

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Government Decisions on cross compliance

June 2014

Contents

Implementation of cross compliance in England.....	1
GAECs from 2015.....	3

Implementation of cross compliance in England.

1. Cross compliance is the set of rules that serves as a baseline for direct payments, such as the Basic Payment Scheme, and certain Rural Development payments. These rules cover the environment, animal, plant and public health, animal welfare and landscape features. They are split into two types; Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs), which reflect specific EU legislation and have to be adhered to, and standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC), where Member States are given a framework to work to, but they are able to set actual requirements.
2. Reform to the CAP has led to changes in the cross compliance framework set by the European Commission (EC). This has generated changes to the GAEC requirements across England. The proposed changes in the GAEC framework will impact the way in which England implements cross compliance.
3. On 19th December 2013 the Government published its response to the consultation on implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in England, which ran from 31st October to 28th November 2013. A response on additional issues was published on 26th February 2014¹.
4. In the consultation the Government sought public opinion on cross compliance, as well as proposing to have two further informal consultation workshops in early 2014.
5. In the replies to the consultation, stakeholders and members of the public highlighted concerns that they had with cross compliance. There were a significant number of responses in regards to the retention of some current requirements, as well as the deletion of the current soil protection review.
6. Government analysed all the responses received and used them, along with evidence from stakeholders and industry, to put together a further consultation document which asked for opinions on specific policy proposals. This document was then used for the informal consultation workshops which took place in early 2014.
7. Following on from the consultations and feedback received, Ministers have made the following decisions regarding GAEC standards;
 - To remove the mandatory requirement for record-keeping relating to soils;
 - To add in protection for earth banks and stone banks as landscape features;

¹ These responses are available online at <http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/common-agricultural-policy-reform-implementation-in-england>

- To retain protection for public rights of way;
 - To retain protection for stone walls;
 - To retain protection for trees;
 - To retain protection for hedges;
 - To extend the ban on hedgerow cutting by 1 month to 31st August in order to protect nesting birds;
 - To retain protection for SSSIs;
 - To retain protection for scheduled monuments;
 - Not to take up the optional element in EU legislation of controlling invasive plant species
8. The Government has taken the decision to replace the SPR with a simplified outcome-based approach, where farmers will need to comply with national minimum standards on soil management. The deletion of the SPR was a key topic in the CAP consultation.
 9. Government has decided to include requirements for earth and stone banks. This decision was two-fold. Firstly, it ensures that all farmers are treated equally, no matter what boundary feature they have on their land. Secondly, earth and stone banks have cultural and environmental benefits which it was felt were important to protect.
 10. Government took the decision to extend the no-trimming date by one month to the 31st August. This was done after reviewing evidence received for the bird breeding and rearing season, and as they are committed to following EC rules.
 11. The decision to not include invasive weed species was taken as it was felt that the control and removal of such weeds should actually be of benefit to farmers, so there should be sufficient motivation for farmers to manage these appropriately.
 12. The decision to retain public rights of way, stone walls, trees, hedges, SSSIs and scheduled monuments was taken in light of consultation responses, EC rules and environmental and social benefits.

GAECs from 2015

13. Given the decisions outlined, the table below shows the final GAECs for 2015.

GAEC No.	GAEC Name
1.	Establishment of buffer strips along water courses
2.	Water Abstraction
3.	Groundwater
4.	Minimum Soil Cover
5.	Minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion
6.	Maintenance of soil organic matter level
7.A.	Boundaries
7.B.	Public Rights of Way
7.C.	Tees
7.D.	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
7.E.	Historical Monuments



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