



# Crop diversity for healthier, stronger soils

Subtitle: Good agriculture and environmental condition 7 (GAEC) - Crop rotation

## What's it about?

### Understanding crop diversification requirements

Crop rotation helps **disrupt pest** and **disease cycles** that tend to build up with continuous monoculture. **Alternating crops** with different root structures and nutrient needs naturally **improves soil fertility** and **structure**. Under **GAEC 7**, farmers are required to **rotate crops on arable land** to preserve soil health and ensure sustainable farming practices. This involves:

- Requiring farmers to rotate crops, helping to **prevent long-term soil degradation**
- **Restricting monoculture** by avoiding repeated planting of the same crop on the same plot, with some exceptions
- Encouraging the **use of secondary crops**, supporting biological diversity
- **Setting specific rules** (e.g., minimum crop diversity or rotation frequency) at **national level**, varying by farm size and land use

The goal is to **maintain soil fertility** and **reduce reliance** on inputs like **pesticides** and synthetic **fertilisers**.

## What do you need to do?

### How to manage your rotation effectively

To comply with GAEC 7, you should:

- **Planning a crop sequence** that avoids repeating the same species too often
- Including **legumes** or other **soil-enriching crops** in your rotation when suitable
- **Checking national rules** for exemptions or special cases (e.g. small farms or grass–arable mixtures)
- Keeping **records of crop rotations** for inspection or verification
- Integrating crop choices that **support pollinators** or **beneficial insects** where possible

You can combine crop rotation with other practices, such as GAEC 6 (soil cover) and GAEC 8 (non-productive features), to support sustainability.



# Why is this good practice?

## Healthy soil means a resilient farm

**Monoculture farming** (growing the same crop every year) can lead to **several long-term problems** for soil health and the environment. By rotating crops, you:

- **Improve soil structure** and encourage **soil biodiversity**, which helps the soil remain fertile and productive
- **Maintain soil fertility**, leading to better yields over time
- **Reduce the need for chemical pesticides** and fertilizers, cutting costs and environmental impact
- **Help enhance carbon sequestration**, contributing to climate action efforts
- **Prevent the spread of pests and diseases**, reducing the risk of crop damage

Crop rotation is part of **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** and promotes more resilient, sustainable farming practices.

## Practical tips

### Combine practices and adapt locally for better results

By maintaining buffer strips, you help:

- **Combine crop rotation with other sustainable practices**, such as cover crops (GAEC 6) and non-productive features (GAEC 8), to meet multiple environmental goals
- **Secondary** crops can also help meet eco-scheme or **agri-environment-climate commitments**
- **Exemptions** may apply for:
  - **Small farms** (<10 ha of arable land)
  - Farms with a high proportion of **grassland, legumes, or fallow land**
  - Permanent **grassland-dominated holdings**
- Some **Member States** allow **crop diversification** as an alternative to rotation, depending on local conditions such as agro-climatic factors or farming systems

