

Amid nationwide drought, Rome seeks ways to avoid rationing

July 27 2017, by Frances D'emilio



A view of the Tiber River, whose level is low due to the drought, during a warm and sunny day in Rome, Wednesday, July 26, 2017. Scarce rain and chronically leaky aqueducts have combined this summer to hurt farmers in much of Italy and put Romans at risk for drastic water rationing as soon as this week. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)

Rome and its water company are working hard to avoid rationing during

a nationwide drought, Italy's environment minister said Thursday.

Scarce rain and chronically leaky aqueducts have combined this summer to hurt farmers in much of Italy and put Romans at risk for drastic [water](#) rationing.

But Environment Minister Gian Luca Galletti told reporters that while Rome's situation "worries me most" both the city and the Acea water utility are "working out a solution that can avoid having hundreds of thousands of Roman citizens go without water."

He called that scenario "unacceptable." Galletti also decried as "intolerable" chronic leaks that lose some 40 percent of the water supply before it reaches users.

Last week, the governor of Lazio, the region including Rome, ordered a halt to drawing water from the drought-suffering Lake Bracciano, which supplies 8 percent of Rome's water. Gov. Nicola Zingaretti urged Acea to find water from other reservoirs instead. Drastically decreasing water levels are posing danger to the aquatic life of the lake, 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the city.

Meteorologists say Italy experienced one of its driest springs in some 60 years and that some parts of the country had seen rainfall totals 80 percent below normal. Among the hardest-hit regions is Sardinia, which is seeking natural disaster status.



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The Farmers' lobby Coldiretti has estimated 2 billion euros (\$2.3 billion) worth of damage so far to Italian agriculture. Dairy farmers are lamenting drops in milk production. Among those suffering are farmers growing tomatoes in the southeastern region of Puglia, wine grapes throughout much of Italy and those cultivating olives—all signature crops for the nation.

Another afflicted area is Parma, an area in north-central Italy renowned for Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and prized prosciutto.

Earlier this week, Vatican City turned off its fountains due to the

drought.



A ferry sails on the Tiber River, whose level is low due to the drought, during a warm and sunny day in Rome, Wednesday, July 26, 2017. Scarce rain and chronically leaky aqueducts have combined this summer to hurt farmers in much of Italy and put Romans at risk for drastic water rationing as soon as this week. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)

In Rome famed, monumental fountains beloved by tourists risk being turned off.

Rome had 26 rainy days in this year's first six months, compared to 88 in the first half of 2016, with precipitation totals in those same periods more than four times higher last year.

Making matters worse, water supply pipelines in the Rome area—famed

in ancient Roman times for its aqueducts, segments of which still stand—are notoriously leaky.



Italian firefighters check the Tiber River, whose level is low due to the drought, during a warm and sunny day in Rome, Wednesday, July 26, 2017. Scarce rain and chronically leaky aqueducts have combined this summer to hurt farmers in much of Italy and put Romans at risk for drastic water rationing as soon as this week. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)



A view of the Tiber River, whose level is low due to the drought, with St. Angelo Castle in background, during a warm and sunny day in Rome, Wednesday, July 26, 2017. Scarce rain and chronically leaky aqueducts have combined this summer to hurt farmers in much of Italy and put Romans at risk for drastic water rationing as soon as this week. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)

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