

Are you interested in continuous cover forestry?

A new online course will tell you everything you need to know.

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ForestMoocForChange is a new collaborative educational project, co-financed by the European Union, between four European forestry development agencies: Teagasc Forestry Development Department in Ireland, ANW in Germany, Pro Silva France, and Forêt-Nature in Belgium as lead partner.

The aim of the project is to provide introductory online training on continuous cover forestry systems. This will encourage forest management and help integrate production of quality timber with biodiversity enhancement, the protection of ecosystem services and greater forest resilience.

Continuous cover forestry is a forest management approach which allows for the production of commercial timber while retaining a forest cover. It harnesses forest processes such as natural regeneration of trees, mixed species, increased biodiversity and natural forest development (forest succession). It is also known as close-to-nature forest management.

Forest policy

National and EU forest policies increasingly promote diverse and integrated forest management. The goal is to enhance forest resilience in the face of climate disruption, while also sustaining forest production and delivering diverse ecosystem services to society.

The new Forestry Programme 2023-2027 funded by the Department of Agriculture Forestry and the Marine is built on the three pillars of sustainability: People, Planet and Prosperity.

The programme was launched in autumn 2023 and aims to expand our forest cover, and diversify the range of forest types within our landscape. It also promotes a broad range of management systems to suit landowners' many objectives.

The programme will make €1.3 billion available to farmers and landowners to help integrate forests into farmland. This will promote a sustainable and thriving rural

economy, benefit society and support wellbeing through a healthy environment.

In recent months the European Commission has published new 'guidelines on closer-to nature forest management.' The aim is to 'promote biodiversity-friendly and adaptive forest management as part of a common framework for closer-to-nature forest management.'

“ The course will encourage forest management and help integrate production of quality timber with biodiversity enhancement, the protection of ecosystem services and greater forest resilience

The new guidelines present relevant practices and showcase the benefits of these practices for forest multifunctionality and climate change resilience without neglecting socio-economic benefit.

Training need

One of the main hurdles preventing integrated management systems has been a lack of knowledge and expertise on alternative management options. Integrated systems should combine, at the forest level, the profitable production of quality timber with the enhancement of biodiversity and the protection of ecosystem services.

To address this problem Teagasc Forestry Development Department has been collaborating with other organisations in Ireland and Europe to develop and deliver the first online course on continuous cover management systems.

This exciting new course is called ForestMoocForChange – the first free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on continuous cover forestry. This course is an important new educational tool to facilitate transformation of Europe's forests towards integrated management systems. The

course promotes production of quality wood, biodiversity, the protection of ecosystem services and enhanced resilience.

Course content

ForestMoocForChange covers the various aspects of continuous cover forestry over eight-weeks. The course, which can be started at any time, is a blend of webinars and 74 tutorial videos produced in the field by experts, managers and owners. To keep it interesting there are online quizzes and exercises for participants to carry out in the forest. Each fortnight, a live session is organised with the speakers where you can ask questions and discuss the topics covered with an expert.

The first training session

The course first ran between October and December 2023 and saw over 9,000 learners taking part and over 1,700 certificates delivered across Europe with approximately 1,000 participants to the English version coordinated in Teagasc by Forestry Development Officer Jonathan Spazzi and Research Officer Dr Ian Short.

The course was informed by interactions with foresters and forest owners in Germany, Ireland, France and Belgium. They shared their practical management experience, sometimes spanning several decades, and demonstrated their management skills.

Starting with the principles of close-to-nature management, participants gradually discover the functioning and dynamics of natural forests and how those principles inform management.

The resilience of forests and their ecosystem services is central to this course. The course also looks at the profitability of continuous cover forestry. There are testimonials from foresters and forest owners who apply it for its economic benefits, among other reasons.

At first glance it might seem complicated to adopt integrated forest management. But this course explains step by step how forest transformation practices and management tools can be applied in practice in a range of forest types and circumstances.



Jonathan Spazzi (second from right) filming educational content for the MOOC tutorial videos.

Second training session now live

If you missed the first session of our free online course on continuous cover forestry you can now take the opportunity to participate and obtain your certificate during our second, and final session which opened on 19 February.

Register now at <https://mooc.forestmoocforchange.eu/login?next=/dashboard>

If you are interested in the multi-functional value of forests and the impact of climate change on forests and are wondering what can be done to make forests more diverse, while

remaining productive and resilient, than this course is for you.

The course is comprehensive and open to all. It will help you discover continuous cover forestry, how it works and its dynamics, ranging from economic to ecological and social issues.

Some testimonials from participants to the first session

“I really like the general principle of continuous cover and to see the experience across Europe. The videos really conveyed the philosophy of this management method and were well organised and presented. It was a pleasure to watch them.”

“I was particularly impressed by the diversity of the technical situations, the speakers and the mix of theory concepts expressed through practical examples in the field and with people who are passionate about what they do.”

“I really enjoyed the intergenerational approach required to manage a forest, whether private, State-owned or public. I also liked the quality of the speakers, who were willing to share their experiences. It was a real pleasure!”

For more information contact Jonathan Spazzi, Forestry Development Officer with Teagasc. Email jonathan.spazzi@teagasc.ie