

### 1 Major principles and developments in forestry policy

Forestry policy in the Netherlands is primarily based upon the idea, that the small forest area should be conserved for a variety of uses to the society. To conserve as much diversity as possible in forests existing differences in types of ownership are maintained where possible.

Until World War II forest conservation was considered mainly for timber and natural beauty. According to prevailing circumstances the one or the other of these aspects was emphasized. When there was heavy demand for local timber the forest area extended, especially by reclamation of waste land. After the War the policy was broadened as forests became important for recreation and environment preservation.

The idea of maintaining the status quo was gradually replaced by that of extending forest on suitable soils and of increasing production on less suitable soils. The worst soils of all should be abandoned by forestry and managed as areas of natural beauty.

This change can be related to increasing prosperity and increasing use of forests for recreation. Forest came to be considered as an asset to the environment, to recreation and the scenic beauty. Timber production was clearly subordinated to second place.

However in recent years, various interests have pointed out the danger of a timber shortage due to rapidly increasing demands from the timber-processing industries. The demands cannot be ignored and are forcing a reassessment of resources and of the function of Dutch forestry as a supplier of timber. We are lucky that at this moment people are being forced to consider the role of forestry in society and the diversification in the functions of forestry. Hence it is a choice moment to supply proposals that can be constituted into a new forestry policy.

### 2 The legal apparatus for policy implementation

The main lines of forestry policy and related matters, but ensue from interests within the community, can primarily be implemented by the forestry legislation. Forest law includes rules on the giving of notice, on the need for replanting and the forbidding of felling and providing credit for replanting of forest during periods of unprofitability (article 9) and the costs of establishing new forests (article 10) and the financial contributions to public bodies and associations and trusts that assist in the conservation of forests and other plantations (article 11).

Since 1970 a decree has been enforced providing contributions for replanting. It replaced a credit rule in article 9 of the Forest Law. Another decree dating from 1970 provides financial assistance for afforestation. It replaced a decree dating from 1966 on whose basis credits could be provided under article 10 of the Forest Law. Neither in letter nor in spirit do these decrees nor the Forest Law itself encourage the growing of particular tree species. The two regulations are limited to the regulation of reafforestation or afforestation by a well conceived plan. But this means only that the tree species must be planted which are suitable for the soil of that place. Likewise a decree on improvement of the landscape dating from 23 March 1967 provides for contribution to the cost of planting for the landscaping or recovery, or improvement of the landscape does not encourage the establishment of particular species. This applies equally to the forestry support regulations – regulation providing support to public bodies is based on article 11 of the Forest Law – which establish that supported forests must be maintained and get open to the public. This brief summary shows that forestry regulations here in the Netherlands do not attempt to stimulate the growing of any special tree species.

### 3 Poplar growing and the legal provisions

As indicated above neither the Forest Law nor any of the other government regulations on forestry encourage the growing of particular tree species and thus they do not encourage the growing of poplar. The question remains, however, whether these regulations could discourage culture. It could be that the regulations make conditions or limitations which are particularly unattractive for the growing of poplar, because of its particular properties so that poplar growing is hindered. This question is important because poplar has some characteristics that distinguish it from other tree species, in particular its pioneering qualities and its rapid growth. Because of its rapid growth a poplar plantation can be felled within 15 or 20 years. Also a plantation provides an element of the landscape within a few years of being planted. The poplar is thus interesting for timber. It is true that poplar timber is not suitable for all purposes, but the short cycle of growth makes the timber cheap per m<sup>3</sup>. Its rapid growth and its pioneering qualities make the poplar particularly suitable for establishment of forest on better soils in areas not previously under forest so long as a reasonable assortment of clones is used. Particularly pleasant for the grower is the fact that returns can be expected in a short time, thus balancing the high costs of establishing new plantations. Another advantage of poplar which should not further be overestimated is that during rotation much more than in other tree species the grower can choose for mass production or quality production in the light of marketing conditions. He can best react to the timber market, much more than with other tree species.



Populus 'Marilandica' op een stapelplaats bij een klompenmaker te Best.  
*Populus 'Marilandica' for manufacture of clogs.*

Foto: H. A. van der Meiden

This short review of the characteristics of poplar gives little evidence but the legal apparatus limits production. The only way in which this could happen is the provision for replanting (article 3), which could prevent a landowner from planting poplar. If this fear does indeed inhibit the planting of poplar article 6, section 2 of the Forest Law could be put into operation providing a means of annulling this requirement.

#### 4 Poplar's role in forestry and in the landscape

From section 3 it will be clear that the poplar now has an important place in forestry and in the landscape thanks to its peculiarities. Poplar has been used in establishing forests in the new polders and in areas of the old land where there have been until now no forests. In open areas too and for plantations intended to improve the landscape poplar is particularly suitable. Partly because of the uses mentioned here poplar has received particular attention from research and from the advisory services. It is certainly worthy of this attention. Good qualities of poplar must be used to the full in the landscape, in timber production and in recreation. The poplar is indeed suitable for recreation although opinions do speak otherwise. In establishing plantations that will be used for recreation, considerable use can be made of trees of the genus *Populus*, which is abundant in species to obtain a variety of green in the open land.

#### H. A. van der Meiden / The poplar and willow area in the Netherlands\*

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In 1971 the third national inventory of forests, waste lands and roadside and line plantations was published. The data were collected from 1964 to 1968. The second census was carried out in the period 1952–1963.

The detailed data comprise isolated woodlots of 0.5 hectare and over, and roadside and line plantations. Further, some rough calculations were made with regard to the total surface of stands of less than 0.5 hectare; this appeared to be no more than 311 hectares for poplar and 14 hectares for willow.

#### I Poplar and willow woodlots

Table 1 shows the distribution of poplar and willow over different forest regions in the Netherlands, which are indicated in figure 1. The "rest area" comprises among others the new polders, where a considerable and still increasing area is planted with poplar and willow. In the table a comparison is made between the results of the second and the third inventory.

From these data the following conclusions may be drawn:

- 1 The main poplar areas in the Netherlands are the Southern area and the "rest area". The latter region comprises besides the new polders also the river area with its alluvial deposits.
- 2 The total area of poplar forest in the Netherlands increased within about 10 years by 2228 hectares or nearly 40%. The main part of this increase took place in the Southern forest area, a region with many brook valley and gley soils.
- 3 The surface of poplar stands in the so-called "rest area" is still increasing, especially due to the large afforestations in the new polders. This is the reason why these polders ought to be considered as a separate unit in the case of an eventual new inventory.
- 4 The area of willow in the Netherlands is very moderate, but it increased much in the period between the second and the third inventory. Recently, the watermark disease is slowing down the planting of this tree species.

Within a few years holidaymakers and trippers have sufficient cover from a growth of poplar.

#### 5 Summary

1 The aim of Dutch forestry policy is to maintain and extend the area of the forest while maintaining the diversity of ownership. The policy has been formulated with regard to the importance of a varied and healthy stand of forest for the environment, for the landscape, for nature conservation, recreation and timber production.

2 Consideration is given as to what aspects of policy will be accented in coming years.

3 Forestry policy is implemented with the legal apparatus of the Forest Law and other regulations on forestry. This apparatus is not intended to encourage the culture of particular tree species, neither of the poplar. Equally it is not intended to discourage culture of any species.

4 The policy does not encourage the growing of poplar more than any other species, but poplar has an important function in the extension of forest because of two peculiarities of the genus *Populus*: its pioneering character and its rapid growth. These properties give that poplar an essential place in the establishment of forests, in areas previously unforested and in landscape plantations.

#### L'inventaire du peuplier et du saule aux Pays Bas

##### Résumé

Le troisième inventaire des forêts et des plantations d'alignement aux Pays Bas était réalisé pendant la période 1964–1968. Les résultats indiquent une extension de la superficie de peupleraies de 2228 hectares ou de 40% depuis le deuxième inventaire qui se passait dans la période 1952–1963. Cette surface continue de s'étendre surtout grâce aux boisements dans les nouveaux polders. Au contraire, le nombre des plantations de saules n'augmentera plus beaucoup, parce que cet espèce est fortement menacé par la „watermark disease”.

Pendant la période entre les deux inventaires la longueur totale des plantations d'alignement du peuplier et du saule augmentait de 3700 km ou de 25%. De la longueur totale 10% est composé de saule. La volume totale du bois de ces plantations accroissait de 75%.

La plupart des peupleraies (85%) a un accroissement annuel moyen de 5.5 m<sup>3</sup>. Ce chiffre est mis en doute, vue les problèmes d'estimer l'âge des plantations pendant l'inventaire et vue l'influence considérable de cet âge sur l'accroissement annuel.

#### II Poplar and willow in roadside and line plantations

During the third inventory data about these plantations were collected by carrying out a random test of 10% of the total surface of the Netherlands. The same was done during the second census.

Table 2 mentions the data of both inventories.

The following may be concluded:

- 5 The total of these plantations increased considerably during the period between the second and the third census, viz. 3700 km or about 25%. Willow comprises about 10% of the plantations mentioned for the third inventory.
- 6 As compared with the second inventory, the spreading of the different diameter classes became much more regular. The

\* Populier en wilg in de nieuwe bosstatistiek. Onder deze titel is dit artikel verschenen in *Populier* 8 (3), 1971.