



IEAGHG Information Paper; 2013-IP12: EU Votes to Reduce HFC's

The European Parliament has called for a ban on air-conditioners and refrigerator systems using fluorinated gases by 2020. Fluorinated gases or F-gases are used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbons, hydrochlorofluorocarbons and halons. Though they do not damage the atmospheric ozone layer, have a potential global warming effect far greater than carbon dioxide. As part of the international Montreal Protocol, the European Union is obligated to phase down on these F-gases.

The draft legislation passed by the European Parliament's Environmental Committee proposes to entirely phase out the use of F-gases between 2015 and 2020. F-gases are said to account for only 2 percent of the E.U.'s overall greenhouse gas emissions, but these have risen by 60 percent since 1990.

There are three groups of F-gases: Hydrofluorocarbons or HFCs, perfluorocarbons or PFCs and sulfur hexafluoride. HFCs, the most common of the F-gases, should be reduced by 16 percent of current consumption by 2030.

"Today's vote represents an important step in the fight against climate change. Emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases have risen by 60% since 1990 in the EU. Banning the use of these "super greenhouse gases" in refrigeration and air-conditioning is therefore urgently needed to reverse this negative trend", said lead MEP Bas Eickhout after the draft legislation was adopted by 48 votes to 19, with 1 abstention.

The United States and China have also proposed the phase out of HFCs and have agreed to work together to do so (see IP number 8). *"The U.S. and China have said they are willing to scale back use of HFCs. E.U. legislation can set a global example on how to do it,"* said Mr. Eickhout. –

The main points of the new legalisation are:

Phase out, phase down - The committee proposes to entirely phase out the use of F-gases between 2015 and 2020 in several new sectors, where safe, energy-efficient and cost-effective alternatives are available. MEPs say that overall use of HFCs must be reduced to a mere 16% of current consumption by 2030. (The European Commission had suggested 21%).

Fees -To respect the principle that the polluter should pay, the Environment Committee proposes charging producers a fee of up to 10 euros per tonne of CO₂ equivalent for the HFCs they use. This would offer an additional incentive to innovate and recycle and help address any regional differences in the implementation of the regulation. The Commission would be tasked with carrying out an impact assessment to define the system and charges.

Export ban - The committee strengthened the legislation by proposing an export ban to prevent appliances using fluorinated gases being dumped in countries outside the EU.

Next steps - The Environment Committee voted to give a green light for the rapporteur to open negotiations with member states. If Council adopts a common position in July, talks can begin after the summer recess.

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