

## **Fluoropolymers Downstream User Meeting: Addressing the Future of Fluoropolymers and PFAS Restrictions**

On February 4, 2025, **Sandy Van den Broeck – ESG Director at ESA** and a number of key stakeholders gathered at the Plastics Europe office for the Fluoropolymers Downstream User Meeting. The meeting was a crucial forum for discussing the evolving landscape of fluoropolymer regulations, particularly the PFAS restriction proposal, and exploring strategies to mitigate potential impacts on industry operations. **Caroline Anderson**, the newly appointed director of the Fluoropolymers Product Group (FPG), led the discussions, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and proactive advocacy.

### **Industry Overview and Regulatory Landscape**

Caroline Anderson began the meeting by introducing herself and outlining FPG's role in representing Europe's leading fluoropolymer producers. She highlighted the organization's mission to advocate for the industry, ensuring that regulatory decisions consider both environmental concerns and the critical applications of fluoropolymers in various sectors.

A key focus of the meeting was the progress of the PFAS restriction proposal currently under review by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). Guy Parker of Acumen provided an update, noting that discussions within ECHA remain ongoing, with scrutiny extending to multiple industry sectors, including transport, medical devices, and semiconductors. While two primary options—outright bans or time-limited derogations—have been on the table, a potential third option is emerging. This alternative would involve stringent emission reduction measures at the manufacturing stage and responsible end-of-life waste management.

### **FPG's Commitment to Sustainable Manufacturing**

To address regulatory concerns, FPG has launched a Manufacturing Commitment, designed to reduce PFAS emissions in air and water. This initiative includes:

- The development of a **Safe Handling Guide** to ensure best practices within the industry.
- The creation of a **Technology Exchange Platform** to foster collaboration on emission reduction strategies.
- Continuous updates on **emission reduction achievements** to maintain transparency and accountability.

These measures underscore the industry's commitment to responsible fluoropolymer production, reinforcing the notion that sustainable manufacturing is achievable without compromising the essential uses of these materials.

### **End-of-Life Management and Alternative Assessments**

FPG has also taken proactive steps to assess the environmental impact of fluoropolymers at the end of their lifecycle. The organization has engaged an independent consultancy, to conduct a comprehensive End-of-Life (EoL) study. This report will examine disposal methods, including incineration, landfill, and potential recycling solutions, to better understand the fate of fluoropolymers after use.

Stakeholders from across the value chain are encouraged to contribute data to this research, with a deadline for input set for March 14, 2025.

Additionally, FPG has initiated an **Assessment of Alternatives (AoA)** project. This study aims to evaluate the feasibility of replacing fluoropolymers in certain applications while maintaining performance standards. The report, conducted with an external consultant, will present scientific and technical evidence, as well as regulatory requirements, to determine whether viable substitutes exist for specific uses.

### **Advocacy, Communication, and Future Engagements**

Effective communication remains a cornerstone of FPG's strategy in navigating the regulatory landscape. James Eyermann from Acumen emphasized the need for clear, fact-based advocacy to counter negative narratives surrounding fluoropolymers. Key components of FPG's advocacy efforts include:

- **Enhanced digital presence**, leveraging the FPG website and social media platforms to disseminate accurate information.
- **Regular newsletters** providing industry updates, scientific insights, and regulatory developments.
- **Strategic engagement with policymakers**, ensuring that decision-makers are well-informed about the indispensable role of fluoropolymers.

FPG is also committed to maintaining an open dialogue with regulatory bodies. Over the past year, the organization has engaged with the European Commission's Environment (ENV) and Growth (GROW) departments, as well as national authorities in Austria, Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic. The group will continue advocating for balanced regulations that recognize both environmental concerns and the technological indispensability of fluoropolymers.

### **Looking Ahead: Upcoming Meetings and Webinars**

To maintain momentum and keep stakeholders informed, FPG has planned a series of future engagements:

- Webinar on the End-of-Life study.
- **Q1 2025:** Webinar on the FPG Manufacturing Program.

- **April/May 2025:** In-person meeting to discuss regulatory progress and industry developments.

FPG also remains actively involved in global discussions through its participation in the OECD Global PFAS Group. The organization will contribute to the upcoming synthesis report on the lifecycle of fluoropolymers, collaborating with international partners such as the Performance Fluoropolymer Partnership (PFP) and the Fluoro-Chemical Product Japan (FCJ) group.

## **Conclusion**

The Fluoropolymers Downstream User Meeting underscored the industry's commitment to sustainable practices, regulatory compliance, and proactive advocacy. While challenges surrounding PFAS restrictions persist, FPG and its stakeholders remain dedicated to finding balanced solutions that uphold environmental responsibility without compromising essential applications. Through continued collaboration, technological innovation, and transparent communication, the industry is well-positioned to navigate the evolving regulatory landscape while ensuring the sustainable future of fluoropolymers.