

Netherlands



Patrick Jansen, Jenny Mills and Peter Buckley

FACTS AND FIGURES

Patrick Jansen

Definitions

Closed forest with vegetative regeneration by regrowth of the stools of deciduous species (not willow) with good regrowth capacity.

Gesloten bos met vegetatieve verjonging door stronkopslag van loofboomsoorten (m.u.v. wilg) met een goed uitstoelingsvermogen.

Legal Framework

Traditional coppice is considered forest in the Dutch Nature Conservation Act. The criteria are a minimum area of 0.1 hectare and a canopy cover of at least 60%.

Short rotation coppice is considered agriculture in the new Nature Conservation Act. It is defined as: plantation of willow, poplar, ash or alder with the aim to produce woody biomass. It is harvested at least every 10 years and contains at least 10,000 stools per hectare per unit. The short rotation coppice must have been established after January 1st, 2013.

Statistics

Forests in the Netherlands consisted mainly of coppice woodlands until approximately the end of the 19th century. Since then, most coppice woodlands have been converted to high forest through replanting, abandonment and singling. Approximately 1,500 hectares is still coppiced today.

Typology

Simple coppice	As forests and small plantings in open, agricultural area.
Coppice with standards	Currently not practised
Pollarding	On roadsides, waterways and as forests along rivers
Short rotation coppice	Mainly <i>Salix</i> (limited area)

DESCRIPTION

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Large parts of the Dutch forests, approximately 57%, were coppice woodlands until around 1850. Oak coppice was dominant due to the use of its bark for leather production. The most common production cycle was 8-10 years for bark production. Longer production cycles were

used for fuelwood, up to 25 years. Coppice with standards was rather rare in the Netherlands.

Some beech and birch coppice existed on the drier lands and ash and alder coppice (Figure 1) in wetter conditions. Due to the rise of cheaper tanning and fuel products and rising labour



Figure 1. Coppice management in alder coppice in The Netherlands (Photo: P. Jansen)

costs, the management of coppice woodlands declined in the second half of the 19th century. Thereafter, only a small proportion of the coppice woodlands were managed in the traditional way. During the two World Wars, some coppice woodlands were harvested for fuel wood, and in many cases this was the last time they were coppiced. Coppice woodland on the more fertile soils was converted to agricultural land. In drier, not so fertile grounds the coppice woodlands were converted to high forest. Between 1955 and 1965 there was even a subsidy scheme available for this aim. High forests were seen as a better economic alternative. Stools were cut down and species such as Douglas-fir or spruce were planted, but many oak coppice woodlands were also ‘singled’. In this strategy only one sprout was saved on every stool. These shoots formed the basis of a new high forest of oak.

Already in 1964 two prominent ecologists published an article on the nature conservation values of traditional coppice woodlands. Some nature conservation organisations saved a small area of coppice woodlands for this reason, but most was converted to high forest or agricultural land or simply abandoned.

Currently only approximately 1,500 ha of actively managed coppice woodlands remain managed mainly for biodiversity and cultural heritage. Old stools form an interesting habitat for certain species, for example some rare mosses. Coppice woodlands are also a suitable

habitat for a large number of species because of the quick shift between sunny and shaded conditions. Both light demanding and shade tolerant species can find a suitable habitat in actively managed and therefore ever-changing coppice woodlands.

One of the main challenges in restoring coppice woodlands is to rejuvenate old stools. Many old stools died back after coppicing. This is also due to the large number of deer, but research has shown that the main reason is the time that has passed since the last coppicing. Even if the old stools resprout successfully, the number of stools is very low compared to historic densities. The low number of stools in old coppice woodlands is due to self thinning in the last decades. Restoring coppice woodlands therefore also involves planting new trees with the aim of forming new stools.

The wood from these coppice woodlands is mainly used as industrial biomass chips or domestic fire wood. The rise of the biomass market has had some positive impacts on the management of coppice woodlands, but the cost of coppicing and restoring coppice woodlands is still much higher than the income from the wood and biomass sales. Coppice woodlands are also subsidised. For coppice woodlands on wet soils the management subsidy is currently 2,563 euro per hectare per year. On dry lands it is 394 euro per hectare per year. These subsidies have been crucial in protecting the small remaining area of coppice woodlands in The Netherlands.

Since the nineties, high density short rotation coppice with poplar and willow has been promoted, but due to the high prices for land it has only been a success in areas where dual goals could be achieved. A good example is the establishment of short rotation coppice on biological chicken farms. The chickens use the available land better through the short rotation coppice and the farmer has biomass to sell.

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FORESTRY REGULATIONS

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Some 10% (360,000 hectares) of the Netherlands consists of woodland, which is protected under the 1961 **Forestry Act** (the Boswet).

The legislation in the Act applies to planting areas greater than 1000 m², or when there are more than 20 trees in a row. Trees in urban areas are excluded; these are regulated under municipal law.

One month before felling is due to take place it must be reported, either by the owner or the contractor, to the Ministerie van Economische Zaken (Ministry of Economic Affairs) by means of a **kapmelding** notification. A topographic map (minimum scale 1:25.000) on which the trees are marked must also be submitted. Only 5 plots can be entered on each kapmelding and a separate one must also be sent for each municipality in which the trees are growing. Felling must take place with a year of submitting the kapmelding, otherwise it has to be re-submitted. An additional permit may be required under other legislation.

A receipt is given after submission of the kapmelding. If there is no response one month after submission, then the trees can be felled.

If the cut is prohibited (kapverbod), the owner is notified within a month of submission and this is also published in the Government Gazette. The reasons are always given. If the owner disagrees with the decision, an objection can be filed within 6 weeks. An appeal decision will be given within 6 weeks of the objection

being made. When a landscape of exceptional natural beauty is threatened, the Ministry of Economic Affairs can prohibit felling, but this rarely happens.

After felling, there is a duty to **replant** (herplantplicht) within three years of felling. This also applies if trees have been lost through fire, windthrow or disease. This obligation is attached to the property and, if sold, the new owner has a duty to replant. High fines can be imposed if replanting does not take place. The Forest Act allows planting on a parcel other than that which was felled, but it must occur in a silviculturally acceptable way on a similar-sized area. Natural regeneration is not officially considered to be replanting, but in practice it is allowed if successful (within 6 years).

Thinning and coppicing do not usually include a duty to replant and therefore do not need to be notified by a kapmelding.

A judge adjudicates the difference between thinning and felling: if the canopy cover is reduced to below 60%, it is considered to be a felling.

A kapmelding notification is not required under the following circumstances:

- the trees to be felled are in urban areas and therefore under local authority regulations
- the trees are in gardens and other domestic areas
- the felling is to promote the growth of the remaining trees (thinning)

- coppice or withies are being cut periodically
- felling is taking place as part of an approved development plan
- an exemption has been granted in the Regulations on notification and replanting
- roadside plantations and single-row plantings of poplars and willows on, or alongside agricultural land.

Felling does not have to be reported for the following species: Poplar (*Populus spp.*), lime (*Tilia spp.*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum L.*) and willow (*Salix spp.*) fruit trees and windbreaks around orchards, spruce up to 12 years old intended as Christmas trees. However, municipal legislation may still apply.

Further applicable legislation:

The 1988 **Nature Conservation Act** (De Natuurbeschermingswet) regulates the protection of areas that the Government has designated as protected natural monuments. It also protects areas in accordance with international agreements such as the Birds Directive (Vogelrichtlijn) and Habitats Directive (Habitatrichtlijn) and the Ramsar Convention, which protects wetlands. In 2005, the Act was amended to better integrate legislation on nature protection, forestry policy and obligations under the Habitats Directive.

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For **Natura 2000** areas, special management plans must be developed, including an inventory listing the habitats to be protected. The management plan then provides an overview of the measures that will be taken to protect these habitats. Measures that are included in the management plan may be carried out without a licence, but permission from the province is needed for other activities if they have an impact on protected habitats or species.

The 2002 **Flora and Fauna Act** (Flora- en faunawet) protects designated species. Management, development, hunting, etc., only take place under strict conditions.

As from January 1st 2017 a new **Nature Protection Act** (Wet Natuurbescherming) replaces the Flora and Fauna Act, the Forest Act and the Nature Conservation Act. This will make it easier to apply the law to protect the Netherlands' flora and fauna, Natura 2000 sites and forests. Implementation and controls under the Act will mainly be carried out by each individual Province rather than the Government.

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