

Impressions following a European course on CCF forestry.

By Paul Quinlan

MOOC – Massive Open Online Course

A free online course in Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) is being run by several European organisations, including Foret.Nature, Pro Silva, ANW, and Teagasc. Its emphasis is on inspiring forestry practice to adopt CCF principles for multiple benefits, especially increased forest resilience in the face of climate change – not just ecological, but also economic resilience.

The course is available up until the 30th. Here is a link: <https://forestmoochange.eu/en/faq/>

Impressions and parallels for NZ

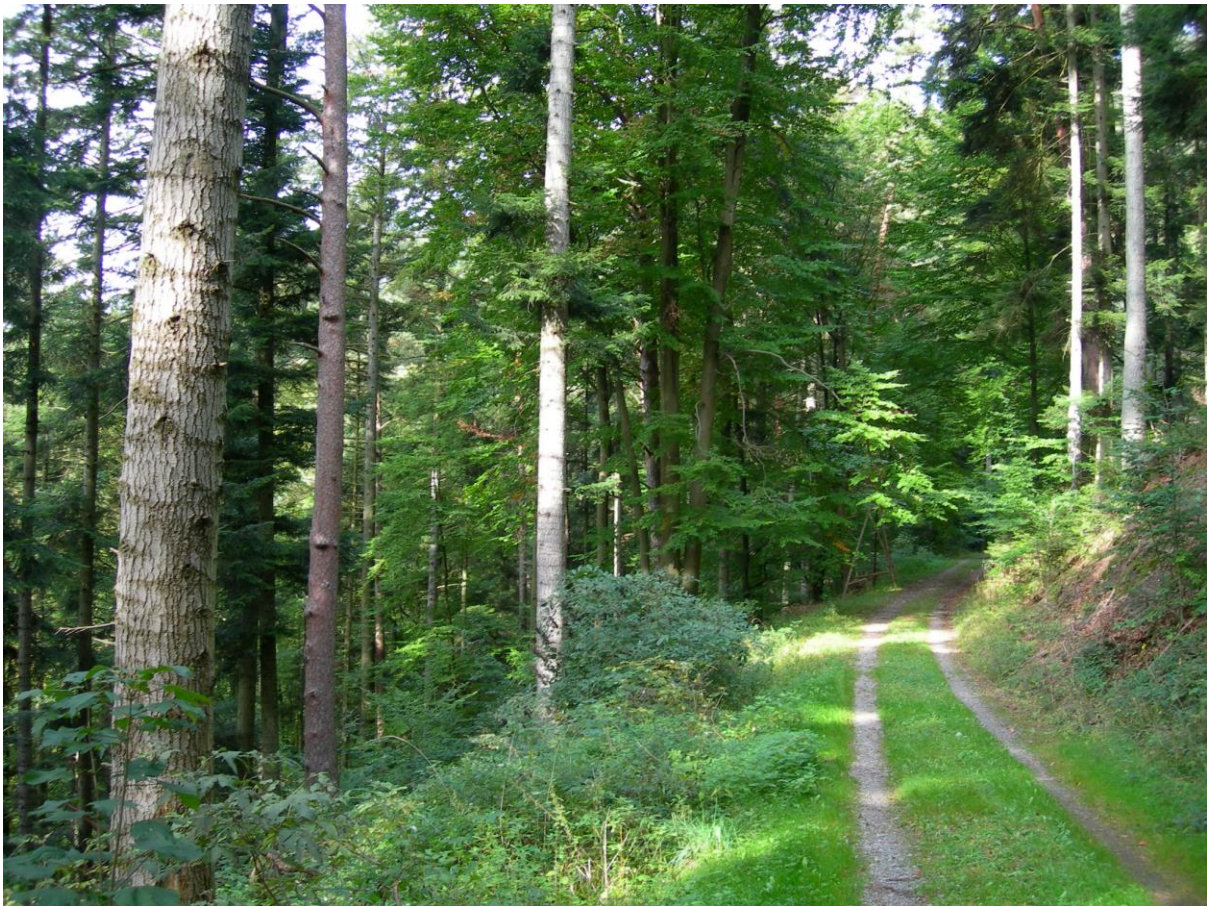
I completed the course which involved 76 short videos, downloading resource materials, field exercises, and multi-choice tests. I gained the impression of a growing movement towards CCF in Europe and the compelling benefits of such forest practices. There were also many thought-provoking similarities and differences to the New Zealand situation. Some of these impressions are outlined below.

- European foresters are more acutely concerned about the effects of climate change on the forest resilience than NZ foresters, and are very actively searching for adaptive practices, including fundamental restructuring of the forests. CCF is gaining popularity as a rational response to improve forest resilience.
- The principles of CCF can be applied to a wide range of forest types from sparse, arid, mediterranean forests, to high-rainfall temperate forests, and both hardwood and coniferous forest mixes. Adaptive management and unique site solutions are always necessary. These are ultimately based on observation and really knowing your forest, site, and context.
- CCF requires management with intergenerational perspective and values.
- Many opportunities involve transitioning from an existing mono-cultural, even-aged plantation forest structure. (N.B. - in Ireland, it seems there may be some national funding to support such transitions). Transitioning plantations of Douglas fir, and Sitka spruce to mixed species, irregular forest is common.
- Key economic factors include, producing large-diameter and consequently high-value trees, minimising costs via natural regeneration (rather than planting), silvicultural management (minimising the need for pruning), and production thinning to improve the residual forest capital (high-quality stock). It can compete with regular plantation forestry, with less risk.
- Keeping deer numbers low is essential for CCF. This was a consistent message.
- Recreation and aesthetics were usually included in the multiple values being managed in each forest. This aligns with the more sensitive ‘tending’ role of the CCF forest manager/steward.

- The value of inspirational forest examples, and passionate CCF foresters, in leading this movement is clear.

This CCF course certainly reinforced confidence that the basic principles for Close to Nature Forestry (as set out by Pro Silva) are robust and can be adapted and applied to any forest. Naturally, this inspires confidence that the principles can be translated to situations here in Aotearoa, New Zealand too.

It also reinforces confidence that Tāne's Tree Trust's ideology, and promotion of multivalent native forest management, and CCF, is bang on target. Moreover, the trust has been fulfilling roles that have proven critical in other countries to start their CCF movements. As associate members of Pro Silva, I expect Tāne's Tree Trust's contribution to the development of CCF in Aotearoa, will grow from here.



CCF forestry in Pforzheim, Germany. Photo Paul Quinlan