



Creating space for nature and boosting biodiversity

Good agriculture and environmental condition 8 (GAEC) - Non-productive areas and features

What's it about?

Making space for nature to thrive on farmland

GAEC 8 promotes **biodiversity** and environmental stewardship by requiring farmers to **dedicate a portion of their arable land to nature-friendly features**. These non-productive elements **help protect habitats, support wildlife**, and maintain ecological functions across the farmed landscape.

Farmers can meet this standard by **setting aside areas** such as:

- Fallow **land, hedges, buffer strips, ponds, and trees**

At least **4% of arable land** must be **allocated to these features**, with the **possibility to increase this to 7%** by including catch crops or nitrogen-fixing crops—provided they are grown without the use of pesticides.

Note: This is **not a mandatory requirement**, but a **recommendation** for farmers to support sustainability goals.

What do you need to do?

Practical steps to meet the requirements

To comply with GAEC 8 in 2024, farmers have **two main options**:

- **Maintain non-productive features** on at least 4% of their arable land. This can include:
 - Fallow land
 - Hedges, ponds, buffer strips, or other landscape features that support biodiversity
- **Alternatively, meet the 4% requirement** by:
 - Growing **nitrogen-fixing crops** (e.g. peas, lentils, fava beans), or cultivating **catch crops**
 - Both must be grown **without plant protection products**

This initiative also contributes to your eco-scheme or agri-environment-climate commitments and can be beneficial for biodiversity goals.



Why is this good practice?

Nature's role in farming

Non-productive areas aren't just "unused" land; they provide significant **environmental benefits**, including:

- Supporting pollinators and **encouraging natural pest control**
- Offering critical **habitats for birds and wildlife**
- **Reducing erosion** and improving water infiltration, which helps protect water resources
- Enhancing the **visual and cultural landscape** of the farm
- Improving **farm resilience**, making it better equipped to handle environmental challenges

Setting aside land for nature supports efforts to **reverse biodiversity loss** and **ensures healthier ecosystems**.

Practical tips

Making the most of non-productive areas

By maintaining buffer strips, you help:

- Eligible **features can vary by country**, but generally include hedges, field margins, ponds, ditches, and fallow land. Check with your local authority for specifics
- **Conversion/weighting factors** may help you meet your non-productive area targets
- **Many CSPs offer financial incentives** to support the creation and maintenance of these areas
- These **non-productive features** may also **help meet eco-schemes** or agri-environmental commitments

