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Hailstorm Ravages Crops in Southern Italy

Farmers in Barletta-Andria-Trani said the storm destroyed young shoots and erased weeks of work before the growing season.

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A hailstorm that struck the province of Barletta-Andria-Trani in southern Italy on the evening of April 21 damaged vineyards, fruit trees and other crops just as farmers were finishing a month of pruning, tying vines and spraying fields for the next growing season.

In Andria, one of the hardest-hit areas, growers said newly sprouted shoots were snapped by the force of the hailstones. Riccardo Aruanno, a vineyard owner in the area, said the storm wiped out work that had been done to prepare for the coming season and added costs that would not be recovered through grape sales.

Coldiretti Puglia, the regional farm lobby, said hailstorms at this stage of the season are among the most dangerous weather events for agriculture because they strike flowers and young buds in the first days of formation. Damage at that point can stop fruit from developing or leave it misshapen and unsuitable for sale.

The storm came after heavy rains earlier in April and added to a growing list of extreme weather events in 2026. Coldiretti Puglia said there have now been 41 severe climate episodes this year that have put pressure on farms across a territory already considered fragile because of rising soil consumption.

Marcello Lanotte, a regional councilor from Forza Italia, called on the regional government to move quickly to request recognition of a natural disaster emergency for agriculture. The appeal reflects mounting concern among growers that repeated weather shocks are making it harder to protect yields and maintain quality in one of Puglia’s key farming areas.