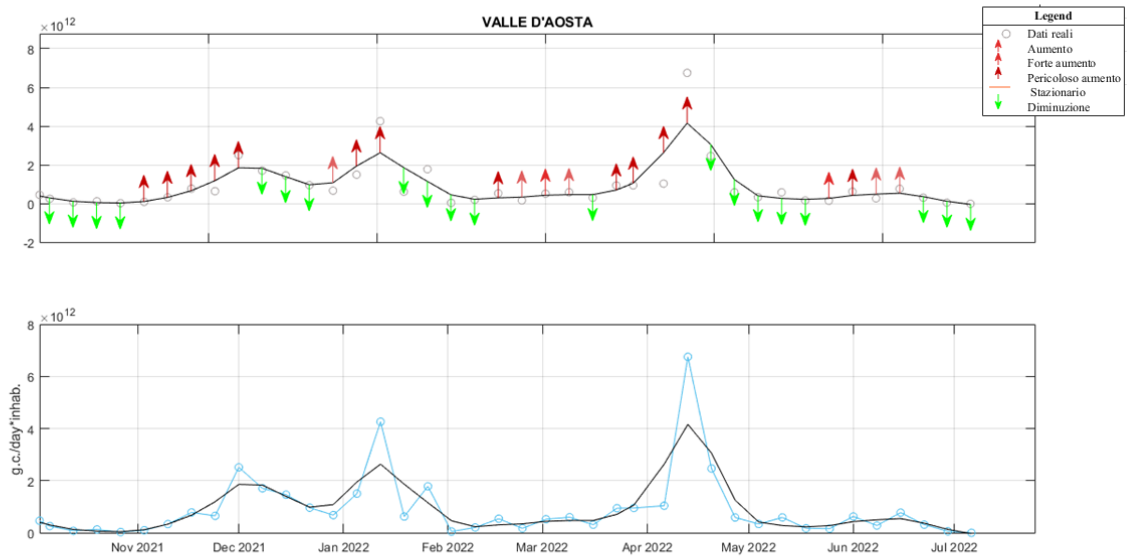


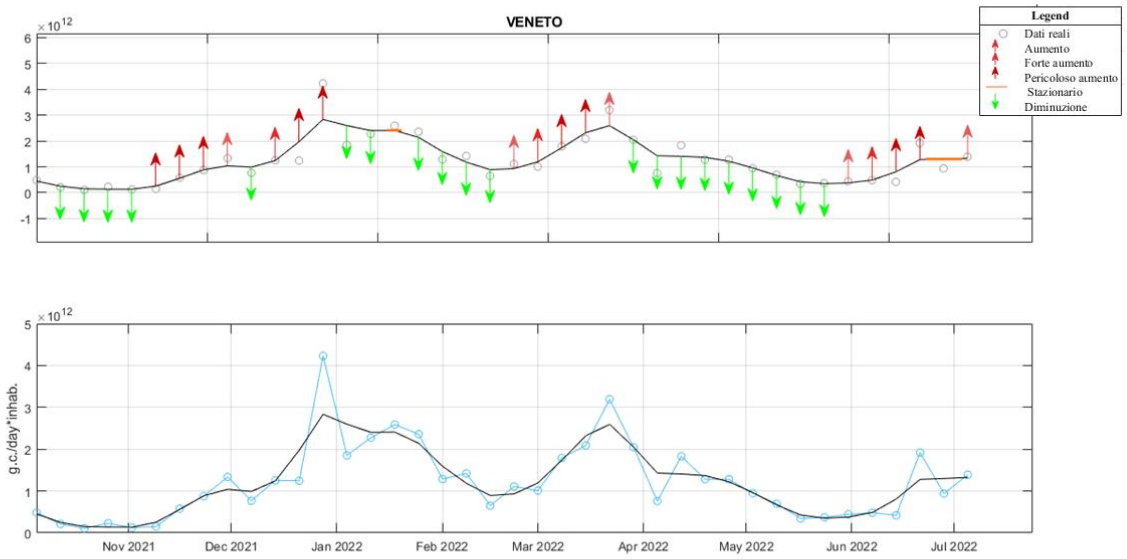
UMBRIA



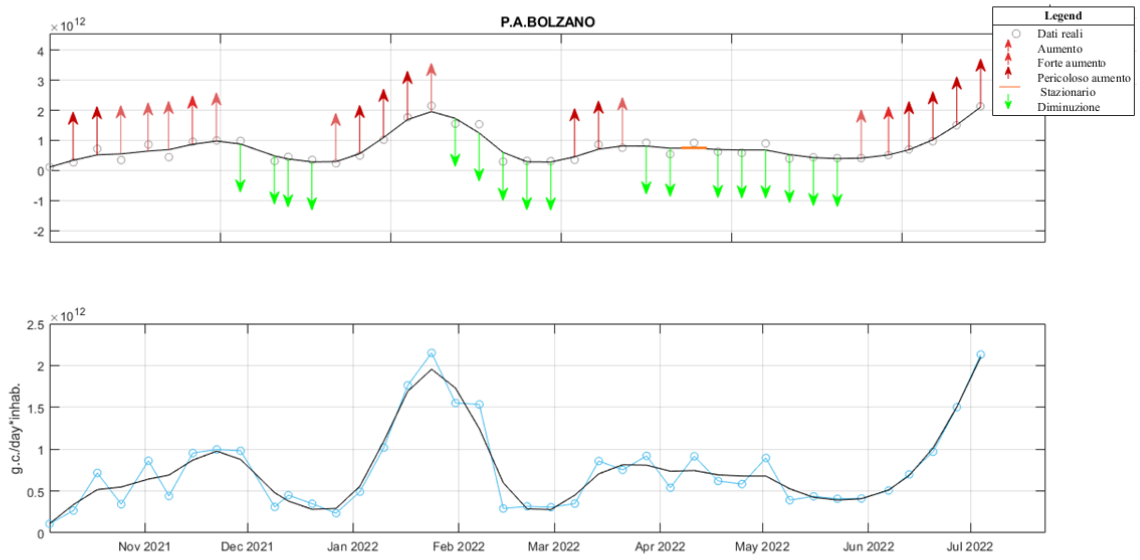
VALLE D'AOSTA



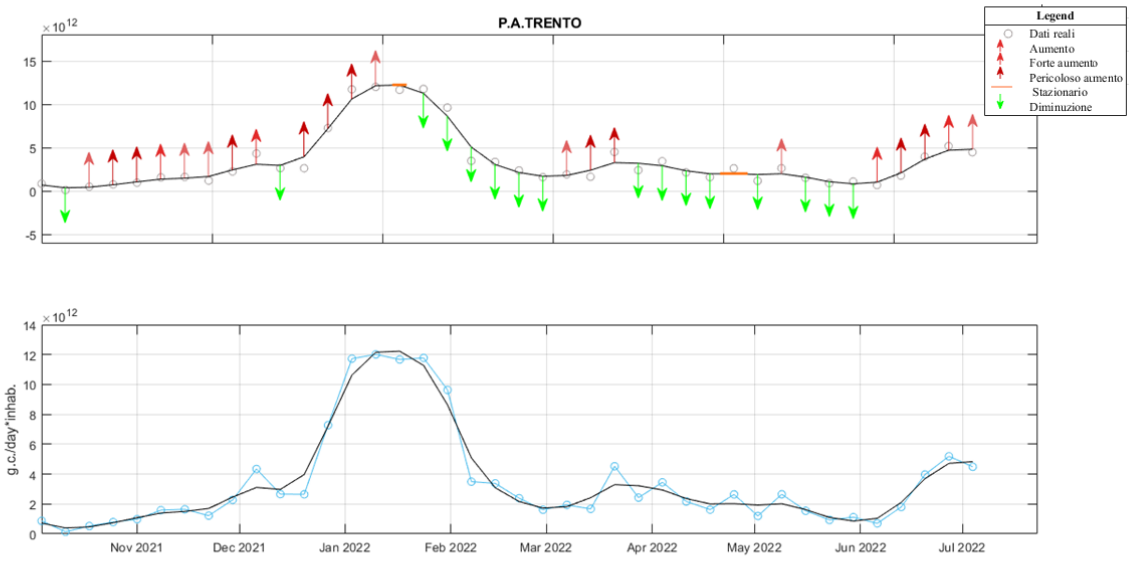
VENETO



P.A. BOLZANO



P.A. TRENTO


P.A.TRENTO
×10^12
15
10
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Legend
Dati reali
Aumento
Forte aumento
Pericoloso aumento
Stazionario
Diminuzione
×10^12
14
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g.c./day*inhab.
Nov 2021
Dec 2021
Jan 2022
Feb 2022
Mar 2022
Apr 2022
May 2022
Jun 2022
Jul 2022

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- **Marche:** Luigi Bolognini, Fabio Filippetti (Regione Marche); Marta Paniccia', Francesca Ciuti, Sara Briscolini (IZSUM - Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Umbria Marche); Silvia Magi (ARPAM);
- **Molise:** Michele Colitti (Regione Molise); Carmen Montanaro (ASReM); Giuseppe Aprea, Silvia Scattolini, Daniela D'Angelantonio, Giacomo Migliorati (Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale"); Maria Grazia Cerroni (Arpa Molise);
- **Piemonte:** Bartolomeo Griglio, Renza Berruti, Mauro Cravero, Angela Costa (Regione Piemonte); Manila Bianchi, Lucia Decastelli; Angelo Romano; Clara Tramuta (IZSTO - Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Piemonte Liguria e Valle d'Aosta SC Sicurezza e Qualità degli Alimenti); Elisabetta Carraro, Cristina Pignata (Dipartimento di Scienze della Sanità Pubblica e Pediatriche, Università di Torino), Silvia Bonetta (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita e Biologia dei Sistemi), Lisa Richiardi (Dipartimento di Scienze della Sanità Pubblica e Pediatriche, Università di Torino);
- **Puglia:** Giuseppe Di Vittorio, Onofrio Mongelli (Regione Puglia); Osvalda De Giglio, Francesca Apollonio, Francesco Triggiano, Maria Teresa Montagna (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro - Dipartimento Interdisciplinare di Medicina); Nicola Ungaro (ARPA Puglia);
- **Sicilia:** Mario Palermo (Regione Sicilia); Carmelo Massimo Maida, Walter Mazzucco (Università degli Studi di Palermo-Dipartimento PROMISE - sezione di Igiene); Simona De Grazia, Giovanni Giammanco (Centro di Riferimento Regionale per la Sorveglianza delle Paralisi Flaccide Acute (PFA) e ambientale della circolazione di poliovirus in Sicilia - AOUP Palermo); Giuseppa Purpari (IZS - Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Sicilia); Margherita Ferrante; Antonella Agodi, Martina Barchitta (Università degli Studi di Catania - Dipartimento "G. F. Ingrassia");
- **Toscana:** Piergiuseppe Cala' (Regione Toscana); Annalaura Carducci, Marco Verani, Ileana Federigi, Giulia Lauretani, Sara Muzio (Laboratorio di Igiene e Virologia Ambientale - Dipartimento di Biologia Università di Pisa); Matteo Ramazzotti (Dipartimento di Scienze Biomediche Sperimentali e Cliniche, Università degli Studi di Firenze), Alberto Antonelli (SOD microbiologia e virologia, azienda ospedaliera universitaria Careggi, Firenze);
- **Umbria:** Giovanni Santoro (Regione Umbria), Ermanno Federici, Maya Petricciuolo, Sofia Barigelli (Laboratorio Microbiologia Applicata e Ambientale, DCBB Università di Perugia);
- **Valle D'Aosta:** Mauro Ruffier (Regione Valle d'Aosta); Francesca Borney, Eric Grange, Florida Damasco (Laboratorio chimico biologico microbiologico Arpa Valle d'Aosta);
- **Veneto:** Francesca Russo, Gisella Pitter, Vanessa Groppi (Regione Veneto); Franco Rigoli, Marco Zampini (ARPAV - Agenzia Regionale per la Prevenzione e Protezione Ambientale del Veneto); Tatjana Baldovin, Irene Amoruso (Università di Padova);
- **P.A. Bolzano:** Lorella Zago (P.A. Bolzano); Alberta Stenico, Anna-Maria Prast (A.P.P.A. Agenzia provinciale per l'ambiente e la tutela del clima, Laboratorio biologico)
- **P.A. Trento:** Francesco Pizzo; Alessandra Schiavuzzi, Elena Mengon (P. A. Trento) (P.A. Trento); Maria Cadonna, Mattia Postinghel (ADEP SGI PAT), Francesca Cutrupi, Paola Foladori, Serena Manara (UNITN – Università di Trento).