

PROGRESS ON THE PHASE OUT OF METHYL BROMIDE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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Regulation EC2037/00 of the European Parliament and of the Council on "Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer"¹ came into force on 1 October 2000 in all 15 countries of the European Community. The regulation mandates an accelerated reduction in the consumption of MB compared to the Protocol, mandatory use of fumigation sheets by qualified personnel when using MB for soil fumigation, strict controls governing any further uses of MB (called 'critical' uses) after phase out if an alternative is not available, a freeze on the quantity of MB that can be used for quarantine and pre-shipment (QPS) applications, and annual reporting on the progress achieved in the development of alternatives to MB for all uses including QPS. The impact of these measures on the phase out of methyl bromide in the EC is described, based on a survey of methyl bromide use in the EC.

The use of MB for QPS is reported to be increasing in many countries due mainly to trade that requires disinfestation typically with MB prior to export or on arrival. The EC limit on the amount of MB that can be placed on the market for QPS in 2001 is 487 ODP tonnes based on the average use of MB used for QPS from 1996-1998. Beginning in 2002, Member States must also report on the quantities of MB used for QPS and for which purposes. These actions are expected to encourage research on the development of alternatives and to minimise future dependency on MB whose cost is likely to increase and whose availability in the future becomes increasingly uncertain.

Research expenditure by the European Commission on alternatives to non-QPS applications of methyl bromide is reported. The international exemption for the uses of MB for QPS applications renders research on this area a lower priority than research finding alternatives for MB uses that will be banned in 2005. As a result, the exemption for QPS is counterproductive to the development of alternatives in this sector. Moreover, developing countries are not able to apply for funds for alternatives for MB used for QPS as the Protocol's Multilateral Fund will only fund alternatives for ozone depleting substances that are not exempt. As QPS alternatives would be similar for both all countries, acceptance of an international control measure would benefit all countries that are using MB to overcome pest problems in trade.

¹ Official Journal L244, Vol. 43 of 29 September 2000 ; or go to http://www.europateam.cc.cec/eur-op/ojol/en/dat/2000/l_244/l_24420000929en00010024.pdf