

# GAEC 4: Soil and Carbon Stock – Minimum soil cover



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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**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, 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.

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).

## For further information please contact:

Welsh Government

Natural Resources Wales

See 'Useful Contacts' factsheet within this pack