

How can Italy help to make its

# artisanal salinas

more sustainable?

## Key policy recommendations

By developing relevant laws and regulations, putting in place incentive programmes and providing technical support, national and local governments can enhance the management of artisanal salinas, to generate both economic and environmental benefits. This factsheet the main recommendations compiled by the ENI CBC MED MedArtSal project based on the analysis of artisanal salinas in Italy:

**DEFINE A LEGAL FRAMEWORK** of certification for artisanal salt to boost recognition as a high-value product

**IMPLEMENT ADAPTATION MEASURES** according to the National and Regional strategy for climate change adaptation

**DEVELOP NETWORKS** to transfer knowledge related to technology, management and provide access to funding opportunities

**CREATE A SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAIN** for saltpans through public subsidies

**SIMPLIFY ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES** and develop a specific regulatory framework for the artisanal sector

**SUPPORT INTERNATIONALISATION** of sector and international cooperation

**DEVELOP A SECTORAL PLAN** for artisanal Salinas including salt production jobs in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications from the Ministry of Education

In Italy, the main challenges faced by artisanal salt producers are related to the product vision and the economic sphere. The production of sea salt is in some ways still anchored to certain ancient traditions, even if a certain degree of mechanization has been introduced over time, and even if it cannot be defined as zero-emission production, in general terms it has a lower environmental impact than the production of rock salt.

Italian experts consider that there is a lack of recognition of artisanal salt as a high-value product, which means that it currently has little profitability in the market. A local, not internationalized and not very competitive market, in addition to the high cost of maintaining the facilities, puts salt producers in a difficult economic situation. Additionally, there is some concern about the consequences that climate change may have on the natural system of the Salinas.



## SWOT W Weaknesses

- Maintaining the technical infrastructure of salinas entails a **high economic cost**
- **Lack of compliance** with the legal obligations
- **Missing a regulatory authority** which certifies the quality of *fleur de sel* and virgin salt
- Artisanal salt remains an **undervalued product** with low levels of profitability
- **Marketing efforts are still limited** to smaller local markets and don't target international markets

## SWOT T Threats

- In the absence of a clear regulation or standard to certify the quality, there is a **lack of differentiation** between artisanal salt and industrial salt
- **Salt flats are declining**, losing their natural quality or even disappearing as result of climate change effects
- **Low market prices** threaten the competitiveness of local and organic salt products
- **Business activities** in salinas struggle to become economically sustainable
- Business project are **lacking financial, administrative and policy support** from the public administration, which is key for implementing, sustaining the projects and making them more profitable



Some products (like fleur de sel) have a high degree of natural iodine, sea salt incorporates a vision of history, flavours, quality, nature and the environment, which differentiates it from rock salt. Unfortunately, the higher production costs mean that it is not always a competitive product.

It should be noted that the production of sea salt is not an extractive activity as well (despite the fact Salinas are administratively and economically included in the extractive industry) but it is more a natural product transformation (sea water into salt through sun evaporation) more similar to an agro-food activity.

Italy has abundant resources and values in the Salinas that can be taken as an economical advantage. The opportunities to develop new economies associated with the diversification of products and services are vast. Advocating for local and international cooperation, the market could be opened to other countries, promoting activities that allow the maintenance of the natural values of the Salinas as well as economic profitability

## SWOT **S** Strengths

- **Abundance of resources** in commercial salinas offers a wide array of possibilities to develop economic activities, based on natural, touristic, historical, cultural, gastronomic or heritage-related values
- Artisanal treatment allows to create **personalised salt varieties** to fit the standards of gourmet cuisine
- Artisanal salinas which are active play an important role in **preserving nature** (not only in terms of species, but also of ecosystem services)
- There is a high potential to simultaneously **develop diverse products and services**, e.g. macro and microalgae cultivation, tourism
- Artisanal salinas can produce **gourmet products** for which there is growing interest, such as *fleur de sel*, algae, etc.

## SWOT **O** Opportunities

- **Expanding commercial activity** to enter international markets
- Developing comprehensive projects that **apply the Nature-based Solutions** standard to protect, sustainably manage, and ecosystems while addressing societal challenges effectively
- **Exploring synergies with other small business** to carry out joint marketing actions
- The unique landscape and natural value of artisanal salinas is well suited to **develop ecotourism**, especially at a moment of increasing demand for nature and outdoor experiences, as well as for tailor-made tourism, as in *saliturismo*
- **Promoting the universal value** of salinas by fostering the exchange and international cooperation between researchers, businesses and others



# artisanal salinas

**The MedArtSal Network**  
 is defining common priorities  
 for the development of artisanal  
 salinas in four Mediterranean regions  
 (Italy, Spain, Lebanon and Tunisia)

