



Preventing air pollution and protecting soil health

Good agriculture and environmental condition 3 (GAEC)- Ban on burning arable stubble

What is required?

An EU-wide measure to safeguard environmental health

Under **GAEC 3**, the **burning of arable stubble**—the crop residues left on the field after harvest—is **prohibited across the EU**. This includes stubble from **cereals, oilseeds, legumes**, and similar crops. The ban is intended to protect **air quality**, **prevent soil degradation**, and **preserve organic matter** in the soil. Burning stubble releases harmful pollutants into the atmosphere and contributes to the **loss of valuable soil nutrients** and **biodiversity**.

There are, however, limited **exceptions** to this rule. Burning is only allowed for **plant health reasons**, for instance, to control the spread of pests or diseases, and must be:

- **Justified** by the competent authority
- **Authorised in advance** at national or regional level

This requirement applies to **all farmers receiving CAP support** on arable land, forming part of the EU's broader commitment to sustainable and environmentally responsible farming practices.





Why does it matter?

The environmental and agricultural impact of stubble burning

Burning stubble can seem like a quick solution for clearing fields, but it **has serious environmental costs**:

- Releases **harmful emissions** and fine particulate matter into the air
- Destroys **soil organic matter** and beneficial organisms
- Contributes to **greenhouse gas emissions**
- Increases the **risk of wildfires**
- Undermines **soil structure**, fertility, and long-term productivity

By prohibiting stubble burning, the EU encourages **more sustainable ways to manage residues** like incorporation into the soil or cover cropping.

Practical notes

What you need to know on the ground

- **Check national guidance:** Your country or region may have specific instructions on how to manage residues, and how to request an exemption if a plant health threat is present.
- Some countries offer support or advice for **transitioning to residue management techniques** that benefit soil health and meet compliance.
- Burning of grassland, pastures, or forest margins may also be regulated under other rules **always consult your local CAP authority** if in doubt.

