



Considerations and proposals in the light of the latest environmental data

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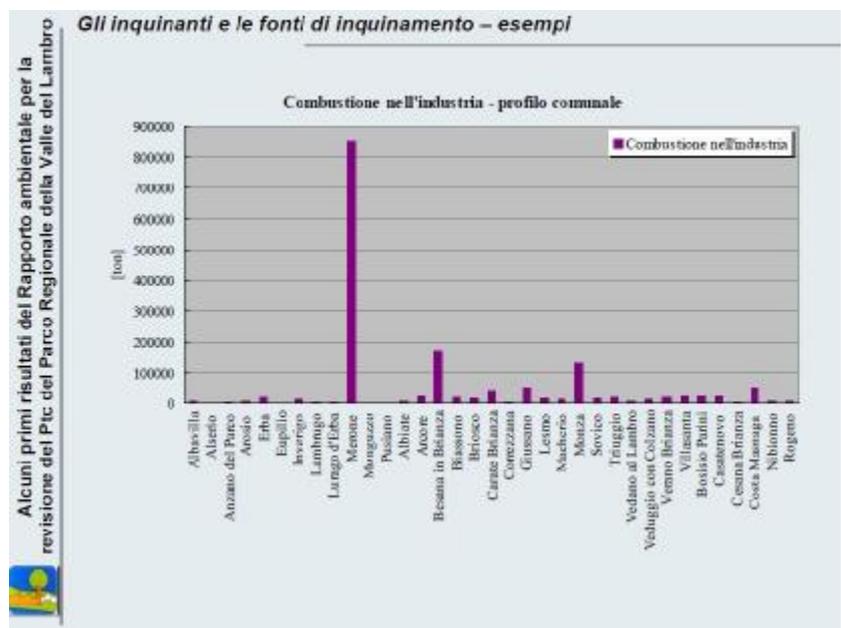
Today the environmental association Rete Donne Brianza is pleased to present its second authoritative independent scientific study: "Lichen biomonitoring of the atmospheric pollution by heavy metals in the area of Merone". This new study has been carried out according to the recommendations of the previous study on the Metal Contamination of the Soils in Merone (Valerio, 2006). Given the limited financial means of the Association, both studies are only a small part of the analyses that should be conducted to provide an effective monitoring of air and environmental quality in order to protect citizens' health, as suggested by the authors of the studies.

This, of course is the task of municipal, provincial and regional authorities which, however, will only act if obliged to do so by the law, as was the case with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) introduced by Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 and implemented by the Region Lombardy with Regional Act n.12 of 2005. Based on the principles of sustainability and precaution, this directive aims at protecting and improving the quality of the environment and human health and promoting a rational use of natural resources.

Therefore, in compliance with this Directive, two important SEA reports were recently written: one by the Municipality of Merone, with the assistance of the Polytechnic University of Milan, and one for the revision of the Coordinated Territorial Plan by the Regional Park of the Lambro Valley. These two documents stress, in several paragraphs, the huge polluting impact of Merone, due to the cement plant of Holcim Itala SpA, compared to other municipalities in a vast area that goes from Erba in the north to Monza in the south.

The study of the Polytechnic University of Milan states: "*The municipality of Merone stands out because of its very high contribution to emissions from the "production" and "combustion in industry" sources. The main reason for this is the presence of Holcim, a large-sized cement plant, which leads to an exponential increase in atmospheric emissions*", as the above diagram clearly shows.

Our study on biomonitoring, as the previous one on soil contamination, assumes a cause link between the pollutants found in the environment and Holcim's emissions. We believe that such hypothesis is supported by the recent SEA Reports mentioned above.





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After obtaining the Integrated Environmental Permit of the 19th of October, 2007 from the Region Lombardy, Holcim can burn annually up to 104,000 tons of various types of waste such as oils and industrial waste of various origins, WDF (waste derived fuel), MBM (bone meal) and purification sludge, as against 34,000 tons per year it declared in 2005. In terms of capacity, therefore, Holcim cement plant in Merone exceeds the incinerator of the city of Como (90,000 t/y). Furthermore, in the same year the company required and obtained permission to derogate from emission laws and can pollute up to 5 times more than the limits imposed by the law, which in our opinion are already insufficient to ensure the protection of human health.

Apart from a few technical measures of dubious effectiveness, such as filters at emission points, (no filters can stop nanoparticles PM2,5, PM1 and PM0) the SEA Report of the municipality of Merone contains a long list of “compensatory measures” including, for example, the creation of an eco-museum and cycling tracks, as a way to compensate for damages to the health of the community, in sharp contrast with the alarming data reported in the previous pages.

Recent studies carried out in Italy and other countries confirm that populations exposed to incinerators emissions show significantly higher rates for various types of cancers, in particular sarcomas and lung cancers, child tumours and non-Hodgkin lymphomas. There are also increased numbers of cancers affecting the liver, larynx, stomach, bowel, bladder, kidney and breast and increases in congenital malformations, thyroid hypofunction, diabetes, ischemia, behavioural disorders, lung diseases, bronchitis, allergies and childhood disorders.(*)

The health risks listed above are totally unjustifiable, since there exist fully validated alternatives to waste incineration with no harmful effects, as national and international experts like doctor Federico Valerio and doctor Paul Connett have clearly explained at our conferences in recent years. The local authorities must bear responsibility for such risks to citizens' health. What we ask is simply that they put the right to health first, for the people of today and future generations.

IN THE LIGHT OF ALL THESE DATA, WE URGE THE MUNICIPALITY OF MERONE AND THE OTHER MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED TO:

- **demand that Holcim should: drastically reduce emissions; invest in research to find the least polluting fuel; stop using waste as fuel;**
- **choose leading independent organizations to conduct new studies on environmental quality and have Holcim pay the bill.**

Our association offers its support and experience in such effort.

(*) – for more information and references, please contact members of ISDE at: www.isde.it.

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