



PRODUCERS WELCOME COMMISSION PROPOSAL ON F-GASES REGULATION BUT CAUTION AGAINST PHASE OUT OF HFC134a IN CAR AIR-CONDITIONING.

Brussels, 12 August 2003 The European Fluorocarbon Technical Committee (EFCTC)¹ welcomes in general the proposal for a EU Regulation on fluorinated gases² which was issued today by the European Commission. The industry group supports legislation that seeks to harness the environmental benefits of F-gases, through enhanced energy efficiency and emission reduction but is concerned that the proposed restriction on the use of enhanced R-134a, in car air-conditioning could be counterproductive.

“The draft Regulation presents a clear set of rules for the trade and use of Fluorinated gases, including end of life issues across the EU” says Dr. Nick Campbell, chair of EFCTC. *“With the exception of the automotive sector, it will assist in reducing the large degree of uncertainty which is discouraging new investment and innovation in energy efficient equipment and technologies, much of which will use F-gases”*. The proposal provides a common system for data reporting, and lays down a framework for emission prevention. These aspects have been strongly advocated by industry as part of Responsible Use.³

Mobile air conditioning

“We welcome the recognition that the commission gives to a range of options for mobile air-conditioning, which includes the long term use of HFCs with a low Global Warming Potential. Given the current lack of a proven alternative, that is commercially operating, we believe the setting of a phase out schedule for enhanced HFC134a systems in cars is inappropriate”, continued Dr. Campbell. Investment in enhanced R-134a has been shown to have a superior environmental performance when compared to other systems, in regions where there are hot traffic conditions. A rapid phase out in Europe will stop investment in this technology, which is currently delivering significant improvements in reduced greenhouse gas emissions. This could be

¹ A sector group of CEFIC representing the producers of the fluorinated gases within the European Union

² Com (2003) 492

³ <http://www.arap.org/responsible.html>

counter-productive for the environment, leading to the adoption of less energy efficient and heavier mobile air-conditioning systems that could, ironically lead to greater emissions of carbon dioxide. Also it could undermine the move from CFCs (which have a much higher Global Warming Potential) to HFCs in developing countries. The focus on the phase-out of R-134a in mobile air-conditioning contradicts the conclusions of the final report of the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP)⁴, endorsed by the Council of Ministers in December 2001. These conclusions were clearly orientated toward containment of these gases and monitoring of actual emissions, which minimise their environmental impact. Better containment in current systems and enhanced R-134a air-conditioning systems should be a priority.

The benefits of F-gases, vital in many daily life applications

There are strong arguments in support of the use of F-gases, bringing substantial benefits to society. F-gases (fluorinated hydrocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride) are used in many vital applications of our daily life such as refrigerators, air-conditioners, thermal insulation and medical sprays. They are particularly safe (because their low toxicity and low flammability) and consequently can have distinct environmental benefits such as improved energy efficiency when used in refrigeration and air conditioning systems or in foam used for thermal insulation. Their improved energy efficiency can lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is why all avenues should be explored to use these gases responsibly, rather than proposing phase-out of their use. The proposed regulation confirms the long-term sustainability of F-gases in their vast majority of applications and clearly establishes common rules for the EU.

F-gases and climate change into context

To put F-gases into context, it is important to note that all together they currently contribute less than 2% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. By 2010 this figure is expected to remain less than 3% but the benefit F-gases bring through improved energy efficiency is thought to outweigh this, as they contribute to reduced CO₂ emissions in many of their applications. By contrast, the CFCs progressively replaced by the HFCs represented about 25% of all greenhouse gas in 1990.

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⁴ The ECCP report represented a thorough assessment of the fluorinated gases and was undertaken by all the stakeholders, government, industry, environmental NGOs and academia. See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/eccpreport.htm>

Notes to the editors

1. F-gases, their past and future contribution to reduced greenhouse gases emissions:

F-gases have permitted an unprecedented rapid phase-out of Ozone Depleting substances such as CFCs. HFCs have also a much lower Global Warming Potential (GWP) than CFCs, and have already contributed to a significant decrease of the greenhouse gas emissions⁵. In applications such as thermal insulation or refrigeration and air conditioning, their energy efficiency contributes to reduce the energy consumption. HFCs contribute therefore indirectly but significantly to reach the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol and such opportunity should not be missed

2. About certification of personnel: Although the draft regulation requires the Member States to set minimum technical qualifications and certification for personnel working with F-gases, it fails to specify these minimum requirements.

3. About recovery of F-gases: The Regulation requires Member States to establish proper recovery, recycling and end-of-life destruction procedures. Because of their non-flammability and low toxicity, F-gases are very suitable for recovery and re-use. Unfortunately, the introduction of cost-effective recycling systems is often discouraged by the EU-regulations on transborder shipment of recovered substances.

For further information :

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⁵ Actually, the progressive substitution of CFCs and HCFCs by HFCs represents the most significant reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions.