

Ending of exemption for agricultural green waste burning

Final dates for the burning of cut and other agricultural green waste

The Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) Regulations 2009 makes it an offence to dispose of waste by burning. An initial five-year exemption was provided for the permissible disposal of waste by burning where it was done as a final measure after the preferred alternatives had been assessed, the local authority was notified and the material to be burned consisted only of uncontaminated wood, trees, tree trimmings, leaves, brush, or other similar waste generated by agricultural practices. This exemption has been extended on several occasions.

In early 2023, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications announced that the practice of burning agricultural green waste will end on the 30th of November 2023.

To facilitate a final transition, a last short time-period for burning will re-open on the 1st of September 2023 and close on the 30th of November 2023. There will be no further extension.

Farmers who plan to undertake the burning of agricultural green waste within this timeframe must notify their local authority in advance.

Material types

This final burning exemption applies to farmers who generate agricultural green waste through:

- Management of hedgerows
- Land clearance and maintenance activities
- Wind fall material arising
- Pest-infected and diseased material requiring management

This exemption does not apply to the controlled burning of growing vegetation as this is covered by Section

39 & 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976. In addition, if land is in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA), it is likely that an application will have to be made to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for permission to conduct any burning of vegetation. For the management of invasive species, please refer to the NPWS.

Why is the burning of green waste ending?

To improve the sustainable management of agricultural green waste which will:

- Improve air quality and human health
- Better utilise material for sustainable alternative uses
- Enhance and promote biodiversity

What are the sustainable practices to replace burning?

In November 2022, the Irish Bioenergy Association on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine developed a feasibility study on the sustainable management of agricultural green waste in Ireland.

This report outlines **many sustainable alternatives to burning** which farmers are permitted to use, including:

- Use of flailing and return the cut material to the ground in-situ
- Establish a nature pile/biodiversity habitat corner allowing the material to decompose over time
- Produce sustainable wood fuel for own heating use on-farm
- Composting of the material on-farm
- Off-farm energy generation from high quality, large volume, uncontaminated material
- Use of the material for animal bedding
- Produce landscaping material
- Biochar production



The **full feasibility study** to explore the sustainable management of agriculture green waste in Ireland is available to read by scanning this QR code or via tinyurl.com/IrBEA-SMAGWStudy

