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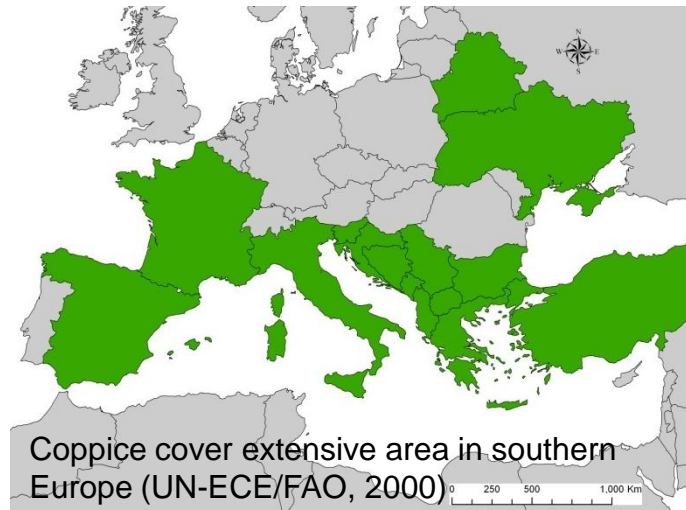
Mediterranean perspective on coppice

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Introduction

Coppice forest contributed significantly to the survival of rural communities

Today coppice is characterizing many Mediterranean forest landscape



- ❑ Assortments with specific features and dimensions
- ❑ Forest regeneration is secure → natural regeneration
- ❑ The rotation period is short → good for private owners
- ❑ Forest management is easy

After the II World War → Coppice crisis

- ❑ Development and spread of other low cost energy sources
- ❑ Population exodus from rural area

At the end of the 'eighties → Renewed interest in coppice and firewood

- ❑ Increases in fossil fuel prices following the energy crisis
- ❑ A rising population with “second homes” in rural areas
- ❑ The growing popularity of wood-burning ovens

Today → The imbalance between rising labour costs and the value of wood has led to two conflicting consequences:

1. The marginalization and the abandonment of many coppices
2. The simplification of cultivation techniques and the concentration of coppie utilization on the easier sites or close to roadways

The current management scenarios

- ☐ Coppices under a regular felling regime
- ☐ Coppices in silviculturally oriented evolution towards high forest
- ☐ Coppices left to free evolution
- ☐ Coppices managed for special purposes



Coppices under a regular felling regime

Coppices that are still regularly managed as such

- ❑ Assortments requested by the market
- ❑ Optimum sites with limited slopes that are served by roads
- ❑ Coppice utilized at the end of the rotation without any cultivation management → SFM?
- ❑ The forest is easily prey of negative forces → wood poaching, uncontrolled grazing and fires
- ❑ The coppice and wildlife → impact on shoot regeneration



Coppices in silviculturally oriented evolution towards high forest

Coppices that having exceeded the customary rotation age are managed with the aim of converting the stands to a high forest

There are three situations:

1. Coppices in the waiting period
2. Coppices in which the conversion has been initiated with thinnings
3. Coppices in which regeneration felling has begun



The suspension of coppices promotes the increase of growing stock and of the age of the stand

Coppices left to free evolution

Coppices in which no cultivation operations is done because the owners are no longer interested in the production

- ❑ Abandoned, aged or degraded coppices
- ❑ Grazing, fires and diseases have contributed to coppice degradation

The evolutionary processes follow different patterns in relation to stand structure, the site and the interactions with other systems



Coppices managed for special purposes

Coppices at high altitudes near mountain ridges and coppices along stream and rivers need special management

- ❑ Protective forests → transformation from coppice to selection coppice
- ❑ Coppices on steep slopes → soil conservation and stability
- ❑ Coppices along streams and rivers → habitat protection and conservation (e.g. Natura 2000)



Mediterranean perspective on coppice

For the near future three scenarios can be envisaged for Mediterranean coppices:

1. The maintenance of coppice forest
2. The conversion from coppice to high forest
3. The conversion from coppice to high forest through autonomous evolution



Scenario 1: The maintenance of coppice forest

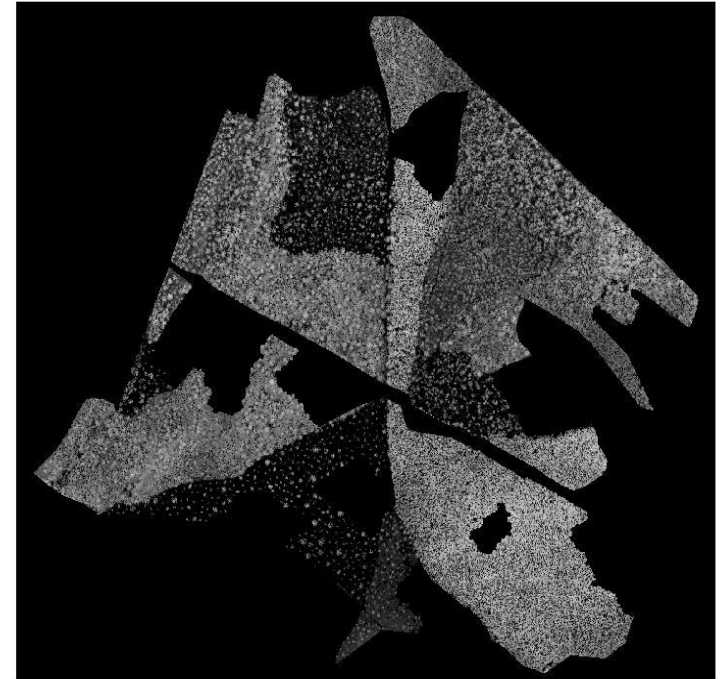
- ❑ The market demands firewood, biomass for energy and small size product
- ❑ Labour costs have the greatest impact on pricing → this has favoured a development model that is often based on simplified management form
- ❑ In some countries, like in Italy where private forest ownership is fragmented the association between owners should be encouraged



- ❑ The coppice forest has become increasingly significant from the historical, cultural, aesthetic and economic standpoints
- ❑ Agritourism facilities have developed in the vicinity of coppices; wildlife and hunting establishments have been created



- ❑ Forest regulation will place restrictions on current methods of using the coppice forest and promote forms of SFM
- ❑ Forest planning will have a central role for promoting SFM
- ❑ New technologies will support forest inventories and monitoring



Scenario 2: The conversion from coppice to high forest

- ❑ The conversion from coppice to high forest has been moving slowly due to technical and financial issues
- ❑ In the near future we expect that the conversion will be applied especially on public forests or within the protected areas
- ❑ For private owners the conversion through the compound coppice phase could be an option
- ❑ Conversion to high forest will make headway if forest planning is given room



Scenario 3: The conversion from coppice to high forest through autonomous evolution

- ❑ Coppices that have not been used for a long time and utilization of which is financially and technically burdensome
- ❑ In these cases the most practical approach is conversion through autonomous evolution of the coppice
- ❑ Coppice cannot be completely abandoned → it is necessary to provide for protection against fires and to monitor the evolutionary processes



Conclusions

- ❑ The analysis of the perspective on coppice forest is a complex task as it is an issue that depends on forestry policy
- ❑ To improve sustainable coppice management a system of regulations and specific actions should be implemented on a European level
- ❑ To this end a common understanding on coppice system should be created
- ❑ Knowledge gap should be investigated by further research, this include:
 - Forest certification systems for coppices
 - The interaction between coppice management and forest biodiversity
 - The role of coppices in the protected area
 - Coppice forest ownership and governance
 - The interaction between SRF and “traditional” coppices
 - Coppice forest harvesting systems