# UK’s outdated F-gas regulations stall refrigeration innovation amid EU’s sharper climate targets



The refrigeration industry stands at a critical juncture as the UK grapples with its F-gas regulations. Steve Shipp, Managing Director of Ultra Refrigeration, articulates significant concerns regarding the current regulatory climate, which he believes hampers innovation and fails to provide the necessary clarity for long-term investments. In stark contrast to the European Union's aggressive updates set for 2024, the UK remains mired in an outdated framework that predates pivotal changes in environmental policy.

The discrepancies between the UK and EU regulations are substantial. While the EU aims for a staggering 95% reduction in hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) usage by 2030, the UK is on a slower path, targeting an 85% reduction by 2036. This gap in regulatory ambition places UK companies in a precarious position, balancing between two divergent paths while trying to anticipate future changes. According to Shipp, this indecisiveness merely defers inevitable decisions that could significantly impact operational frameworks and costs across the sector.

Shipp further elucidates that the aftermath of Brexit adds layers of complexity, especially for manufacturers dealing with Northern Ireland, which adheres to EU regulations. The Northern Ireland Protocol creates a dual regulatory environment forcing companies to decide whether to conform exclusively to EU standards or create separate product lines for different UK regions. This situation not only intensifies bureaucratic hurdles but also risks stifling domestic production and the ensuing competitiveness of UK firms. Exemptions granted to businesses involved in refrigerated transport highlight a practical but confusing shift, necessitating a more nuanced approach to regulation.

The ramifications of the current regulatory stagnation extend far beyond compliance; they influence innovation and decision-making within the industry. As Shipp notes, the urgency surrounding F-gas compliance has largely been relegated to the background. Consequently, many contractors and clients hardly discuss it until faced with the need for new installations, where they are caught off-guard by uncertainties regarding future regulatory obligations. This hesitance cultivates a reliance on outdated systems, as companies shy away from investments that could lead to complications down the line.

In advocating for a tiered approach to global warming potential (GWP) limits, Shipp suggests that the UK could craft a regulatory framework that not only aligns with environmental goals but also accommodates specific application needs within the refrigeration sector. By implementing higher GWP limits for niche applications—such as ultra-low temperature refrigeration, where viable alternatives might be lacking—this strategy would foster innovation while still steering the sector towards greener solutions. The rigidity of a uniform GWP cap fails to recognise the practical challenges presented by different applications, which can lead to inefficiencies and detrimental environmental impacts if inappropriate refrigerants are substituted.

Further complicating goals of sustainability is the issue of energy efficiency throughout a system's lifecycle. Shipp posits that overlooking the energy performance of refrigerants could undermine net zero ambitions, as certain designated 'greener' options perform poorly in real-world applications. A robust regulatory approach must consider both direct emissions from refrigerants and their indirect emissions resulting from energy consumption.

As UK companies gradually transition to more environmentally friendly refrigerants, a well-defined regulatory pathway becomes imperative. A clearer framework could encourage investment in research and development, as companies would feel more secure in committing resources to future-proof technologies. The momentum for innovation thrives when organisations understand the parameters within which they operate, making it critical for the government to engage proactively with the industry.

In this era of increasing regulatory scrutiny and environmental responsibility, the call for a more refined and forward-thinking approach has never been more pressing. Shipp champions the integration of industry insights into legislative processes to pave the way for smarter, cleaner refrigeration systems. The opportunity exists for the UK not just to align with EU standards but to craft a regulatory landscape that could lead globally, fostering innovation and creating a competitive edge, while honouring environmental responsibilities.

Until such an approach is formalised, businesses will remain in an awkward limbo, disinclined to take the necessary strides forward, uncertain of the landscape that lies ahead. As Shipp aptly states, "If we accept that our environmental goals are ultimately aligned with the EU’s, then dragging our feet doesn’t buy us time—it just shortens the window to act."

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/), [[2]](https://ultra-refrigeration.com/uk-f-gas-regulation-the-way-forward/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/), [[2]](https://ultra-refrigeration.com/uk-f-gas-regulation-the-way-forward/), [[3]](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/fluorinated-greenhouse-gases/f-gas-legislation_en)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/), [[4]](https://www.coolingpost.com/uk-news/ccc-backs-alignment-with-euro-f-gas-regs/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://fea.org.uk/news/fea-helps-secure-exemption-to-new-f-gas-regulations-for-refrigeration-equipment/), [[6]](https://www.climateworks.co.uk/post/how-to-keep-your-business-compliant-with-the-f-gas-phase-down-in-2025)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.climateworks.co.uk/post/how-to-keep-your-business-compliant-with-the-f-gas-phase-down-in-2025), [[7]](https://www.fsw.uk.com/f-gas-regulation)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/), [[2]](https://ultra-refrigeration.com/uk-f-gas-regulation-the-way-forward/), [[7]](https://www.fsw.uk.com/f-gas-regulation)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/), [[3]](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/fluorinated-greenhouse-gases/f-gas-legislation_en)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.coolingpost.com/blog-posts/uk-should-take-a-tiered-approach-to-f-gas-policy/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://ultra-refrigeration.com/uk-f-gas-regulation-the-way-forward/> - Steve Shipp, Managing Director of Ultra Refrigeration, discusses the UK's current F-gas regulation, highlighting the lack of clarity compared to the EU's more aggressive 2024 updates. He advocates for a tiered approach to GWP limits, considering application-specific needs and performance, to align with environmental goals while supporting innovation and efficiency in the refrigeration industry.
3. <https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/fluorinated-greenhouse-gases/f-gas-legislation_en> - The European Commission's F-gas Regulation (EU) 2024/573, effective from 11 March 2024, aims to reduce hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by 95% by 2030 and phase out HFCs by 2050. It introduces stricter rules to prevent emissions, expands the quota system, and facilitates better monitoring to combat illegal trade, aligning with the European Climate Law and the Montreal Protocol.
4. <https://www.coolingpost.com/uk-news/ccc-backs-alignment-with-euro-f-gas-regs/> - The UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommends aligning UK F-gas regulations with the EU to reduce costs and provide certainty for UK supply chains. The CCC's Seventh Carbon Budget report advises that regulatory alignment would stimulate innovation and support decarbonisation efforts, while ensuring sufficient time for the sector to prepare for changes.
5. <https://fea.org.uk/news/fea-helps-secure-exemption-to-new-f-gas-regulations-for-refrigeration-equipment/> - The Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA), in collaboration with EFCEM, secured a temporary exemption for certain refrigeration equipment from new EU F-gas regulations effective 1 January 2025. This grace period allows manufacturers time to develop new technology and alternative refrigerants, applying to specific self-contained refrigeration equipment until 30 June 2026.
6. <https://www.climateworks.co.uk/post/how-to-keep-your-business-compliant-with-the-f-gas-phase-down-in-2025> - ClimateWorks outlines the F-Gas Regulation, aiming to reduce emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases in refrigeration, air conditioning, and heat pump systems. Key changes effective from 1 January 2025 include prohibitions on certain refrigerants and requirements for accurate service records, with fines and enforcement increasing for commercial operators.
7. <https://www.fsw.uk.com/f-gas-regulation> - FSW discusses the impact of the F-Gas Regulation on market pricing, noting that by 2027, the reduced quota will result in a significant price increase. The market will need to transition to ultra-low GWP alternatives, such as A2Ls or non-F-Gas alternatives like hydrocarbons, ammonia, or CO₂, each with their own challenges.