

Delivery of Public Good Farm Practice through CAP

Anne O’Malley, Farm Food Business and Drystock Advisor, Teagasc Ballina

Cross Compliance rules were first introduced in 2000, changes were made in 2015, following the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform and the aim was to implement public good practices on farm to protect human, animal, plant and environmental health. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine produced a handbook as a guide to help farmers understand and comply with Cross Compliance Requirements. Bord Bia Sustainable Quality Assurance Schemes and certification by regular audits reinforces Cross Compliance Requirements and best practice on farms. Cross Compliance refers to 13 Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) under EU legislation (Directives and Regulations) and 7 Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAECs) standards of land established at national level, specifically for farmers receiving CAP payments. The SMRs requirements and GAECs standards can be divided up into three main areas.

Area 1- Environment, Climate Change and Good Agricultural Condition of Land

Protection of Water: Nitrates Regulations (SMR 1) for the protection of water against pollution from agricultural sources, includes EU legislation on Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters Regulations 2017 (S.I. 605 of 2017) as amended by the 2018 and the 2020 Regulations. Farmers contribute to Water Framework Directive through compliance with the regulations on nitrates records, farmyard and nutrient management, storage and application of slurry, farmyard manure and chemical fertiliser. Protection of water through the establishment of buffer strips or zones along watercourses (GAEC 1), compliance with authorisation procedures for water irrigation, where applicable (GAEC 2), and protection of ground water against pollution (GAEC 3).

Soil health and Carbon Stock: Prevent soil erosion through minimum soil cover (GAEC 4) and minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit soil damage and erosion (GAEC 5). Maintenance of soil organic matter levels through appropriate practices (GAEC 6). Regular soil analysis on productive areas, protection and maintenance of less productive areas and avoid bare ground and provide cover within 4 months of ploughing

Biodiversity: NATURA 2000 Directives on conservation of wild birds (SMR 2) and conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (SMR 3). Farmers with designated land must comply with certain conditions and have written consent for actions requiring consent (ARCs) from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Landscape Features: Retention, protection and minimum maintenance of landscape features including hedgerows, trees, drains, archaeological sites and monuments, designated habitats and also the control of invasive species and noxious weeds (GAEC 7). Hedgerows and/or trees must not be cut or trimmed during the bird nesting season, 1st March to 31st August.

Area 2 -Public, Animal and Plant Health

Food and Feed Safety Requirements: Regulation on general food law and hormones directive are included under Food and Feed Hygiene (SMR 4) and restrictions and controls on the use of substances in farm animals (SMR 5).

Traceability: Regulations on identification and registration of pigs (SMR 6), cattle (SMR 7), sheep and goats (SMR 8).

Animal Disease: Regulation on prevention, control and eradication of Transmissible Animal Disease (SMR 9), for example, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and feeding animal protein to ruminants is prohibited.

Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD): SMR 10 Regulation on plant protection products (PPPs), for example, herbicides or sprays, biocidal products, for example, disinfectants and rodenticides. Correct use, handling, storage & recording of product. Promote the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and alternative approaches or techniques to routine chemical use and dependency.

Area 3 –Animal Welfare

Welfare: Directives on the welfare of calves (SMR 11), pigs (SMR 12) and all farm animals (SMR 13). Better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity. New animal health legislation is set to be introduced in 2022 as part of the Farm to Fork strategy which will require a shift in how antibiotics are used in some areas of agriculture and address antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Buffer zones

	Land storage buffer for FYM	Spreading buffer for organic fertiliser and soiled water	Spreading buffer for chemical fertiliser	Land storage of silage bales/ supplementary feeding	Uncultivated margin for non-grassland crops (watercourse on a 1:5000 map)
Water abstraction points	50m to 250m	15m to 200m	2m	20m	
Lakes/ turlough	20m	20m	2m	20m	
Other surface waters	20m	5m to 10m	2m	20m	2m

