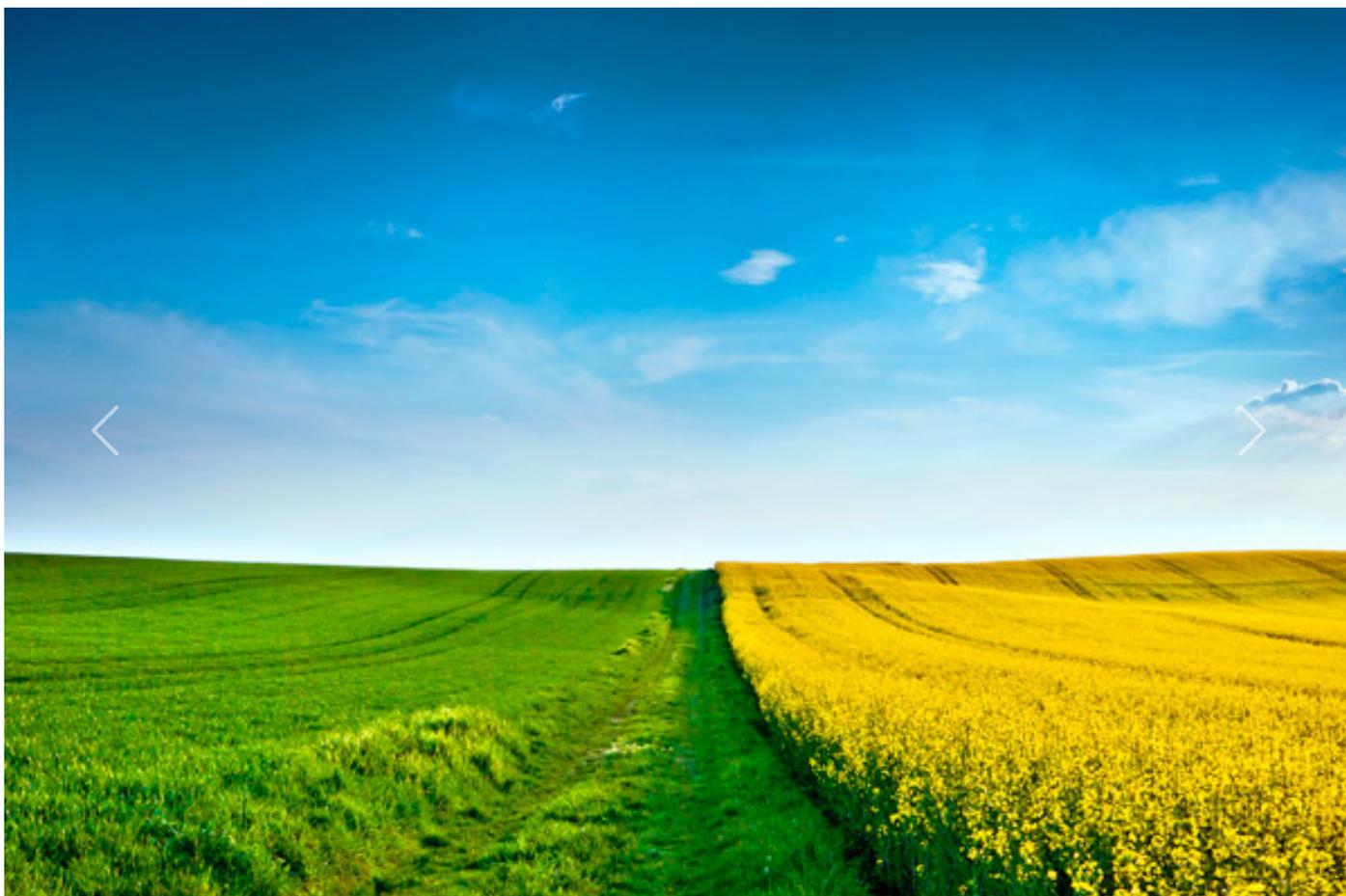


The conditions for the application of the Standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition have been approved

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Date: 28.07.2023 *Issue:* 7/2023



By order of the Minister of Agriculture and Food, the conditions for the implementation of the Standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) have been approved, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food announces.

The Standards take into account the environmental and climate challenges and the new green architecture of the Common Agricultural Policy and aim to contribute to the development of sustainable agriculture in the EU. Their implementation is part of a system of ex-ante conditionalities related to more ambitious commitments in

the field of environment and climate. Farmers must comply with the requirements of these Standards on their holdings in order to receive financial support under the relevant interventions of the Common Agricultural Policy.

As of 01 January 2023, in Bulgaria the GAEC Standards are determined and implemented by order of the Minister of Agriculture.

The order sets out the requirements for the Standards:

GAEC 1: Maintaining the ratio of permanent grassland (PG) to agricultural area at national level and at holding level;

GAEC 2: Protection of wetlands and peatlands;

GAEC 3: Ban on burning stubble;

GAEC 4: Establishment (maintenance) of buffer strips along watercourses;

GAEC 5: Management of soil tillage, reduction of the risk of soil degradation and erosion, including taking into account the degree of slope;

GAEC 6: Maintenance of a minimum soil cover during periods and on areas that are most sensitive;

GAEC 7: Crop rotation on arable land, with the exception of crops grown under water;

GAEC 8: Minimum share of arable land designated for non-productive purposes and features; preservation of landscape features and prohibition of cutting hedges and trees during the breeding season and the rearing period of birds across the entire agricultural area;

GAEC 9: Prohibition of converting or ploughing permanent grassland designated as environmentally sensitive in NATURA 2000 areas;

The document also specifies which farmers are obliged to comply with the Standards, as well as the envisaged exemptions.

The published normative act repeals Order No RD 09-122/23.02.2015 of the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

You can see the full text of the order here: <https://www.mzh.government.bg/bg/sektori/rastenievadstvo/dobri-zemedelski-i-ekologichni-usloviya/>

Granting of derogations from Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 regarding the application of the Standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition of land No 7 and 8 in the 2023 claim year

On 27 July 2022, the European Commission adopted Implementing Regulation No 2022/1317 on granting temporary and short-term derogations from Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 concerning the rules for the application of: GAEC 7 “Crop rotation on arable land, with the exception of crops grown under water“ and GAEC 8 “Minimum share of agricultural area designated for non-productive areas or features“.

The application of GAEC 7 and GAEC 8 is a prerequisite for preserving soil potential and improving biodiversity on holdings, which are important for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector and preserving the potential for the production of agricultural products and food. The proposed derogations aim to bring back into use and employ for production large areas, thereby providing an opportunity to achieve the maximum capacity of the European Union for cereal production.

The derogations will be temporary and will apply only for the 2023 claim year. It is envisaged that the released areas will be used solely for the cultivation of crops that contribute to ensuring food security, thereby reducing the effect of the negative consequences arising from the military actions between Russia and Ukraine. Crops that are usually used for the production of feed and for feeding animals (such as maize and soya) are excluded from the derogation. With regard to GAEC 7, producers will have to grow crops that are directly related to ensuring food security.

Regarding the application of the derogations for GAEC 7 and GAEC 8, an obligation is introduced and the main basic requirements for the Member States are maintained as follows:

- To promote the production of crops intended for human consumption;
- To promote the implementation of eco-schemes and agri-environmental interventions aimed at improving biodiversity and preserving the production potential of soils;
- To apply the derogations solely for “fallow land“ (without the derogation applying to other types of non-productive elements), with the areas not having been declared as fallow in 2022;
- The areas released as a result of the derogation must not be used for the cultivation of maize, soya and fast-growing tree species with a short rotation cycle.

- Landscape features must be preserved;
- Cutting of hedges and trees during the breeding period and the rearing period of birds is prohibited;
- Where possible, measures should be applied to avoid invasive plant species. Plant protection products may be used on the areas that will be included in the derogations.