

Substances that deplete the ozone layer

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In adopting the report of Ms. Ilona GRAENITZ (PES, A) on substances that deplete the ozone layer, the European Parliament drew attention to the fact that over the last two years the hole in the ozone layer had grown by 20-25%, and that skin cancer, eye damage and damage to plants have continued to increase. Parliament's amendments generally shortened the proposed timetable for phasing out these substances. Member States were urged to consider helping SMEs to this end. In an attempt to combat the considerable illegal trade in the substances which are still used in out of date installations, Member States were called upon to carry out random checks on imports. The rapporteur was also in favour of an end to HCFC exports from the EU to those countries which still permit them. For Member States where climatic conditions make it difficult to use alternatives to methyl bromide for soil fumigation in agriculture, the competent authorities may, until December 2004, authorise exceptions for agriculture, subject to the mandatory use of impermeable plastic film. Even after the scheduled phase out of production and use of controlled substances, the Commission may, under certain conditions, grant exemptions for essential uses; care has to be taken that exemptions are granted mainly for medical uses or as chemical precursors for pharmaceuticals.