



# Keeping soil thriving on steep land

Good agriculture and environmental condition 5 (GAEC)- Tillage management to reduce the risk of soil degradation

## What's it about?

### Best practices for farming on vulnerable soils

Under GAEC 5, **farmers are required to adopt tillage practices** that reduce the risk of soil erosion, **particularly on sloping lands** where soil is more vulnerable to being washed or blown away. Improper tillage methods, such as **plowing straight up and down slopes** or excessive soil disturbance, can **accelerate the loss of fertile topsoil**, reduce soil structure and organic matter, decrease long-term soil productivity, and contribute to sedimentation and pollution in nearby watercourses.

This standard:

- **Focuses on fields** with significant slopes or soils vulnerable to erosion
- Aims to **protect soil health** and prevent environmental damage
- Member States will define specific criteria, such as slope thresholds or vulnerable zones, and **may require specific tillage** practices or banning others in high-risk areas

By encouraging careful soil management on slopes, GAEC 5 supports **sustainable farming while safeguarding natural resources**.

## What do you need to do?

### Understanding the rules and requirements

To comply with GAEC 5, you need to:

- **Adapt tillage practices** to reduce erosion risk, especially on sloping or erosion-prone soils
- **Follow national rules** on acceptable tillage methods, which may include restrictions on ploughing or tilling on certain slopes
- If required, **submit a soil management plan** or follow a tillage calendar to reduce erosion in high-risk areas

In some regions, eco-schemes or agri-environmental measures may promote practices like no-till or reduced tillage to help reduce soil degradation.



# Why is this good practice?

## Sustainable tillage for lasting farm productivity

**Soil is a vital resource** for farming, and maintaining its health is essential for long-term productivity. **Poor tillage practices** can:

- **Accelerate erosion**, removing valuable nutrient-rich topsoil
- Compromise soil structure, causing compaction and **reducing water infiltration**
- **Increase the runoff of fertilizers and pesticides**, leading to water pollution
- **Damage ecosystems** and **impact water quality** in nearby rivers, lakes, and streams



## Practical tips

### Protecting the soil on your farm

- Check national rules: **Your country may provide maps or tools** to help assess erosion risk and guide tillage practices
- If your land is in an erosion-sensitive zone, **follow specific recommendations** or submit a soil management plan
- Practices like no-till or reduced tillage might be supported by eco-scheme. **Check if your country offers support**

This GAEC may overlap with GAEC 4 (buffer strips) or GAEC 6 (minimum soil cover) make sure you're following all relevant regulations

