



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

# Cross compliance: managing land to limit soil erosion (GAEC 5) (2015)

Summary of the rules on avoiding physical damage to your soil.

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# Introduction

The aim of this requirement is to limit soil erosion by not undertaking certain operations.

Compaction of both topsoil and subsoil can seriously damage overall soil structure, restrict root growth and reduce the air and water carrying capacity of the land. Physical damage to the soil can be reduced or even avoided completely by taking appropriate steps.

## Main requirements

- do not allow your animals, or other animals to overgraze agricultural land
- do not allow poaching or rutting to occur
- do not carry out any mechanical field operations on waterlogged soil, unless it is necessary for one of the following reasons:
  1. animal welfare or human safety
  2. improving drainage of the soil
  3. incorporating gypsum following saltwater intrusion
  4. meeting contractual obligations in relation to the harvesting of a crop on saturated soil, or
  5. the soil is waterlogged within 20 metres of the access point and access is required to an area which is not waterlogged

N.B Should you carry out mechanical field operations for one of the above reasons, you must provide Rural Payments Wales with photographic or other evidence which demonstrates the activity was absolutely necessary.

- to prevent erosion on late harvested land or on land where a forage or root crop has been grazed out, if it is not possible to sow a cover crop, you must

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put in place appropriate measures to limit soil erosion by either installing sediment fencing or chisel ploughing

- complete and submit a soil risk assessment to Rural Payment Wales if rough ploughed land is left between harvest and 1 March the following year

## Field checks

- check soil has not run off down the slope or off site
- check for signs of excessive bank erosion alongside watercourses where livestock have access
- check for signs of heavy trampling, rutting or poaching
- check for overgrazing
- check for standing water in tramlines that might indicate capping or compaction of the soil and check that tramlines follow field contours
- check that cultivation and the picking machinery selected is appropriate for soil conditions, and guard against creating too fine a seedbed, particularly on light soils
- check for appropriate measures to prevent soil erosion on late harvested land or on land where a forage or root crop has been grazed out or where a rough surface is left over winter

## Good practice

- provide watering points for livestock in order to protect watercourses. Regularly move the location of these watering points
- supplementary feeding must be provided in such a way that the semi natural vegetation is not excessively trampled or soil poached by animals or rutted by vehicles used to transport feed
- move feed locations on a regular basis

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- avoid vegetation that is sensitive to poaching damage, e.g. on wet areas, blanket bog and woodland
- use low ground pressure tyres or dual wheels when necessary. Avoid using vehicles where it's possible the vehicle may damage the soil
- avoid compaction on headlands and in tramlines caused by repeated vehicle movements
- leave a 5 metre wide strip unploughed and uncultivated at the bottom of sloping fields where soil erosion is likely, alternatively install sediment fences

## Further information

For further information please contact:

- Welsh Government
- Natural Resources Wales

or see **Cross compliance: useful contacts (2024)** (<https://gov.wales/cross-compliance-useful-contacts-2024>) factsheet within this pack.

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