



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

Cross compliance: minimum soil cover (GAEC 4) (2020)

Summary of the rules on having soil cover to minimise soil erosion.

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Introduction

The aim of this requirement is to minimise soil erosion by requiring a minimum soil cover.

Main requirements

You must protect soil by having a minimum soil cover (crop, stubble, residue or other vegetation) except where establishing a cover would conflict with requirements under GAEC 5.

To comply with requirements where land has been harvested with a combine harvester, forage harvester or mower, one of the following conditions should be met at all times, between the day after harvest to the 1 March:

- the stubble of the harvested crop remains in the land
- the land is prepared as a seedbed within 14 days for a crop and the crop is sown within a period of 10 days, beginning with the day after final seedbed preparation

When ploughing Grassland, the land must be prepared as a seedbed within 14 days from ploughing with the crop/grass sown within a period of 10 days, beginning with the day after final seedbed preparation.

N.B. If sowing within that 10-day period would mean breaching the requirement in GAEC 5, the crop or temporary cover crop should be sown as soon as is practical after it ceases to be waterlogged.

Field checks

- check there's acceptable soil cover or determine that conditions have prevented compliance
- check soil does not run off down slopes or off site (field parcel)

Good practice

- plan to achieve a soil cover on all areas where harvesting takes place before winter
- leave the stubble of a harvested crop on the land
- prepare the soil for sowing a crop and sow the crop within 10 days of preparing the soil
- leave a 5 metre wide strip unploughed and uncultivated at the bottom of sloping fields, where soil erosion is likely (e.g. late harvested maize fields where a soil cover hasn't been established over winter)

Further information

For further information please contact:

- Welsh Government
- Natural Resources Wales

or see [Cross compliance: useful contacts \(2024\)](#) factsheet within this pack.

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