

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000401/25
to the Commission
Miriam Lexmann (PPE)
(29 January 2025)

Subject: World Trade Organisation's concerns regarding the EU's F-gas Regulation

Regulation (EU) 2024/573 on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gas Regulation) envisages a complete phaseout of F-gases in several industrial applications by 2035. As F-gases are important for numerous industries within global supply chains, this regulation prompted concerns from several World Trade Organisation (WTO) members, including the United States, Australia, Japan and Canada. These concerns highlighted the EU's duty to avoid creating unnecessary trade barriers under the WTO's Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement.

With the new Trump administration in the United States, the risk of protectionist policies, including retaliatory trade measures against the EU, is rising. New tariffs, for example on cars, would have a devastating impact on Europe's automotive industry, including in Slovakia.

1. Is the Commission willing to remove full bans on F-gases for certain applications from Annex IV before these bans enter into force in the 2030s, respecting the principle of technological neutrality?
2. Regarding Article 35(5), will the Commission consider carrying out a review of F-gas restrictions earlier than 2030, maybe in 2025, in order to alleviate the concerns of WTO members?
3. Would the review consider the specific role of HFOs as an alternative to the previous generation of F-gases (HFCs), especially given their low global warming potential and the fact that no impact assessments on their full ban have previously been carried out?

Submitted: 29.1.2025

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(19 March 2025)

Regulation (EU) 2024/573 ⁽¹⁾ on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases), contains a few restrictions covering all F-gases, i.e. including hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs).

Such restrictions were only introduced for applications for which alternatives are available and the restrictions have a long transition period, allowing the industry sufficient time to adjust. The Impact Assessment covered such alternatives.

Some F-gases are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS are chemicals which are very persistent and potentially have negative effects on health and the environment.

Recital (7) of the regulation includes a reference to the full F-gas prohibitions in line with the precautionary principle, to ensure that alternatives which are less harmful for health, the environment and the climate would be used.

The F-gas Regulation delivers high ambition, while respecting the EU's international obligations. The Commission is in regular contact with third countries to clarify this, both in the World Trade Organisation and through bilateral contacts.

The Commission intends to carry out the review of the F-gas Regulation by 2030, in line with the requirements of that regulation.

As required in Article 35(5)(a) of the regulation, the Commission will in that review evaluate whether cost-effective, technically feasible, energy-efficient, sufficiently available and reliable alternatives exist, which make the replacement of fluorinated greenhouse gases possible in the products and equipment listed in Annex IV covered by prohibitions that have not yet become applicable at the time of the evaluation, especially products and equipment subject to full fluorinated greenhouse gas prohibitions, including 'split' air conditioners and heat pumps.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/573/oj/eng>