

Recommendations for green practices at INAF sponsored conferences

Research institutions must spread knowledge and be at the forefront of the path towards social awareness of environmental issues, climate change, and their mitigation. Meetings, conferences and any social event should promote environmentally friendly practices, giving virtuous examples.

We provide a short list of recommendations, hoping that INAF will receive and approve them for all future conferences; clearly, this would also have a positive impact on its public image.

Generally, the selection of the location, technical support, catering company, conference material providers and logistic support should follow green procurement procedures. All organizers, attendees, contractors and collaborators should be aware that the conference strives to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

Attendance

- All conferences should allow remote attendance with low cost and without penalty (e.g. no requirement for in person attendance to give talks).
- Attendants should be encouraged to travel by train and public transport whenever feasible.
- Locations for events should be accessible by local transport and have accommodation within walking distance.

Catering

- It is widely accepted that food from meat, fish and dairy products have a strong impact on the environment and on climate change in particular (see <https://green.inaf.it/2023/08/08/impatto-delle-scelte-alimentari-sulle-emissioni-e-i-cambiamenti-climatici/>). We strongly recommend that for coffee breaks, social dinners and any event involving food, the offer of meat, fish and dairy is strongly reduced if not completely eliminated, favoring plant-based options.
- We also strongly recommend offering local food produced with methods sustainable and respectful of the environment ("kilometro zero", with "certificazione biologica", etc).
- Single-use plastic tools, bottles and glasses should be banned.

- In general, food waste should be limited to the very minimum. Non consumed food should be gathered and given to charity associations.

Supplies

- Conference publicity or information should be provided preferably in digital form or, if not possible, on sustainable materials

- Conference freebies, if absolutely necessary, should be as eco-friendly as possible and reusable or recyclable; we recommend items which encourage environmentally friendly practices such as cotton tote bags, aluminum water bottles or conserved local food items. It could also be positive if the attendee was allowed a choice of gadgets, some people will refuse all of them, and, if people do pick one there is a good chance they will use the item.

- There should be ample, well signposted, recycle bins for paper, plastic, glass and metals where appropriate.

- Whenever possible reusable supplies should be made available for other meetings.

A conference should evaluate the carbon impact of their event, inform the attendees of the results and consider funding carbon offsets to counter the impact.

Ideas for encouraging good practises.

- Organize local bike / e-bike exploration activities
- Highlight local sustainable restaurants and cafes, offering plant-based options
- Include sustainable sightseeing activities
- Plant a tree for each attendee (as a freebie??)
- Plan a discussion of the environmental impact of the research
- Let the local press know you have a sustainable conference