Facts and Figures

Definitions

1) Coppice: Even-aged or uneven-aged stand consisting of trees (mainly: *Alnus glutinosa* Geartn., *Betula pendula* Roth) that regenerate wholly or mainly (at least 50%) vegetatively (sprout or root shoot). After 2 years, shoots are reduced to only 2 or 3, after 5 years one shoot might be promoted to high forest and felled at 60 years.

2) Short rotation coppice: Plantation of fast-growing trees or shrubs (mainly *Populus* spp., *Salix* spp.), with the aim to produce renewable wood biomass in several short rotation periods (5-20 years each), mainly used for energy.

3) Pollarding: cuts by which the tree trunks (*Salix* spp.) are cut at 2-3 m height from the ground in order to obtain coppice sprouts on the top of the tree.

Statistics

Forests cover almost one third of Poland, of which 7,094,696 ha is under the State Forest National Forest Holding management. The total area of coppice amounts to 21,477.57 ha and almost 89% belongs to the State Forest. Coppice forests grow very often on areas of low access and are considered to be water and soil-protecting forests.

A main coppice-forming species is black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* Geartn.); the other coppice-forming species are oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and silver birch (*Betula pendula* Roth). Additionally, European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), lime (*Tilia* spp.) and hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* L.) are also used as mixed species in coppice.

References


Typology

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**Description**

Martyna Rosińska, Mariusz Bembenek, Zbigniew Karaszewski and Piotr Mederski

Forest management in Poland is focused on a high forest system. Stands of seed origin provide timber of high quality, which corresponds with current demand from the timber sector. Forests cover almost one third of Poland, of which 7,094,696 ha is under the State Forest National Forest Holding management. Coppice forests occur in Poland very occasionally; coppice is considered a less important forest management type. The total area of coppice in Poland amounts to 21,477.57 ha and almost 89% belongs to the State Forest (Figure 1).

Coppice forests often grow on areas of low access and are considered to be water and soil-protecting forests. A main coppice-forming species in Poland is black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* Geartn., Figure 2), which is able to regenerate well vegetatively.

However, coppice trees are characterised by lower height, high tapering trunk, unilaterally formed crown and vulnerability to rotting. Due to these factors, the final felling age for vegetative alder stands was reduced from 80 to 60 years in current forest management (Maciejowski, 1953). Despite all the silviculture treatments, alder coppices are still economically less attractive and their functions are limited to forest protection and biodiversity.

The other coppice-forming species are oaks (*Quercus spp.*), silver birch (*Betula pendula* Roth). Additionally, European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), lime (*Tilia spp.*) and hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* L.) are also used as mixed species in coppice.

Oak is the subject of special type of coppice in the State Forest, which is formed after cutting browsed seedlings (mostly *Quercus petraea* and *Quercus robur*). The low cutting is performed 3-8 years after planting the unsuccessful, browsed crop. The damaged plantation is fenced.

**Figure 1.** Coppice area (ha) in Poland by coppice owners (Bureau for Forest Management and Geodesy, 2016)

**Figure 2.** Black alder coppice in Pułtusk Forest District (Photo: M. Rosinska, 2015)
one year prior to the intervention. This low cut results in a rapid growth of coppice shoots, which reach about 1 m height within 1 year. The oldest and the largest coppice area (about 3,000 ha) is located in the South of Poland, Pogórze Kaczawskie (Sudety Mountains). These *Quercus petraea* coppices were created before the Second World War. The trees were cut in a 14-year rotation period, mainly to obtain material known as mirror bark. Remaining stands create one of the rarest forest areas in Poland and are now excluded from utilisation (Szymura, 2010).

Currently, due to increased demand for renewable energy sources, short-rotation plantations of fast growing trees such as willow or poplar are being established. These plantations could be recognised as expanding coppice utilisation for energy purposes in Poland, together with a share of other (coppice) species.

**References**

