Specification of petrol, diesel and gas-oil: mechanism to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fuels. "Fuel Quality Directive"

2007/0019(COD) - 31/01/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to introduce stricter transport fuel standards.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: Directive 98/70/EC establishes minimum specifications for petrol and diesel fuels for use in road and non-road mobile applications and was modified in 2003 in order to adjust sulphur limits for petrol and diesel. (See COD/1996/0163 and COD/2001/0170). Both Directives apply to road vehicles, inland waterway barges and non-road mobile machinery such as locomotives, earth moving machinery and tractors. The main aim of the existing Directive is to protect human health; to protect the environment; and to establish an effective framework for the smooth functioning of the single market.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is to amend Directive 98/70/EC in order to :

i) take account of recent technological developments in fuel and engine technology;

ii) incorporate the growing importance of biofuels into the Directive;

iii) help meet air quality goals set out in the 2005 Thematic Strategy on air pollution; and

iv) reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The main changes proposed to the Directive are:

- To confirm 2009 as the date by which sulphur diesel will be allowed a maximum level of 10 ppm. This will result in lower pollutant emissions, primarily particulate matter. It will also facilitate the introduction of other pollutant control equipment.

- To reduce the poly aromatic hydrocarbon content in diesel to 8% from 2009 onwards. This might result in a reduction in particulate matter and poly aromatic hydrocarbon emissions.

- To reduce the maximum sulphur content in non-road gas-oil from 1000 ppm to 10 ppm for land based uses and from 1000 ppm to 300 ppm for inland waterways. The change for land based equipment will facilitate the introduction of more advanced engines and emission control equipment as well as lowering particulate matter emissions from existing equipment. The change for inland waterways will ensure that these engines operate at approved levels of pollutant emissions.

- To allow for a higher volume of biofuels to be used in petrol. A separate petrol blend will be established with higher permitted oxygenate content (including up to 10% ethanol). The vapour pressure limit is increased for petrol blended with ethanol.

- To clearly label all blends available on the market.

- To introduce controls on higher emissions of volatile organic compounds by collecting emissions in petrol stations for all fuels. (The Commission will bring forward a proposal for the mandatory introduction of “filling station vapour recovery” in 2007).

- To introduce mandatory monitoring of lifecycle greenhouse gases from 2009.

- To reduce emissions by 1% a year as from 2011. This will ensure that the fuel sector contributes to the Community’s longer term greenhouse gas reduction goals as well as parallel initiatives to improve vehicle efficiency.

- To clarify exemptions to the vapour pressure limit for arctic or severe weather in order to avoid misinterpretation and increase legal certainty and to introduce a new review clause.

Lastly, the proposed amendments seek to bring Directive 98/70/EC up to date by eliminating redundant elements.