

Winter Stubble

Specification extract · Pages 67–68

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Winter Stubble action (pages 67–68 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 67 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=67

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-winter-stubble/>

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Picture 5: Example of a Wild Bird Cover Strip



Source: Hen Harrier Project

Winter Stubble

Objective

To provide a winter food source for seed-eating birds that feed on spilled grains and the seeds of broad-leaved weeds.

Background

Cited as one of the most simple but effective measures to support farmland birds, the adaption of over winter stubbles as a winter food source for birds will deliver the greatest benefit when operated on a larger scale. The switch from spring to autumn-sown cereals coupled with improved harvesting technology and pre-harvest weed control has contributed to the loss of quality weed-rich winter stubbles which is a key foraging habitat for farmland birds. Research shows that certain bird species prefer to forage on sprawling open stubbles rather than in tall, dense vegetations. Species such as skylark, yellowhammer, grey partridge, sparrow, finches and pheasant, have a stronger preference to forage on weedy cereal stubbles while linnet specialises in exploiting stubbles after oilseed rape. Over winter stubbles contain spilled grains from the previous harvest along with broad-leaved weeds that germinate post-harvest thus providing a valuable winter food supply for seed eating birds. **Site Suitability**

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels declared as arable and on Non-CP parcels.
- This action is not available on Annex 1 Grasslands in Non-CP parcels.

- This action is only suitable on stubble ground following the harvest of a cereal crop, oilseed rape or linseed. It must NOT be selected on land following the harvesting of maize.

Requirements

1. To deliver this action there are two options following the harvest of a cereal crop, oilseed rape or linseed (but not maize) to be implemented in line with the requirements set down in SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended).
 - a. To provide a food source for birds, leave stubbles in situ until at least the 1st of February the following year. or
 - b. Conduct shallow cultivation to encourage the emergence of a green cover within 14 days following harvest and no later than the 30th of September and leave in situ until at least the 1st of February the following year.
2. This measure can be applied for annually. The winter stubble can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split parcel, choose Winter Stubble SP NPI.
3. If the NPI AWP is approved on or before the 15th of May, it is taken that this NPI will be delivered in that year, unless withdrawn before the 30th of September for the action or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after the 15th of May, that NPI can only be delivered the following year.
4. Grazing or topping of the stubble is not permitted from the date the crop is harvested until the 1st of February the following year.
5. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the stubble.
6. Livestock must be excluded from the date of harvest until the 1st of February.
7. No pre-harvest desiccants are permitted except for on oil seed rape.
8. No post-harvest Plant Protection Products can be applied to the area between the date of harvest and the 1st of February.
9. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once stubble in place or shallow cultivation has taken place following harvest in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional guidance

- Barley stubble (particularly spring barley stubble) is more attractive to birds than wheat stubble.