An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

FAS Training for New Advisers Conditionality GAEC Standards

GAEC 8

GAEC 9

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Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise

Overview & Objectives

- **GAEC 8**
  - Retention and maintenance of non-productive features
  - Improving Farm biodiversity & habitats
  - Places an economic value on biodiversity actions
  - Applicable across all farm enterprises
- **GAEC 9**
  - Restrictions on activities on Environmentally Sensitive Permanent Grassland in Natura sites

GAEC 8 Retention of landscape features, ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season and measures for avoiding invasive plant species

The main objective of GAEC 8 is biodiversity and landscape (protection and quality)

Minimum of 4% of agricultural area devoted to NPFAs

Retention of Landscape Features

Ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird nesting and rearing season

Measures for avoiding invasive plant species and noxious weeds

GAEC 8 Retention of landscape features, ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season and measures for avoiding invasive plant species

Retention of Landscape Features

Key points:

- Landscape features include: Hedgerows, Trees in a Line, Drains, Designated Habitats and Archaeological Sites and Monuments
- Small ponds (less than or equal to 0.2 hectares) are now considered a landscape feature from 2023
- **Landscape Features such as hedges/line of trees/ditches or drains may be removed, in limited exceptional circumstances and only to the length that is needed, provided a replacement hedge/line of trees/ditch or drain is planted/dug in advance of the removal.**
- *Hedgerow removal*: a new hedge of **twice** the removal length must be planted in **advance of the removal** and must be as close as possible, within the farm/holding as declared on the applicant's BISS application, of the removed feature.

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Retention of Landscape Features

Key points:

- *Exceptional Circumstances include:* Building work associated with the farmyard, Road Safety issues and Farm Safety issues. Further guidance will be available in the Conditionality Handbook.
- **Be aware of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations**

Thresholds for screening applications		
Type of on-farm Activity:		**Screening Required:**
Restructuring of rural land holdings :	Length of field boundary to be removed:	Above 500 metres
	Re-contouring (within farm-holding) :	Above 2 hectares
	Area of lands to be restructured by removal of field boundaries:	Above 5 hectare
Commencing to use uncultivated land or semi-natural areas for intensive agriculture :		Above 5 hectares
Land drainage works on lands used for agriculture :		Above 15 hectares

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Retention of Landscape Features

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- S.I. No 407 of 2017 European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) (Amendment) Regulations 2017
- SI 456 of 2011 European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011

PDF **EIA Guidance for Farmers**
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PDF **EIA Summary Information Leaflet**
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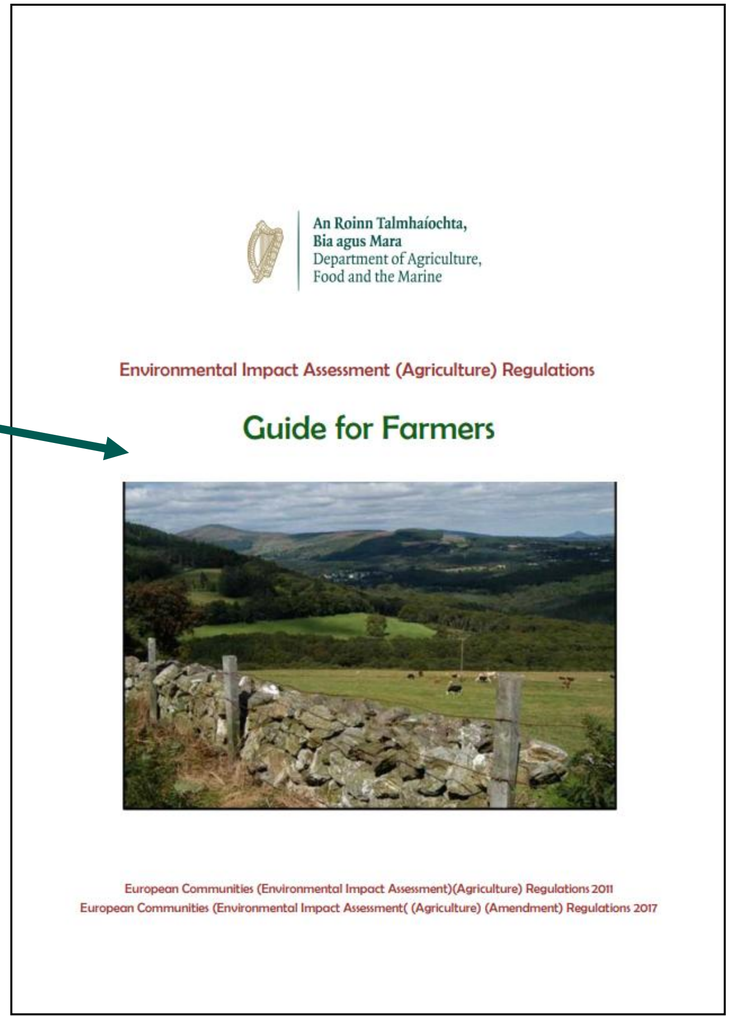
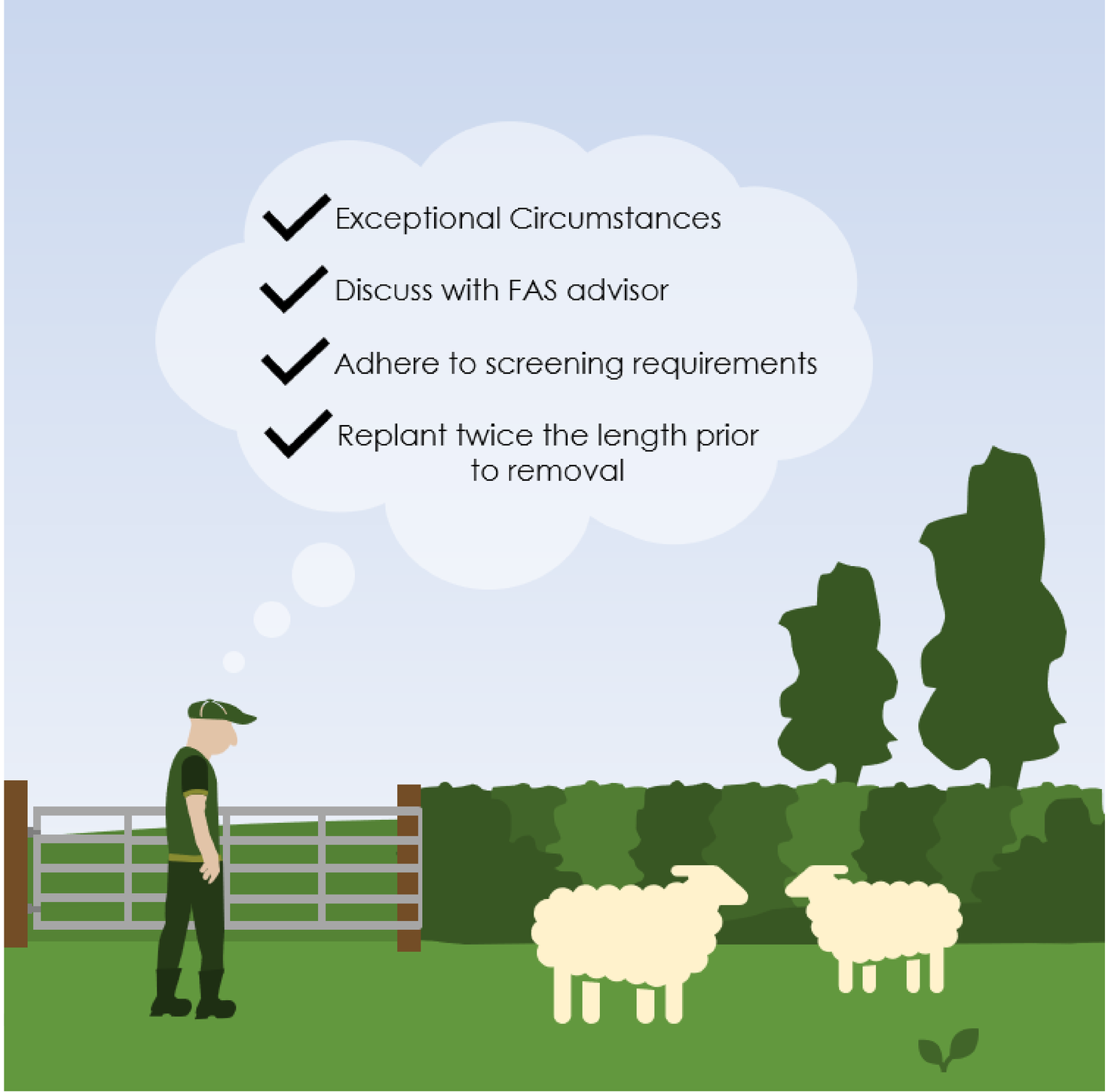
[gov.ie - Rural Environment & Sustainability (www.gov.ie)]




Exceptional Circumstances
Discuss with FAS advisor
Adhere to screening requirements
Replant twice the length prior to removal

Hedgerows (2009)

Trees in a line (2009)

Drains (2009)

Designated Landscape Features under GAEC 8

Designated Habitats (2012)

Archaeological Sites & Monuments (2015)

Ponds (2023) *NEW*

Designated Landscape Features under GAEC 8

Sample Imagery – Tells the story

2010

2017

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Ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird nesting and rearing season

Key points:

- Bird nesting season: 1st March – 31st August.
- Hedge maintenance cannot be carried out during the closed period from 1st March to 31st August in any year as required under the Wildlife Act of 1976

Photo: Irish Farmers Journal

GAEC 8 Retention of landscape features, ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season and measures for avoiding invasive plant species

Measures for avoiding invasive plant species and noxious weeds

Key points:

- All methods of control should be carried out by trained and experienced personnel
- Controlling the growth & spread of invasive species & noxious weeds serves to protect ecosystems

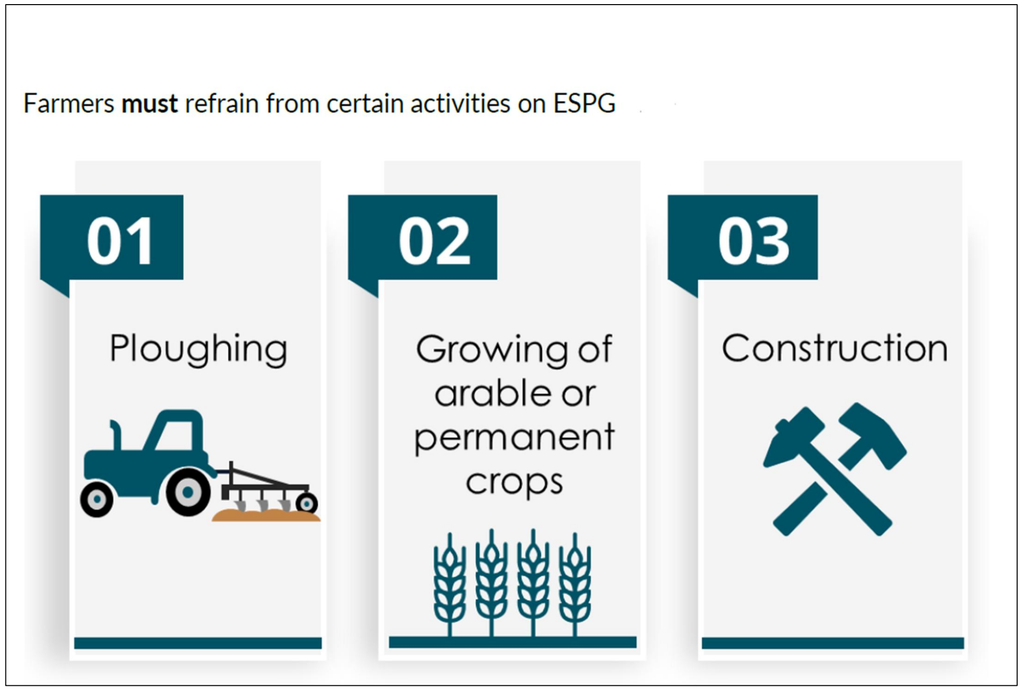
gov.ie - Crops (www.gov.ie)

GAEC 9 Ban on converting or ploughing permanent grassland designated as environmentally sensitive permanent grasslands (ESPG) in Natura 2000 sites

The main objective of GAEC 9 is protection of habitats and species

- Farmers must refrain from certain actions on ESPG, these include ploughing, the growing of arable or permanent crops and construction

- ESPG LPIS contain # on the BISS profile (A123456789#)



Thank you